

**In The Matter Of:**

*CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATIONS*

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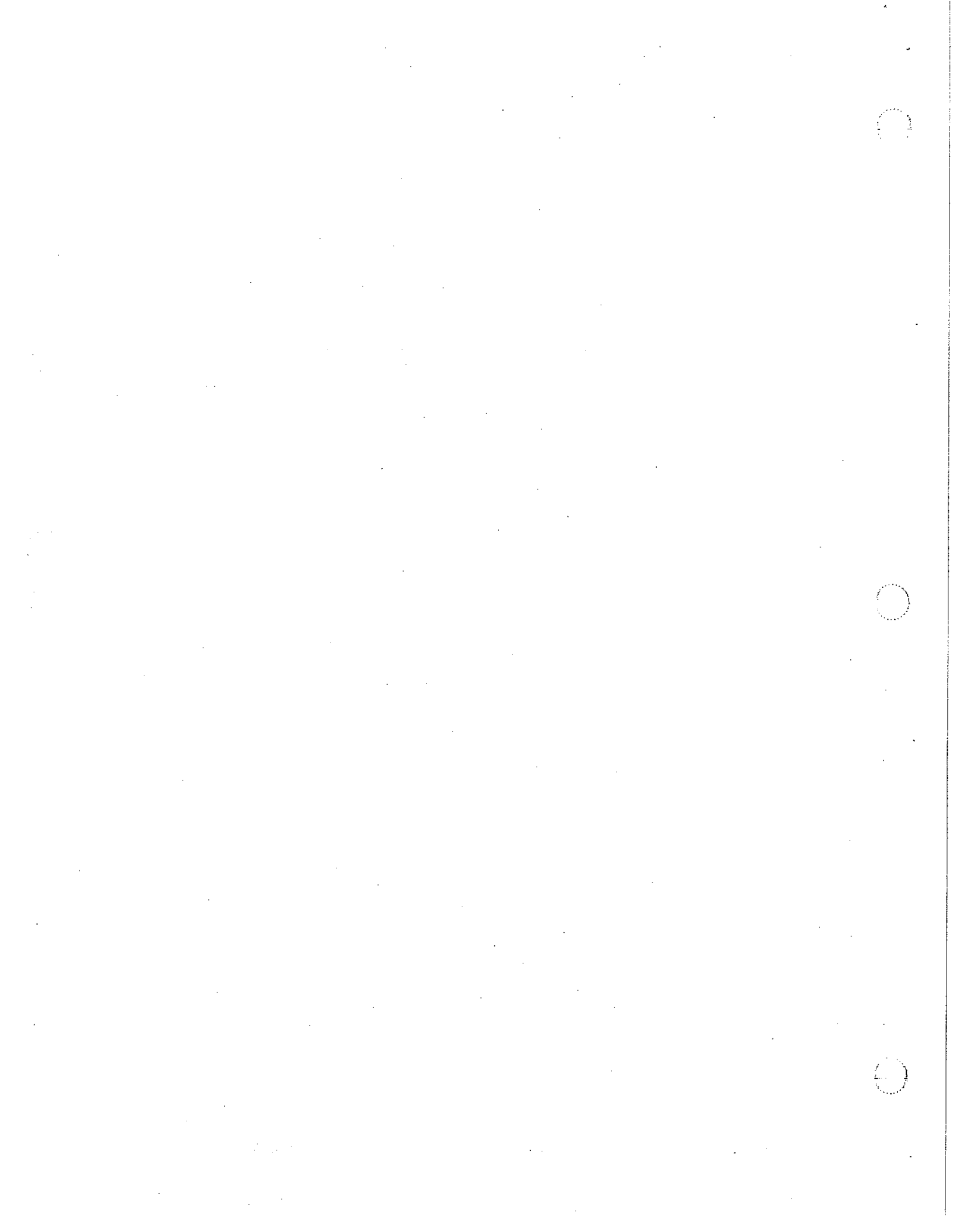
*FOCUS GROUP 1  
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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
FOCUS GROUP NO. 1 FOR D.C. CHARTER SCHOOL  
OPERATIONS  
Washington, D.C.

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High School  
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SUSAN SHAEFFLER,  
KIPP DC:Key Academy

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[1] PROCEEDINGS

[2] (10:41 a.m.)

[3] MS. VARGHESE: Again, I just want [4] to thank all of you for being here, taking [5] time away from your busy schedules to be at [6] this very important meeting. Before — I'm [7] not going to talk much — let me just [8] introduce myself. I'm Ann Varghese. I'm [9] the Internal Affairs Director of the Center [10] for Education Reform and as I said, I'm not [11] going to talk much today, before I to pass [12] it on to Tom. I just want to explain to you [13] why we convened this focus group. [14] Basically, it's part of a broad national [15] effort for us to better understand the needs [16] of charter schools so that we can better [17] influence the development of any [18] organization that is created to suit or [19] serve, both locally and nationally. That [20] said, I'll pass it over to Jeanne and she [21] can introduce Tom.

[22] MS. ALLEN: I just want to jump in

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[1] quickly, kind of give you another context. [2] Actually, I think we're the only one [3] coming. We hired a professional polling and [4] survey firm to help us to this study on five [5] states. We are doing it by telephone in [6] every other state because we are here in [7] your own backyard there's a lot of things [8] happening right here. But it's better to [9] get in a room and try to get you all to talk [10] to the focus group people rather than talk [11] to someone on the telephone, and this spec [12] meeting, you didn't have a chance to really [13] get out everything you thought was [14] important. Tom Healey is from HG [15]

Strategies, and Jonathan Baron is with Red [16] Sea. Jonathan's group is actually doing the [17] telephone survey in Indiana and California [18] as we speak, and some will go to Arizona and [19] Michigan. Tom, we hired locally; he is [20] a consultant of ours from Portico and [21] Management Strategists, who does a variety [22] of work in and around corporate

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[1] organizations. So, we wanted to provide [2] some objectivity to this — obviously, we [3] are advocates for charter schools; we want [4] to help you, but we want to sit back and [5] should have you decide what you need to tell [6] people and what you would like us to be able [7] to do to help you. So, that will be the [8] top.

[9] MR. BARON: So, as a matter of [10] background, this is really market research. [11] If CER, or if CER talks with other groups [12] and are able to help charter schools grow, [13] they need an objective track record of how [14] the schools see — basically four questions [15] being answered today. What's needed most? [16] What do you most expect? What are you most [17] disappointed by? What support is lacking? [18] So then, what do you most need; what do you [19] most expect; what are you most disappointed [20] by, and what support is most lacking? [21] You've missed basically nothing. We just [22] introduced each other —

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[1] MS. ALLEN: Let me just say [2] I'm Jeanne Allen, this is Tom Healey. He is [3] part of a continuum of people including [4] Jonathan Baron from Red Sea. Tom represents [5] strategy which that does political [6] management consulting, and we retained [7] to help to get to you all and do some survey [8] and focus groups, done in person since we're [9] in DC. Most other states are actually doing [10] it by telephone. Help those national and [11] local understanding and help us to better [12] influence people who are working on your [13] behalf.

[14] MS. HERR: Good. Thanks.

[15] MR. BARON: So, again, the four [16] questions that we are most interested in [17] getting to are: what do you most need; what [18] do you most expect; what are you most [19] disappointed by; and what support is most [20] lacking? We'll only go basically through [21] five areas today. Number one is technical [22] assistance — discuss advocacy,

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[1] communications and — sorry — and new [2] school development, and then a few general [3] issues. So, we were — also, just as a [4] practical matter, business

is being done by [5] phone is that I think CER has a very good [6] idea of what generally you want. This is an [7] opportunity to really push out further and [8] try to get deeply into what it is you want. [9] So, instead of the technical assistance, [10] what I would like to discuss to start with [11] is "what organizations have you asked for [12] service, or what kind of services have you [13] been asked for, or have you needed over the [14] last year"? Could we start with you Joanne? [15] Have you asked anyone for help?

[16] MS. GOUBOURN: Probably the [17] resource center, and just in terms of [18] general information, like salary structure [19] or policy development, focus — when I have [20] a legal issue or something being asked by [21] the Chartering Board. If it's something [22] that I think is unreasonable, I call

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[1] Barbara. I think those are about the only [2] two places I've called.

[3] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Irasema.

[4] MS. SALCIDO: Yes. Well, it's not [5] necessarily a particular place. I think for [6] us — I — at least for me — I like what [7] I'm doing, it's so new and I think many [8] times the questions you might have — I [9] don't know if you'd call it technical [10] help — you really sort of do your own [11] search, your own kind of learning, and it's [12] more people, not necessarily the [13] organizations you go to, you know, so it's [14] with time developmental relationship with [15] Shirley, so when I call, Shirley's not the [16] resource center, but Shirley or if the focus [17] is more Robert Cane than focus, per se. So [18] it's not the organization itself, but I [19] think individuals that you think can — you [20] know, sort of have an idea what you're [21] dealing with. Many times you realize, [22] because the issue you might be dealing with

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[1] is so unique to you in some ways. Not [2] unique in that not other charter schools — [3] not unique in the sense that it's not [4] something that other charter schools you're [5] with, but I think for each one of us is [6] depending on what stage of the growth you [7] are, and what issues you might be dealing, [8] you know, whether staffing, or legal, or [9] development, or all those things. So I [10] think it's more, you know, sort of the need [11] you feel because you're dealing with that [12] issue. It's not something that you can just [13] sort of plan ahead of time, or workshops you [14] can attend or — those kind of things.

[15] But at the moment, you see a need, [16] you call the person because you know

the [17] person and sort of think they have [18] answers — also, your own colleagues. I [19] know that, you know, one of the persons that [20] I call a lot is David Domenici from Maya [21] Angelou. So, I know him for a long, long [22] time. So, I think it's sort of more — I

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[1] don't know —

[2] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** That's okay. So, [3] but when you mention a group like FOCUS, [4] which both of you mentioned and one point [5] of background is one of the reasons Jeannie [6] retained my group to do this, is that I [7] don't know anything about your — I've got [8] an MBA and a JD which is nice, right — so I [9] know lots of other stuff, and I'm really [10] skilled in building businesses. But the [11] pure market research, not having any [12] knowledge of what you're talking about, was [13] important. So, if FOCUS is a good group and [14] people — if you like it or someone else has [15] a comment, please feel free to say, "Ah, we [16] use them too", or "there's something [17] valuable there". But what I heard you [18] really saying was that it's more internal [19] need at the moment — the second you've got [20] a problem, who do I know in then [21] focused either to the other schools or a [22] specific issue provider who you — do you

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[1] usually pay those groups? The specific [2] issue providers, or are they good friends of [3] the school?

[4] **MS. GOUBOURN:** I just don't have [5] the money to pay someone for that. Neither [6] does our board for that. If I had to pay my [7] chairperson for the time that he has [8] dedicated to the school, and to mentoring, [9] so to speak, I would be broke. So, I think [10] a lot of us, again, we're extremely [11] resourceful; we have to be. We opened the [12] school. So, it's not organizations per se [13] that, you know, have to depend on to give us [14] that help. It's good to call on them, and [15] all of that. But a lot of — I know what I [16] do, I call them about a lot of [17] implementation stuff — what I have to take [18] care of, I do it myself with my school — [19] not, you know, depending on other [20] organizations to come in and to do it. They [21] might give us a little information. I don't [22] think any of us have really had to use fully

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[1] whatever they offer. Because, you don't [2] need all that they offer necessarily, or [3] what you need is really — you know, you [4] take care of it with your staff. The [5] assumption is that you have the skill and [6] you have it — you know, you recruit [7] different kind of people to

take care of all [8] of those things, because they are so [9] necessary in your school at the moment. So, [10] I don't know if that's — I'm sorry, I'm [11] just —

[12] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** No, that's very [13] good. Wendell, what are your thoughts?

[14] **MR. BUTLER:** A — let me say [15] that — a little about our school. We're [16] a 5 year old school and we have about 500 [17] students. We're one of the larger and older [18] charters in the city. With regard to needs [19] and technical assistance, the advantage for [20] our school is we have, what I would call, [21] fairly seasoned leadership, that some of the [22] new charter schools don't — have not had

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[1] the good fortune to have. Even with that, [2] it's a challenge. In my own case, I'm a [3] native of this city, a Washingtonian. I've [4] been involved in education for a long time, [5] in the private sector. My background is [6] business and public policy. The founder of [7] our school, Ken Amos also had a business [8] background, having been with Xerox for a [9] long time, worked with children for a long [10] time. We've know each other for about 30 [11] years. We have a lot of roots in the city, [12] in the business community, and in the [13] financial community, and the legal [14] community, and the nonprofit sector. So we [15] know individuals which have been very [16] fortunate for us. With regard to my role at [17] the school, I served as chairman of the [18] board for the first five years in a [19] volunteer capacity. We had a very active [20] hands-on board. So actually I had an office [21] at the school, and my other job enabled me [22] to go there everyday. So, we started with a

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[1] lot of oversight — a lot of governance and [2] oversight. If the school leader had a need, [3] the school leader could quickly communicate [4] it to either the managing director, Ken [5] Amos, or myself, the board chairman. After [6] five years, I left the board of directors in [7] the voluntary capacity and joined the school [8] in a senior management position — [9] principally involved with expansion of the [10] school, because our charter allows us to go [11] up to about 5,000 students.

[12] So, we've been crawling for the [13] last five years, and now we're poised for [14] growth — challenges the technical, so where [15] do I go for help? If I can't fix it [16] myself — I mean literally, everything [17] from — if I can't fix the radiator in the [18] school or I can't, or somebody on our staff [19] can't fix the computer, or if we have [20] technical assistance of another nature [21] that's needed, we

either call somebody that [22] we know — FOCUS has been very helpful,

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[1] especially in the real estate area, bringing [2] us opportunities for real estate, but it's [3] up to us to go and sit down, assess the [4] deal — does the deal make sense? You have [5] to know something about real estate. I [6] mean, FOCUS is not going to tell you whether [7] or not this is a good real estate deal for [8] you. They make the match, but you've got to [9] sit down with the building owner or the [10] landlord and assess building conditions and [11] determine — you have to know something [12] about renovation and something about costs, [13] something about construction — and there's [14] nothing really in the charter school [15] movement in the city that prepares you for [16] those kinds of things. The charter schools [17] are small businesses. As a small business [18] person, you have to learn as you go. We've [19] had to — we do a lot of that and we're [20] still doing that, even at five years old. [21] The Charter School Resource Center is very [22] helpful. One of our former employees is

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[1] working there, so we have — I can just call [2] her up and get quick information there. But [3] there is no substitute for learning by doing [4] in this business, and by having the most [5] experienced people you can find. The [6] principal of our school has been a principal [7] in DCPS for 20 years, and at 5 different [8] schools, and was the trainer of principals. [9] So, what I try to encourage other charter [10] schools to do, and we are by no means the [11] big guys looking to help other people [12] because it's a daily challenge for us. But, [13] what I've tried to encourage people who are [14] either interested in starting a charter [15] school, or who are in the early stages of [16] charter school development, if there's not [17] an infra-structure in place, which there [18] isn't in the city — and you've all — may [19] have to discuss the charter school [20] association or the efforts to put together a [21] charter school association. There's no [22] infra-structure. This is a movement in the

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[1] city that has gained a critical mass in a [2] short period of time with relatively little [3] help from the either the chartering [4] authorities — the support groups are doing [5] a good job working as hard as they can, but [6] it's a huge undertaking that has attained a [7] critical mass in the city without the [8] underpinnings. If I need information on [9] audit, for example, if I didn't know [10] auditors and didn't know something

about [11] audits and couldn't go and sit down with an [12] auditor and say, "I know you need to have [13] opinion letter, but I know something about [14] opinion letters and this language hurts", [15] you know. If you don't know that, or if you [16] don't — if you can't sit down with a banker [17] and talk about blended interest rates, [18] you're in trouble. So — [19] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** There's no one [20] right now that you can turn to and say, "I [21] need to know, you know — look at our [22] opinion letter, tell me whether this is

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[1] acceptable language or there's something [2] here" —

[3] **MR. BUTLER:** No, there's no [4] mechanism in place for that. We're talking [5] about trying to develop that with the [6] charter school association, not necessarily [7] being done by the association, but at least [8] identifying the need and being able to [9] determine whether or not FOCUS or the — the [10] resource center, or the coalition, or the [11] reform group — whether or not that need can [12] be filled by somebody else. But, there is [13] no mechanism, and — you know, if you're in [14] the public schools, and you're a teacher in [15] a public school or you're a school leader or [16] principal in a public school, you don't have [17] to worry about the audit. That's somebody [18] else's job. You don't have to worry about [19] FF&E, you know, furnishings are another [20] department. I have — that's a challenge [21] for us as charter school leaders. This is [22] probably a too long an answer to your

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[1] question, but while I'm on a role, I'll just [2] keep going.

[3] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Well, the point [4] here is to collect information. So also, [5] when you're on a role, keep going. If I [6] find that we're off track, I'm going to move [7] on a little bit. But you would also might [8] not hit every point that I've got on my [9] calendar. Big deal, lets get as much [10] information into the record as we can. [11] Because, your experience — each of your [12] experiences is going to take us where we're [13] going to go. I'll fill you in on where [14] we've been in just a moment.

[15] **MR. BUTLER:** Well, let me [16] summarize my comments by contrasting the [17] charter school movement with traditional [18] public schools. Since, a number of our [19] staff comes from charter schools, you can [20] see the difference in the way that an [21] employee reacts to a need. A school leader [22] or a teacher from DCPS will come in and say,

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[1] "I want to hire this person. I know this is [2] really a great teacher, and I've promised [3] her \$45,000, and I've made the commitment, [4] and I need her and I need her to start next [5] month, and begin the interview process — [6] blah, blah, blah". So, that may have worked [7] in where she came from or where the school [8] leader came from, but in a charter school [9] movement, you've got to have that person [10] understand something about budget [11] development and creation. Did you, in your [12] planning last year, you know, what — I see [13] a lot of people shaking their heads — did [14] you, what is your budget, and how did you [15] project your need for this last year? [16] That \$45,000 that you promised this person, [17] how does that compute with what she made [18] before? What is the area average for [19] salaries? What — did you do the [20] appropriate background police checks and the [21] appropriate health checks? — things that [22] you wouldn't necessarily have to worry

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[1] about, but it touches every single facet of [2] business when you're operating a charter [3] school with the responsibilities that we [4] have. The simple answer to your question [5] is, there is no infra-structure in place. [6] There are a number of support groups who're [7] playing — who're dancing as fast as they [8] can and making a valuable contribution, but [9] the infra-structure does not exist.

[10] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** So — and, we [11] started without you — and what we're [12] discussing is essentially — we've got four [13] quick goals, if we just want to review. [14] Number one, we want to know, more than [15] anything else, what you expect from — what [16] you most need from support organizations. [17] Then what you expect from a support [18] organization, what you've been most [19] disappointed by, and what support is most [20] lacking at this point. Okay? We've heard [21] so far Joanne and Irasema have given us [22] their opinions on technical assistance, and

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[1] where they've turned to help in the past, [2] and we've just started discussing this area. [3] We're also going to move into advocacy, new [4] school development, and communications, as [5] well as other issues. Toni could I turn to [6] you next for

[7] **MS. WEBB:** Certainly. Our school [8] is unique on a number of different fronts. [9] We represent, sort of, I guess what we refer [10] to as a "blue print" program. Our school is [11] primarily designed to serve

the students 100 [12] percent — special needs, and primarily [13] those with emotional and behavioral [14] disorders. We also have a residential [15] component that is fairly new. We run into [16] tremendous challenges pretty much every day, [17] primarily because of the fact that the [18] students we service are students who were [19] previously, sort of, out placed and were [20] brought back. It continues to be a sticking [21] point, and so we tend to not get much [22] support. Largely it's due to, you know, —

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[1] and I hate to rely on this, but — you'll [2] probably hear this stream of articulation [3] throughout this focus group, but it is [4] largely politically, sort of, entrenched, [5] you know. You know, our school, at its [6] inception was the only school that created [7] a, sort of a viable option for students with [8] special needs. So, much of the assistance [9] we received was on the end of funding. For [10] the services we provide, it costs [11] roughly \$56,000 a year to provide services [12] to a child. However we receive \$28,000 per [13] child. So, you know, there's no way to, you [14] know, to sort of get out of a deficit [15] spending mode without additional supports. [16] The assistance we've received has primarily [17] come through legislation that was exercised [18] to basically fund us at a rate that would [19] allow us to provide services to our students [20] that were absolutely critical to — not [21] just — not even success, but really just [22] getting them to a place of stability,

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[1] because their educational experiences had [2] been so sorely disrupted. So there was an [3] emergency legislative group of funds that [4] was released to us, funding us as if we were [5] at full capacity. In the recent, sort of, [6] set of events, you know, we've been as an [7] LEA — Local Education Agency — we've [8] actually come up against — come under fire [9] from the Board of Education, and we were [10] publicly ridiculed and attacked for [11] misappropriation of funds, you know, just [12] tremendous poor judgment in spending and [13] audit. That audit was ordered by the Board, [14] and auditors came to us and stayed six [15] weeks — every single day, eight hours a [16] day — and we have just received the [17] preliminary report which found no [18] misappropriations, no physical mismanagement [19] whatsoever, and in addition to that, cited [20] the Board of Education largely because [21] — the interesting paradox is that [22] though Joz-Arz is the only school of its

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[1] kind located in the District, we are [2]

beginning our third year with less than [3] sixty students — a residential treatment [4] facility with a capacity of 56, growing to a [5] capacity of 70, which currently 11 children [6] since September. What's interesting about [7] that is that one would think that there [8] would be lines out of the gate to bring [9] these kids back from these very expensive [10] private placements. There has consistently [11] been a thwarted effort for reasons that, you [12] know, still sort of remain a mystery. So, [13] though we seek out technical assistance from [14] the Board, which is our governing authority, [15] you know, they've been remiss in [16] providing —

[17] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** The Board of [18] Education?

[19] **MS. WEBB:** The Board of Education, [20] yes.

[21] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Now just to jump [22] forward a little bit, because we're there.

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[1] **MS. WEBB:** Yes.

[2] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** The special [3] appropriations — did you have a lobbying [4] effort to get that done?

[5] **MS. WEBB:** We actually did.

[6] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Or how was [7] that —

[8] **MS. WEBB:** I mean, we — there [9] were a series of special education hearings, [10] and we were at every single one of them. [11] What we did essentially was to say that, [12] these students, in order for them to — in [13] order for us to be able to close the gap — [14] they require clinical therapy. You know, [15] they require specialized instruction. They [16] require behavioral intervention. So, you [17] know, vocational development, and these [18] types of supports need to be in place in [19] order for them to come out and become [20] productive contributing citizens, and not [21] return to the types of behaviors that began [22] to interrupt their educational experiences.

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[1] We, sort of, you know, appeared — [2] reappeared — reappeared — with the same [3] story about, you know, what we're facing in [4] terms of letting these kids down, letting [5] them continue to fall through the cracks, [6] not providing for them the adequate support. [7] What the implications of that, you know, [8] sort of, oversight would be long term. [9] Eventually, it was realized that \$28,000 a [10] year to care for these kids across the board [11] and address their therapeutic needs, which [12] are clearly obvious, is just not going to [13] get it done — it's just not going to get it [14] done.

[15] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Where did [16] the \$56,000 a year figure come from — where [17] did you get support for that?

[18] **MS. WEBB:** Well, we — and I don't [19] want to speak too much about that because it [20] falls slightly out of my area of focus —

[21] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Well, I may [22] bring not up this. Wendell talked about

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[1] reaching out for salary information. Joanne [2] talked about, you know, questions, you [3] know — where do we get comparative salary [4] information come under finances? here [5] you've got a very nice, you know, [6] description. It costs this much to actually [7] do it; here's what the state saying it's [8] going to cost. Where did you find — you [9] know, how did you — anyone here, basically [10] dive in to being able to quantify in an [11] objectively verifiable sense, what the [12] numbers are.

[13] **MS. WEBB:** Well, we are driven by [14] the per-pupil allotment formula, which [15] disperses certain dollars per service. So, [16] the dollars that are allotted for their [17] clinical treatment, for their education, for [18] their — actually, the dollars that are [19] allotted are only allotted for their [20] education. It does not take into account [21] the complement of services that's necessary [22] in order for these kids to have a fighting

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[1] chance. In addition, it doesn't take into [2] account transportation. So, our kids are [3] transported privately. They're transported [4] through the District, and they're also [5] transported through public transportation. [6] When you take all of the full complement of [7] services into account, it raises the bar [8] dramatically. Even with that, it still is [9] less than what the District is willing to [10] pay for a private place — far less than [11] what the District is willing to, and has [12] paid for, a private placement per child. [13] Currently there are thousands of students [14] still in out-of-state placements, and so [15] there's a missing link somewhere. Our [16] support has come through just a concerted [17] effort to raise awareness about the fallacy [18] of this, you know, per pupil allotment [19] formula. I mean, it has never worked, and [20] it can't work really if you want to truly [21] educate children. It cannot work, as it is [22] currently structured.

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[1] **MS. GOUBOURN:** We cannot — I'm [2] sure it applies to all of us — I think each [3] one of us here can say the same thing, you [4] know, just with the student population that [5] we have and quality of education in general, [6] I don't think

anyone has seriously taken the [7] time to really understand how much it [8] takes — how much money. I think we're [9] being put in a situation where, because we [10] have to produce results, and we want to, and [11] we have to add all these services, I mean, [12] the mental health, social worker, the after [13] school, the summer, the college prep, you [14] name it. Those are just things you have to [15] do if you want the kids to achieve. But [16] this figure of \$6,000 and whatever, [17] whatever — is just unrealistic. On top of [18] it, when some, I don't know where this — [19] "Okay, sorry, you're not getting that [20] amount, you're getting less." You know, [21] charter schools where do we go. We cannot [22] go to central office and say, "Well, now

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[1] approve more money to come, because we need [2] it." You know, we're having to go back to [3] our budgets and start cutting money. I [4] think you were asking one other question, [5] you know, what is the need or where — I [6] mean, that is definitely an area that I [7] think we hope that our work would open the [8] eyes of policy makers and people that are in [9] positions to say, are we really serious [10] in looking at what it really takes to [11] provide a good education, and what that [12] amount is? You know, people might be afraid [13] of doing that, because that means that [14] traditional public schools, you start [15] throwing more money to them, and then you [16] get a cuts more. Anyway, so that's an [17] issue, too.

[18] **MR. BUTLER:** Can I ask you a [19] similar question? How do you respond to the [20] people that say, "But the allotment in DC is [21] the highest in the nation?" For people the [22] allotment is —

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[1] **MS. ALLEN:** Before she answers [2] that, let me ask something. I told Tom I [3] wasn't going to participate at all, except [4] for two things: one, that I saw there was a [5] German something I wanted to try to hear [6] more about, and two, if I thought maybe [7] there was something that was missing. I [8] sort of heard a German tone that was [9] talking, and I wanted to throw it out there. [10] That is, I'm hearing a story that is very [11] important in the bigger charter school [12] picture, and I'm hearing it about a school. [13] Two things struck me: one is, why wasn't [14] that a story that was very, very — more [15] people knew about it at the time? Two, to [16] what extent would the publication or the [17] publicity of those things do you think help [18] in the bigger picture of this whole [19] financing issue? You've all talked about [20] individual challenges you're having, and

[21] you're all figuring out some of those [22] challenges, but then there's not an

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[1] understanding in the greater Wash-  
ington [2] community really about what  
you all do. You [3] want to jump on that?

[4] **MS. SALCIDO:** Isn't that because [5]  
we can't get any publicity? I don't know.  
[6] We've tried very hard to get publicity  
over [7] different issues, but the — there  
is [8] very — there is no response by  
media or [9] other avenues that you  
could, sort of, get [10] your message out  
with.

[11] **MS. HERR:** Negative.

[12] **MS. SALCIDO:** We found that if [13]  
it's negative, and if it's negative, they [14]  
love that.

[15] **MS. GALARCE:** Yeah.

[16] **MS. WEBB:** We actually have been,  
[17] sort of, singing this song for almost 30  
[18] years. Interestingly enough, you  
know, [19] we've spoken with the Wash-  
ington Post. [20] There was an article that  
came out in the [21] city paper that had —  
was extremely, [22] extremely offensive  
to our efforts, and

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[1] extremely imprecise, you know, and,  
you [2] know, we have held public  
forums; we have [3] done open houses;  
we have, you know, of [4] course, appear-  
ing at, you know, community [5] hall  
meetings for, you know, conducted by [6]  
the Board, and also, you know, at public  
[7] hearings for the Mayor and the City  
Council. [8] These are televised. But it  
seems to be [9] very circular in response.  
People — there [10] are certain people  
who hear a story, but [11] what could  
result is that Joz-Arz becomes, [12] sort of,  
this, you know, — the publicity [13] that  
permeates is, I don't want to say [14]  
exclusively negative — but largely [15]  
negative.

[16] Because, they on same point [17] each  
time. When it appears that, you know, [18]  
there's momentum to be gained with  
respect [19] to pointing out flaws —  
perceived flaws — [20] and hitting buzz  
words like "physical [21] mismanagement"  
— those are the types of [22] things that  
keep people really hopping, in

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[1] terms of, "Oh, my God, Joz-Arz is about  
to [2] close". They asked — they being  
the [3] Board — said, "Look, you know, we  
believe [4] strongly that you are doing —  
you're not [5] doing right by our kids, and  
so, we're going [6] to order this study and  
we will not issue [7] any letters of support  
or good standing [8] until we are assured  
that there's no fiscal [9] mismanagement."  
So, what happens? After [10] the auditors  
of their choosing come to us [11] and

spend six weeks, day in and day out, and  
[12] come out with a — and when I say, [13]  
practically nothing, I mean one of the  
items [14] that — and this would be a  
matter of public [15] record — one of the  
items that they called [16] us on was that  
invoices are not stamped [17] after they  
been paid. This is the level of [18]  
administrative, sort of, problems that  
they [19] saw, and there were 10 other  
items that were [20] similar in the level of  
seriousness. I [21] think we had 2 con-  
tracts that were more [22] than \$25,000  
since 2000, and one of those

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[1] contracts did not go to the Board for [2]  
approval. So, I mean, you know, when  
you [3] talk about a start-up entity that  
seeks to [4] close the gap on special —  
not just special [5] education, but special  
education with this [6] group of kids —  
that has largely been [7] underserved and  
ignored for years and years [8] and years,  
you have a viable option in the [9]  
District. I would think people, schools,  
[10] boards would be flocking to stren-  
gthen this [11] effort and support the  
Center.

[12] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Part of the [13] prob-  
lem, I think unfortunately, in this [14]  
city, we're starting under a disadvantage.  
[15] People don't take charter schools  
serious to [16] begin with. They're not  
going to pay [17] attention to whether it is  
good or bad. [18] They might focus on it  
for a little bit. So [19] I think the climate  
has to change, because [20] otherwise  
we're not going to achieve the [21] goal  
where they see us as good institutions  
[22] that are doing the job that they  
expect it

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[1] to be doing. So, it's really discouraging  
[2] for us. I know, I've been at it for five [3]  
years and, you know, I've gotten good [4]  
publicity. Great, but I think people just [5]  
look at it and say, "Well, it's one person; [6]  
it's one school, it doesn't mean anything"

[7] **SPEAKER:** Right.

[8] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Instead of taking [9]  
things serious and say, "How is the  
charter [10] school movement con-  
tributing to the [11] betterment of the  
city, the lives of the [12] kids", and it is just  
going to make it [13] totally difficult —  
very difficult — [14] because it just seems  
that everywhere you [15] turn, you know,  
you don't have support, or [16] the  
perception is, like, we're going to be [17]  
here but not for long — or we're here  
and [18] we're taking away something —  
or we're here [19] but it's not — we're not  
for real. I [20] usually don't get discour-  
aged, I mean for [21] those of you who  
don't know me. I really [22] don't. I mean, I  
love my job; I have five

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[1] kids on my arm, just, like, I have, like I  
[2] feel very fortunate to do this job. But  
I'm [3] just really starting to be discour-  
aged, [4] because, you know, I think it's  
going to [5] take — I don't know —  
maybe, and [6] especially seeing the new  
administration — [7] administration and  
the Mayor, I respect them [8] greatly, but,  
you know, when I go to these [9] meetings  
and the push is for neighborhood [10]  
schools. What is that all about? I mean,  
[11] we're 30 something charter schools  
and [12] you're setting out a vision of the  
city and [13] how we're going to improve  
schools, not [14] taking into account the  
contribution we can [15] make. Not  
sending the message to the [16] families  
and the community, how important it [17]  
is have quality schools, for parents to  
have [18] a choice within public educa-  
tion. [19] Unfortunately those messages  
hurt us, or [20] helped us, and until those  
messages are [21] different, unfortunately  
the rest of the [22] city — or people who  
are influential are

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[1] not going to take it serious. Oh, I [2]  
can't — but actually, I'm also very [3]  
encouraged because I also know that the  
[4] business community is starting to take  
us [5] serious, and was really encouraging  
and [6] amazing to me, and I guess that's  
why you [7] begin to understand or have  
some — I don't [8] know if the word is  
respect — but, in the [9] business model  
how that party works best for [10] charter  
schools or can help charter schools [11]  
more. By that, I mean, for example, now  
[12] that the business community is  
saying, [13] "Okay, these charter schools  
are here. How [14] do we assist them? We  
see they have this [15] need, that need" —  
there's no way that [16] government can  
do that, or anything that has [17] to do  
with government policies — they pass  
[18] a law; they have a policy, but can care  
less [19] about how is it going to be  
implemented, and [20] to intervene to  
really fix things, and, you [21] know, I  
think that's what's working against [22]  
us. There is a creative policy in DC to let

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[1] charter school exist, but no one is  
paying [2] attention. What does this  
mean? How do we [3] make sure that they  
grow healthy? How do we [4] make sure  
that, you know, things that have [5] to be  
in place, are in place? We are out [6] here  
having to do it all ourselves, and it [7] just  
seems that is just not the way to do [8] it —  
it's not good business.

[9] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Susan how do  
[10] you —

[11] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** Well, I think, [12]  
and with the publicity, we've been pretty  
[13] fortunate with some positive pub-

licity, and [14] it's nothing that I'm doing per se, but I do [15] think that — I think we're outnumbered. I [16] mean, I think you have — you had a strong [17] teachers' union — the majority of kids and [18] their families are DC public school [19] supporters, and there is a fear of charter [20] schools in competition and the lack of [21] control over public schools with the charter [22] movement.

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[1] So, I can understand where some of [2] the resistance is coming from, but I do [3] think we are moving in the right direction. [4] I do think there's a lot more positive [5] articles coming out these days than [6] negative. We are starting to sort of turn a [7] corner. So I am becoming actually more [8] encouraged as we go along. In terms of who [9] we have reached out for support, we [10] actually — I know I've called a few of you [11] around the table — it's usually something [12] really small like: what food service are you [13] using or, you know, are you having problems [14] in your — and really small but —

[15] **MS. GALARCE:** But important.

[16] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** But important, [17] and turning to each other I think has been a [18] good resource, and something that KIPP and [19] my school has this KIPP Network of Schools [20] as well. I feel very fortunate to have the [21] connection with other KIPP schools in the [22] country, other start-up schools going

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[1] through the same things. What they do is, [2] sort of, have, like, a whole bunch of [3] consultants, and we just call when we need [4] something. I'll say, "I got a real estate [5] issue. Can somebody come out and sit in [6] this meeting so that we can talk about [7] interest rates and I will actually appear as [8] though I know what I'm talking about." You [9] know, and having some — someone have my [10] back on these issues. That's been really [11] helpful for us, and in not taking big steps [12] back, but making wrong choices and bad [13] decisions. It, sort of, saves us from [14] having to learn the hard way. I know we've [15] been able to do a lot with SEED and teacher [16] swapping and sharing curriculum, and, but [17] then when we call KIPP Network and say, "We [18] ought to re-write the eighth grade [19] curriculum. I need exit standards. Can you [20] choose someone that's really good at [21] curriculum that can come out and help us?" [22] So, that's been a great resource for us. I

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[1] would — it would be great if there's [2] something more local as well, because [3] sometimes it just a DC problem. DC has,

[4] sort of, a different set of rules. So if [5] there was some sort of a network, a [6] database, you know — I know we're all so [7] busy at the same time, and even coming to [8] this I'm so glad I'm here to talk with [9] everybody, but, you know, I'm also [10] thinking — okay, we got to go. So, a few [11] things I'd like to see with even FOCUS and [12] the Charter Resource Center — I think that [13] they both have strengths. But I also think [14] that they're not on the same page with each [15] other which we pay for as charter schools. [16] We have two organizations that, sort of, [17] have different philosophies about how to [18] approach charter school issues. I respect [19] both organizations, and I've turned to both [20] for different reasons. But it would be [21] great if they would get on the same page, [22] and then include some of the other stuff

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[1] that maybe — I have resources through the [2] KIPP Network, it would be great if all charter [3] schools had those same resources.

[4] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Just because I'm [5] clueless, what's the difference in their [6] view? As a research matter, I want to be [7] able to look back and say, "Okay, we've got [8] a dysfunction here in the service area". [9] Can you — do you mind going on record with [10] reference to what that is?

[11] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** I would say FOCUS [12] has a more active aggressive approach, and [13] they're doing a lot more with, like, [14] legislation and making sure that if they say [15] we get 1500 for our facility allowance, it [16] doesn't drop down to 1200. They, sort of, [17] are willing to, kind of, do whatever it [18] takes and make waves, possibly irritate city [19] officials —

[20] **FEMALE SPEAKER:** hope so.

[21] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** Whereas, the [22] resource center has a much more — I think

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[1] that they tend to say, "How can we help [2] you?" This is the situation, how can we [3] help you through this? If you want some [4] teacher training, can we help you with [5] workshops? They're more of a support [6] network, and I also think, if a parent calls [7] and says, "Do you know a great charter [8] school for ninth grade?" I direct them to [9] the Charter Resource Center, then tell them, [10] you know, who to call, and stuff like that. [11] So, I use them more — more on a parent side [12] and then the FOCUS group I use more for, "We [13] need money; what happened to this?" — [14] political stuff. I think both approaches

[15] have, you know — are worth, you know, [16] looking into, but they — but I wish they [17] just got along better and realize how much [18] it would benefit us if they were supportive [19] of each other, not just professionally, but [20] actually mean it. I think, and I've talked [21] to both Robert and then Shirley about [22] getting on the same page. They — they're

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[1] interested, but —

[2] **MS. GOUBOURN:** They'll not [3] change. and I think it was more [4] recognition, more wanting to be recognized [5] as the association helping charter schools. [6] You know, I think they're doing it because [7] they also want to help and they're seeking [8] funds. So, that plays a part. So I think, [9] part of the conflict is, you know, "How can [10] I show that I am doing more than you are, [11] and how can I show that I'm doing more?" [12] That's what I perceive. Just personalities [13] I think [14] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** I think the [15] resource center, the Charter Resource [16] Center, is making efforts to change what [17] they're doing, too, and try to support the [18] schools.

[19] **MS. HERR:** The Nexus.

[20] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** With this Nexus [21] Approach. It's a new thing that they're [22] trying. I also think FOCUS is a — supports

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[1] all charter schools, regardless of [2] performance, test scores or anything else, [3] which I think that, you know, there's a need [4] for that as well. Especially, when a lot of [5] the information that is being provided is [6] incorrect. I can understand when — why, [7] when people are reading the article on the [8] same paper, you tend to believe the stuff [9] that's in the papers. So, that is — it is [10] very frustrating when that information is [11] incorrect, and it's really damaging.

[12] **MS. HERR:** It is.

[13] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** Not just to your [14] school, but we take a hit for that in every [15] single school. Every hit sets us all back. [16] So, I think, every good thing sets us all up [17] a little bit, too. But I do think that the [18] resource center having some unity with FOCUS [19] would really be beneficial for everybody.

[20] **MS. ALLEN:** Do you think that [21] policy makers or people you need to [22] influence, or people who can do something

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[1] for you outside of your support [2] organizations, would warm better to one [3] organization? I mean do you think that [4] honestly, in what you're talking about,



when [5] you think about how things could be [6] different, do you think that it's a matter [7] of maybe just fixing those and getting an [8] association running, or do you think some [9] were — what you're talking about is a trend [10] everywhere first of all. Now that, that [11] you're not alone. A and B, a lot of people [12] are doing programs because they can get [13] money, and then they exist, as opposed to [14] what do you need; how do we set something [15] up? So, I guess where I'm going with this [16] is — if you could design something — I [17] know you're in middle, so I'm not talking [18] about the association per se — but if you [19] could design the new infra-structure for the [20] city, would it be all these different [21] providers that were just servicing you?

[22] MS. HERR: Well, I think — I mean

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[1] the point about, you know, the difference of [2] views — and I think association aside, I [3] mean, I think, the association is one [4] approach. But I actually don't think it is [5] enough, because I think what you need is — [6] on something like the facilities and all — [7] and to me that's fine for an organization [8] like FOCUS to have a political agenda and to [9] really push that. But, it would be really [10] helpful if FOCUS wasn't the only entity [11] making that point. If policy makers were [12] hearing it from FOCUS, from the resource [13] center, from the chartering authorities, [14] from, sort of, everybody, from individual [15] school leaders and if there were —

[16] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: What about from [17] parents?

[18] MS. HERR: From parents, from an [19] organized for both parents, but just, sort [20] of, across the board and that it was a [21] unified message and that everybody felt like [22] it was their message to get across.

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[1] Because, what happens now is, you know, if, [2] I mean, — I think a lot of us just let [3] FOCUS carry the water on issues like that. [4] I mean, it is a difference in mission, but [5] it wouldn't — you know, you wouldn't have [6] to switch your mission around and say, "All [7] right, we're not going to do technical [8] support anymore; we're just going to do [9] advocacy, but we're giving you technical [10] support". But when we need it, we're going [11] to make that phone call. We're going to get [12] the business community involved in this, [13] too. So that it isn't just, sort of, one [14] voice that's really easy to ignore, on some [15] of these really critical political issues. [16] Because no one has time for it. That's one [17] of the problems with advocacy. Then

we [18] wonder what we're risking by being really [19] vocal. So, it's very comfortable to let — [20] you know, you kind of want to push it all [21] off and say, "Okay, well, they're down there [22] testifying and we can stay back and worry

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[1] about, you know, the next crisis building [2] But I — that's one of the things I see with [3] the different, you know, — I think having [4] multiple organizations could be good if they [5] were all reinforcing each other and kind of [6] getting the message out.

[7] FEMALE SPEAKER: Right.

[8] MS. HERR: That that could [9] actually be strong. But, the way that it's [10] set up right now, it isn't.

[11] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Patricia: first [12] here, last to come.

[13] MS. GALARCE: Let's see, where do [14] I start? We — we go also to FOCUS and the [15] Center for support. We also use the [16] Cooperative for special ed. support. We, [17] started very, very small with 35 [18] students and 5 faculty, and now we are [19] at 208 — 40 faculty, so all of a sudden, [20] we're not a family any longer. We're [21] becoming an organization, and it — and [22] we're needing more help. So, what we have

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[1] is — we use different consultants, computer [2] consultant. We have different people to do [3] different things, but it's getting bigger [4] and it's less — it's harder. You know, the [5] building and the growth and every going. We [6] just hired someone — and I'm hoping — I'm [7] not sure that it's going to work — from the [8] business community, as our new director of [9] operations, to take, you know, kind of, to [10] help, you know, as we go through our audits.

[11] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: You advertised [12] in the paper?

[13] MS. GALARCE: The Washington Post. [14] Yeah. I don't know if it's going to work or [15] not. To be honest, has no idea about [16] education, but does know how to run a [17] building and keep our budget and — well, [18] we'll see. So, that's where I get that, you [19] know, we're no longer a family. We're [20] becoming too big now. Our human resources, [21] we can't just call the Washington Council [22] and go, "Oh, I need to add someone new". I

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[1] mean, it's — everything gets more [2] complicated to make it.

[3] MS. GOUBOURN: But it tells you [4] the difference of approaches. Up to now, I [5] have not hired a consultant. You know, I [6] pretty much — either I try —

[7] MS. GALARCE: Do you have your own [8] accountant?

[9] MS. GOUBOURN: We — I hire — [10] well, an accountant, but I don't want to [11] call him a consultant. But if, you know, I [12] try to again reach out to people that know. [13] It's just because, maybe it's — it's a [14] financial commitment, and I, you know, [15] thinking do I have someone or do I hire an [16] extra teacher? You know, those kinds of [17] decisions, and what I try to do is — not [18] that I don't like, I trust consultants, or [19] don't like them — but, no, no, it's just [20] that when you're experiencing — and you're [21] evolving and it's so much change and, you [22] know, decisions have to be made at the

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[1] moment. If you hire a consultant for this, [2] by the time, you know, a month later, two [3] months later, there are other issues that [4] you have to deal with. The approach that I [5] have used is really to try to find very, [6] very — and all of us do, I'm not saying [7] that the rest of the schools don't — very [8] talented people that are willing to learn [9] quickly, new things. Just sort of, like, my [10] chief financial officer — you, oh, no, [11] she's not here — you guys might know her, [12] Susan Flora, she's been with me; she's a [13] Teach For America, great, went to Johns [14] Hopkins, got a Master's Degree in [15] Administration. She's done an excellent — [16] and she's been with me now four years. She [17] had to learn a lot of this stuff. She's [18] better than the accountant that we hired [19] too. I mean, she's checking the [20] accountant's job. You know, the budget, all [21] those things — I have to learn them myself [22] with the help of the board of — my chair of

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[1] the board has been, like I said, that's the [2] person that has guided us the most in terms [3] of budget. So I think it just varies from [4] school to school, and how you — you know, [5] so I think that's why the challenge. Do you [6] to create an institution that provides [7] technical help? It's just — it will be [8] very difficult to work. Because, it's each [9] one of us are at a different place and role [10] in the approaches we use are very different.

[11] MS. HERR: I guess one of the — [12] one of the things that we found starting up [13] and continue going is: kind of — I guess I [14] would say it look — kind of a sense of [15] secrecy mentality out there — that you [16] were, kind of, if you could make it — if [17] you could get over all these hurdles, [18] including, you know, the business side and [19] the facilities side, and work out all these [20] problems then you, kind of, deserve to run a [21] school — and otherwise, you didn't. So,

[22] even to the point where, you know, really

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[1] the little things that just seemed like at [2] the beginning it was really — and other [3] schools were really helpful, but it was just [4] like, very difficult.

[5] **MS. GALARCE:** You were on your [6] own.

[7] **MS. HERR:** You really were on your [8] own, and to, so, I guess our perception is [9] it seems like there is a lot of re-invention [10] of the wheel going on out there.

[11] **FEMALE SPEAKER:** Absolutely.

[12] **MS. HERR:** For no good reason, [13] because it isn't really a test.

[14] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** which wheel [15] being reinvented.

[16] **MS. HERR:** Like, you know, things [17] that, you know, —

[18] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Sorry, just a [19] second.

[20] **RECORDER:** I'm sorry, but I just [21] can't get more than one person talking [22] at a time. Sorry.

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[1] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Okay. Well, [2] that was Patricia interrupting Ann; me [3] interrupting, Tom Healey interrupting Ann, [4] and Ann responding.

[5] **RECORDER:** I'm sorry.

[6] **MS. HERR:** I think the business [7] things, and just, you know, management [8] things, that there's a lot of — it doesn't [9] have to be this hard — or it shouldn't have [10] to be this hard. Even things that I thought [11] would be fairly straightforward, like, last [12] year, we were trying to get information [13] about — and it sounds like this came up [14] before — so, I apologize if I'm repeating, [15] but trying to find comparative information [16] about principal salaries, and calling all [17] the different organizations and not having [18] the DC Principal Schedule handy. But, you [19] know, no one could give me that, and I ended [20] up getting it from DCPS, after awhile. But, [21] that just surprised me. I thought that [22] would be there, and we ended up doing our

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[1] own research to get, sort of, the regional [2] from Fairfax County, Arlington County and to [3] get that, but that just seemed like it [4] should exist somewhere, that you could make [5] a phone call and just get it. So our board [6] ended up doing that research. But, you [7] know, little things like that.

[8] **MS. GALARCE:** you go.

[9] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** It's as simple as [10] a data base, so I don't even think that

[11] we're — we're even asking for, you know, [12] world peace. I mean, it's really, you [13] know — and my calls are, you know, what, [14] who are your food vendors — have you ever [15] used somebody that didn't work — I mean, [16] it's as simple as that — just to, I mean, [17] really — and we do reinvent the wheel. We [18] just did it right after you guys had [19] invented it, and, you know, we just did the [20] exact same thing. I called around to every [21] single school, you know, "Do you have a [22] cleaning service that you like, don't

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[1] like?" —

[2] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** An eBay for [3] charter schools.

[4] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** Yes.

[5] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** There a person [6] we like, we really don't — they sit [7] there — I recommend them or don't.

[8] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Yes. I think we're [9] ready to do that. I think all of us can — [10] you know, I think, those of us that are the [11] pioneers, you can say, you know, sort of, [12] first group to open how they — most of us [13] are still here been through a lot of pain. [14] But I'm optimistic that the ones coming [15] behind us will not have — should not have [16] to experience that, in that we can share [17] that knowledge. I think, you know, because [18] we've been through it, we could put [19] something together so there are short cuts [20] for the people who are planning to open, and [21] they can dedicate themselves to really doing [22] the best job they can do right from the

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[1] beginning, as opposed to, you know, the [2] things that we had to experience and learn [3] the hard way. I think we're ready to —

[4] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** That's a great [5] point, because you are the first generation, [6] and as you look forward there's going to be [7] other generations joining you. One of [8] things that — what you're creating today, [9] or what can be created today from the [10] support areas, and what's going to make [11] their lives — second generation or the [12] third generation — hopefully much easier [13] again.

[14] To go to Wendell's question [15] though, on communications: When someone has [16] a valid — what they think is a valid [17] argument — the point of DC Charter School [18] per head allocation's largest in the nation. [19] I guess I can turn it right back at you. [20] Wendell, how do you answer that when someone [21] brings that at you?

[22] **MR. BUTLER:** Well, first, it's

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[1] just been pointed out to me that it isn't [2] the largest —

[3] **MS. HERR:** Second largest —

[4] **MR. BUTLER:** It's high by school [5] standards. I answer in the following way: [6] I think most jurisdictions set their [7] allocations based on their historical per [8] pupil spending for that district. I would [9] assume — I don't know the DC school budget, [10] but I would assume it has 75,000 kids in DC, [11] and you have a \$750 million school budget, [12] and you divide it by that and you come up [13] with a \$10,000 allocation. What that [14] doesn't account for are the kinds of things [15] that you're hearing this morning. You — it [16] might cost DCPS, for example, \$10,000 to [17] educate a child — just pick a number out of [18] the sky. But that number has been arrived [19] at, or achieved, after years and years and [20] years of creating infra-structure that we're [21] now developing. So, as Irasema said, the, [22] sort of, pioneers in this movement are

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[1] spending a lot of time that — searching [2] that Ann talked about for comparative salary [3] rates. If you're part of — you know, [4] that's manpower lost, that's not accounted [5] for in her budget. If you're part DCPS, you [6] have the manual and you pick it up and you [7] look at it. In our case, I have a contact [8] with an HR firm. For the first two or three [9] years I did this myself, but now I have the [10] human resources firm that I pay [11] about \$100,000 a year. When I have a salary [12] question, I call them. When I have [13] somebody to — when I hire somebody now — [14] we don't — we no longer worry about [15] background checks, police checks, drug [16] checks, employment verification — I turn [17] that over to a firm. But, how do you build [18] that into a per pupil allocation? There was [19] nothing in my per pupil allocation that [20] foresaw the need for me to hire an HR firm. [21] It was assumed that I would do HR in some [22] way. You know, there's a facilities

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[1] allocation, but there is no — I mean, that [2] is all melded into the per pupil allocation. [3] So while I'm trying to educate a child [4] within my allocation, there are also a lot [5] of things that were not thought about in the [6] development. Obviously, that allocation [7] wound up as being HR.

[8] **MS. ALLEN:** Can I just ask a [9] question effective organizations [10] anticipate customer's needs and bill them. [11] In a way, Susan's referring to the KIPP [12] Network nationally. In a way that sounds

[13] like what an effective organization does, [14] they staff a group of people who are there, [15] so that she can call upon them, or perhaps [16] they even tell her. "We're having a [17] principals' workshop this weekend in Puerto [18] Rico and we get you there." Should you be [19] having a discussion or should you be [20] thinking about what it would be like in a [21] world where, when you enter the box, Wendell [22] or Irasema, there is somebody there with a

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[1] check list.

[2] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Yes. I think [3] that's what I was referring to when I said [4] earlier, that, unfortunately, we have to [5] depend on the government to do that, because [6] we're public schools and receive public [7] funding. That was my point earlier, that, [8] because they're not taking it — taking us [9] serious or really whatever the word is. To [10] me it seems obvious to me that if I'm a city [11] official and I see that I passed a law to [12] have charter school success and I [13] understand, or want them to succeed, then I [14] shouldn't have — be allocating that [15] additional money to see that that network [16] can be created. You know, it should be that [17] way, not us having to do it. Because, it [18] costs money. A lot of the things that [19] people are saying that they do — I have to [20] do it myself, because again, I think to [21] myself, God, I cannot afford to pay — and I [22] run the risk that I might make a bad

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[1] decision or whatever. But, you know, you — [2] it really — that's what it comes down to. [3] You want most of your money to go directly [4] to the — you, it has to, because you're [5] doing so much. To me, it, you know, it [6] just — it has to be a push for the public [7] officials to take serious the need to either [8] give us the additional money so we take care [9] of it, or create a way where we have access [10] to that. You know, what's really [11] frustrating to me, for all of us, when we're [12] writing grants to try to seek the additional [13] money, you know, — I'm writing two grants [14] this week, and I'm writing why Nexus, you [15] know, what are your challenges you need [16] one — accomplish whatever, and I'm thinking [17] to myself, Jesus, I just don't believe that [18] we don't have a way to generate profit, or, [19] a way to have additional money so I can do [20] all these things. I have to go out [21] begging — expect the city to give me an [22] allocation that I need — foundations —

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[1] whatever. I call it begging, because that's [2] what it is. But, I'm thinking to

myself, [3] why is that there is not a way for us to [4] generate some way, shape or form — I guess [5] we're not businesses, but it comes down to [6] that. You realize you need all this [7] additional funding that no one is [8] projecting, no one is taking serious — the [9] people that you would expect — you know, [10] Someone like, you know, you have an [11] institution like the KIPP Academies and [12] they like you said, they're projecting — [13] they, why not continue doing the service [14] that they want to do. They invest money in [15] the training and the da-da-da, you know, [16] Edison School's another example. But, a lot [17] of us, like myself, and a lot of them — we [18] have similar stories. We're out there on [19] our own.

[20] **MS. ALLEN:** But why haven't — but [21] why haven't you demanded that the other — [22] the groups that exist — you've all talked

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[1] about groups that exist and being helpful [2] and supportive, and yet, you're doing an [3] awful lot of stuff, and notwithstanding the [4] fact that there seems to be agreement that [5] they're very helpful and they're the only [6] people that have been there for you — have [7] any of you demanded that these groups, that [8] are representing you, provide those [9] services?

[10] **MS. GOUBOURN:** But, I'm — I'm not [11] sure that you can demand it, and I'm not [12] sure that they have the resources to deliver [13] all of that. Because, I mean —

[14] **FEMALE SPEAKER:** Because they're [15] begging too. [16] (Laughter)

[17] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Yeah. You know, [18] each institution, we need — I mean, if you [19] want to go as human resources aspect of it [20] — I mean, they can provide information, [21] but, you literally are asking some [22] investment of a person that can work, sort

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[1] of what she's saying. There's no way the [2] FOCUS or resource center can address the [3] needs of 34 schools, and they have 2 or 3 [4] people, you know, to do it. And —

[5] **MS. GALARCE:** Without imposing [6] which with what you need.

[7] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Exactly. We want [8] to be unique. So it's not like there's some [9] model that it fits. You know, at the [10] moment, they might think, "Okay, this is [11] needed for the, you know, the charter [12] schools need this", but — maybe not at that [13] moment of that time. It's not —

[14] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** But isn't [15] accounting universal here? I mean, sal-

ary [16] data is universal. Aren't there certain [17] things that could functionally be imposed [18] upon? I mean, treasury and control for any [19] system are the exact same functions. [20] Somebody might choose to spend things [21] different ways, but the actual reporting of [22] that is the exact same, isn't it?

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[1] **MS. GOUBOURN:** I think it works [2] best when you have it internally. I think [3] it just — when you have to expect someone [4] else to do it, you know, they have to [5] understand your organization and they have [6] to function within, because that means that [7] you have to allocate time to meet, to [8] explain. They're not — they're gone, and, [9] you know, I think for a lot of us, at least [10] for me, it just creates more work. It's —

[11] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** How about fund [12] raising?

[13] **MS. GOUBOURN:** We do it ourselves. [14] We learn it on our own way, and hope and [15] pray that we learn it and can do it, because [16] we don't have the money to pay someone else [17] to do it. It's — I don't know that it's [18] realistic if you ask the resource center or [19] a particular group to do it. Even if you [20] were to, again, it would be very difficult [21] if they're going to be able to do it for 36 [22] charter schools, or that, you know, you can

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[1] demand that FOCUS — and then they have [2] their own way of doing things too, that many [3] times might not — that won't match with the [4] way you see things. For a lot of us — [5] because you have to figure out a lot of the [6] stuff on your own — your staff, the climate [7] of your school, your approaches, how you go [8] about how you build your budget, how you, [9] you know, interact with people, how you get [10] certain things done, it varies. It varies [11] on the approach that you use, and I don't [12] always feel comfortable with consultants and [13] all its stones. I don't always feel, you [14] know, so it's just really, really varies. [15] Maybe, we're — maybe we're missing [16] something. Maybe there is a way to do our [17] work where it doesn't have to be that way. [18] But maybe not. Maybe it's just the nature [19] of charter schools, that we're given the [20] conditions to really be extremely creative [21] and make things happen, and, you know, [22] because of the different missions that you

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[1] have and focuses. Like, in our school, [2] public policy is our focus. So that changes [3] how we do things — you know, each one of [4] us. So, it would be

just extremely [5] difficult, although there are some universal [6] things that apply to us. I guess what I — [7] what I think is the next five years I think [8] is going to be a little bit different for [9] the ones coming behind us. Because I think, [10] through the association, we're trying to [11] build — or any effort where we come [12] together — and collect that information to [13] make it available to other people. I think [14] that's what's going to help. It's not what [15] outside organizations think we need, but us [16] coming together and really taking the [17] time — and I think that's also a challenge. [18] I wish I can help, and a lot of us think, [19] "Okay, I got —", I wish I had time to put [20] stuff together so other people can benefit [21] from it. When? How? That's not, you know, [22] my priority necessarily. I don't know that

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[1] I would do it if I get the additional [2] money — maybe, if I can get additional [3] money so I can hire a principal, so I can be [4] freed up to do it. Maybe, but — no one is [5] thinking that, no one is saying, "Let's [6] invest two or three — hopefully two or [7] three million dollars." So that could help. [8] So, the people that are running the schools [9] can have time to come together and create [10] the manual, create the systems, so other, [11] you know, operators can do it. I think this [12] is what it comes down to. You cannot depend [13] on outside organizations to do that [14] necessarily, because the experiences that [15] we've been through are so unique that only [16] ourselves can put them together as a guide.

[17] **MS. HERR:** Well, with fundraising [18] for instance, I mean, you mentioned [19] fundraising, and I — I mean, I think that [20] there's been talk of, sort of, what kind of [21] collective fundraising could be done, and it [22] kind of doesn't work, because you end up

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[1] with an equity problem of — well, both of [2] effectiveness of — can something like the [3] resource center really fundraise on behalf [4] of 39 really different schools — does [5] anybody want to give money to that kind of a [6] loosely defined thing? Then, a lot of [7] schools would feel like they could do it [8] better themselves. That's kind of the [9] tension all across all these different [10] issues, is, on any given thing, whether it's [11] accounting or not, there's going to be [12] someone that really thinks they can do it [13] better and cheaper themselves, and they're [14] going to be right in some cases. So, it's [15] setting up those structures that are useful [16] to everybody or available to everybody, but [17] aren't

imposed on everybody so that there's [18] still that autonomy to, sort of, do things [19] better, faster, or more efficiently, which [20] is kind of what charter schools are supposed [21] to be about. But, I think what a lot of us [22] are talking about here is, it's really hard

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[1] to get a good focus on what the true [2] administrative costs are of running a [3] school. The idea of the per pupil [4] formula — and, you know, it's true — I [5] mean, in DC we're really, really fortunate, [6] because we do have the same amount as the [7] public schools, and that's not true in the [8] very many places. Usually it's a portion, [9] it's 80 percent or it's some fraction of [10] what the other schools get in a lot of [11] jurisdictions. So, we are funded on a one [12] for one basis. But that's not to say that [13] that's necessarily enough. But, you know, [14] that's an open ended question about how much [15] funding is enough, and what does it cost to [16] educate. But, what we really — I, you [17] know, I think everyone comes into this [18] wanting to put all those resources into the [19] classroom. You know, that's what you want [20] to do.

[21] **MS. GALARCE:** Exactly.

[22] **MS. HERR:** Then you start to step

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[1] back and you realize, "Oh, well, you know, I [2] need this, and this, and this, and this". I [3] mean, in our school it's still functioning [4] with a really, really lean administrative [5] team. We have a principal and we have a [6] three-quarter time business manager, and the [7] board does everything else. But that's [8] temporary, because the board is going to [9] burn out, and all those volunteers are going [10] to go away and do other things. So at some [11] point, we're going to be at that situation [12] that you're talking about where it's not a [13] family anymore. You need to have staff that [14] draw not insignificant salaries to do things [15] like manage your building. That pulls [16] resources out of the classroom that, sort [17] of, was the premise of the whole thing. I [18] don't think, you know, I don't — the idea [19] is that charter schools could be more [20] efficient, and that it would cost less to [21] run a charter school. I don't think anybody [22] really knows the answer to that — whether

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[1] the overhead costs are less or are they [2] just — is it just more effected.

[3] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** I think too, with [4] the — with answering the original [5] question — which is why DC is getting so [6] much more money than other charter schools [7] in other districts. I

think, DC, and having [8] looked at all the other KIPP schools, and [9] having been into their sites and seeing what [10] their problems are and stuff — I really [11] find that we are really independent of the [12] school system. Which just means that it is [13] going to be a little bit more expensive, and [14] all the things that we've been talking [15] about. You know, I have colleagues that are [16] running schools in North Carolina. Well, [17] you know, they — their — maybe their [18] facilities are provided; maybe they don't do [19] their own human resources. It all has to [20] all go through the district. I mean, you [21] know, and I personally — I like the more [22] independence the better, in my opinion, and

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[1] I don't want to have a DCPS do our human [2] resources. That's the whole reason we [3] started charter schools in the first place. [4] I don't want them telling me, you know, [5] which audit, this and that and this and [6] that. But it does come with a price tag, [7] of, sort of, the freedom to hire or pay a [8] principal whatever I want, you know, or a [9] teacher. Like, that does come with the [10] baggage. That is usually more work to do [11] the research and get it so it's good for [12] your own school. So, I shy away, too, from [13] getting in some sort of oversight, some sort [14] of organization where they're going to [15] start, you know, saying, "Well, here are [16] three human resources groups that you can [17] choose from". You know, we don't want that.

[18] **MS. ALLEN:** But, what — what if [19] you had — and part of this is — I'm [20] hearing that you are thinking in terms of [21] what you have now, and what their [22] constraints are. But, what if you flip it

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[1] and begin to build a vision that says, "We, [2] the charter schools, determine what it is we [3] want; we hire people to serve us — serve us [4] in that way, so for example, in a [5] fundraising it may be an eBay data base like [6] Tom's talking about, with a list of 300 [7] people who've already been researched, and [8] what they're willing to accept applications [9] for, and when their deadlines are, and who [10] the contact is, and you had a person at this [11] new place that basically said, "Ann, I've [12] got four that fit your profile. I'm happy [13] to make a call on your behalf but here is [14] the information." That may save you a ton [15] of time. Or, instead, here's three human [16] resources saying, "Here's everyone that's [17] doing human resources in the DC area, what [18] they provide and who's currently using them, [19] and we've kind of rated them.

[20] MS. GOUBOURN: Jeanne, I don't [21] think we're saying we — that would not be [22] helpful — I think, for me, what we're

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[1] saying, we should not have to pay for it. I [2] guess that's what I'm saying, because if [3] you're saying —

[4] MS. ALLEN: Forget that pays [5] for it.

[6] MS. GOUBOURN: I think it would be [7] great, but it comes down to, you know, we [8] need it in our schools. I think a lot of [9] those services will be more beneficial that [10] we get the extra money to do it — I don't [11] want to say, our way, but — to do it — you [12] know, I guess, I don't want to say, our [13] way — you know what I mean? It's just — [14] really, what it will help me — I'm assuming [15] all of you worries — the additional funding [16] to do it ourselves.

[17] MS. ALLEN: Right. But let's say [18] that's not an option. That's not an option [19] until you all are so strong that you can go [20] get more money. So, in interim, how do you [21] get that second generation of people that [22] Tom mentioned, to be even be interested in

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[1] doing what you're doing? Because, when they [2] come and talk to, you present such [3] obstacles —

[4] (Laughter)

[5] MS. GOUBOURN: No, actually, [6] they — I think, I know I get people to call [7] and they come and, you know, I think, maybe [8] work out even more motivated to want to do [9] it, because they see they'll be achieving [10] that. So, yeah, I'm just being honest, if [11] something like that were to be formed, I [12] don't know that I would have too much use [13] from it, you know. You know, and again, it [14] depends on — I'm on my fifth year, my [15] issues are growth; my issues are, you [16] know —

[17] MS. ALLEN: So then, why do you [18] like an association? What do you —

[19] MS. GOUBOURN: I think the [20] association allows to come together as a [21] unit. I think that is really, really, [22] really important. For us to have a voice.

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[1] With — I think, we will gain the respect, [2] we will gain influence, we will be perceived [3] as a serious, you know, group. I don't care [4] who's the chair or who's the president. The [5] fact that we have an association and we have [6] a person and we all say, "You can represent [7] us at the hearings to do this." I think [8] people will see that we have — there's [9] powers in numbers, and right now, we've been [10] doing it all on our own, and I think that's [11] part of what's

hurting us, that they're [12] not — you know, I know that all of us have [13] been to those meetings, and they've been [14] very positive meetings, and very encouraging [15] because we really feel that, as a group, we [16] have to form an association that, you know, [17] includes, I mean, I don't — I've been at [18] those meetings. They have been very [19] productive, and, you know, I usually — I'm [20] reluctant to give more time to something [21] because of my responsibilities as a mom and [22] principal. But this is something that I'm

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[1] very encouraged, and I will try to do more [2] to make sure that the association works out. [3] Too, the association that you can see that [4] as a group you decide: these are issues for [5] school senate — let's see who out there, we [6] can contract out. I think that's the idea. [7] I think that's how, I think, we would like [8] to see that happen, as opposed to [9] organizations just starting up at the ground [10] saying, "We're here to serve you". We're [11] saying, "Okay, but we don't know you — [12] don't even know what you're talking about".

[13] MS. ALLEN: But if you help create [14] that organization and determine what it has, [15] and what should offer, and let's say you [16] didn't have a limit to what you could [17] as a budget —

[18] MS. GOUBOURN: That would be [19] useful for sure, but it — we're not there [20] yet, and, you know, we want go through the [21] process to determine that together, and to, [22] you know, have the exchange of saying,

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[1] "Yeah. We understand that's something, [2] because we went through it. Yeah. We can [3] see what might be what that school needs or [4] this school — we can, kind of, know what [5] they're talking about. They can have a [6] conversation with us and, you know, half an [7] hour, we say, "Okay. Yeah. We understand". [8] As opposed to totally outside agency trying [9] to figure out, you know, what we're all [10] about, and what the needs are, so, there's a [11] benefit, I think.

[12] MR. BUTLER: Is there any [13] relationship between this effort that we're [14] going through and what the association has [15] been doing — the association.

[16] MS. ALLEN: Yes, I mean, to the [17] extent that we try to be helpful with our [18] CER hat on to the folks organizing that and [19] giving them ideas about what's happening [20] elsewhere, and some things to think about.

[21] MR. BUTLER: The reason I raise [22]

the issue —

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[1] MS. ALLEN: The reason I'm raising [2] that is because if you need to influence the [3] development of the association in a bigger [4] or different way based on some of the [5] comments here, you may want to think about [6] other recommendations to make.

[7] MR. BUTLER: Well, a —

[8] MS. ALLEN: But, that's just — [9] I'm throwing that out, because what I'm [10] hearing is a lot — what I'm hearing is a [11] lot of different things about different [12] groups and different services.

[13] MR. BUTLER: Right. But, the [14] reason I raise the issue is — we've spent a [15] lot of time over the last month with the [16] majority of the charter schools in the city [17] in a facilitative manner identifying the [18] issues that cut across all charter schools. [19] They address all of these issues and more. [20] While I'm willing to attend any meeting at [21] any time to try to advance this cause, I [22] want to make sure that we're not stumbling

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[1] over ourselves with too many different [2] forums on the same issues. We — the [3] association has just pulled together the [4] first draft of its strategy, and I [5] commend — if you haven't seen that, Colleen [6] has it provided to you. I would recommend [7] that you take a look at that, because if [8] these things aren't being plugged into — my [9] sense is that we have discussed these [10] issues. You know, you know, in a wide [11] ranging forum, spending a lot of time. I'm [12] pleased to participate in this one. But as [13] somebody — as, I think, Susan said [14] earlier — you can only attend so many [15] meetings. You have to get back where the [16] rubber meets the road and see what the kids [17] are doing. So, I just want to make sure [18] that those of you who are putting together [19] the events or the opportunities are [20] coordinating your efforts so that we don't [21] have to go down the same road so many times.

[22] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Wendell, it's my

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[1] understanding that this is to be [2] complementary too, and to really try and, [3] you know, jumping off point from whatever [4] that is going on with the association, which [5] Ann is attending the meetings on, and I've [6] not any connection to. This research for [7] CER is really to be able to say, "Are they [8] effective? How can they be more effective [9] here in DC?" — and, although the [10] association is being built and as the

[11] association is going forward — the purpose [12] of this is not to say, "Ah, you know, what's [13] the deal with the association?" The purpose [14] here is to say, "CER has an ability to reach [15] out and be able to solve some particular [16] needs for its schools. Now, how should the [17] finite resources that CER has be allocated [18] and work in the biggest affect make — work [19] where they make the biggest affect, which —

[20] MS. ALLEN: Wendell, on a national [21] level, as well as locally, we've been [22] involved from the very beginning for Fight

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[1] For Children was even convening those [2] meetings, and how they tried to influence [3] how to do it. One of things that you will [4] be happy to know is that we're the first [5] people who stood up and said, "This can't go [6] on unless you talk to the schools." So, [7] part of the reason you're in those meetings [8] is because I was in meetings in October [9] saying, "You can't do this without schools." [10] We had the same problem in Indiana and [11] California, so we're delighted that you're [12] having those meetings. But, the issue that [13] you all have to have to, kind of, back up [14] and look at is that, both locally and [15] nationally, charter schools are not being [16] taken seriously, and much of what you want [17] and you need that you might get through your [18] association is not everything that we need [19] as a movement to advance. That larger [20] issues, coordination issues, issues of [21] communication, which may not be the things [22] you wake thinking about in your expertise

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[1] everyday, are something we wake up thinking [2] about everyday. When we have the [3] conversations with policy makers, or media, [4] or parents, we hear things that they're [5] not — that you all are not hearing, and we [6] know where the gaps are. So part of this [7] exercise is, as Tom says, complementary. [8] It's also, after we go through this and talk [9] to all the groups by the end of the day — [10] all the schools, you know, we're putting it [11] into a great big Cuisinart with our data on [12] Indiana and our data on California, and [13] eventually our data on the other states, and [14] saying, "What are the clear, concise [15] messages that are coming out?" I mean, [16] right now, from what I'm hearing, it is very [17] consistent with what we've heard elsewhere. [18] If there is any relationship at all to how [19] you all work here in terms of your [20] association, it might be, at this point, I [21] would just encourage you to think a lot [22] bigger than what's in that document

right

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[1] now. You've been invited, like other [2] states, to think big. The people who [3] haven't been successful in attracting [4] funding in other states are the people who [5] basically just try to design what they want [6] in their own little world. While I'm not [7] taking anything away from you individually as [8] schools and what you need, and you have your [9] act together more than some people, to put [10] it all into one frame and say, "As a charter [11] movement going forward, we think we should [12] have this representing us rather than [13] this — in that we sometimes come together [14] to coordinate." It's a different picture. [15] It's basically saying, "All those lobbies on [16] K Street and those trade associations that [17] are really successful, how do they do it, [18] versus, let's get the charters to stop [19] thinking small, and let's get them to think [20] really big." So, we're contributing to that [21] process and will continue to do so. But [22] what you're saying has a lot of relevance

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[1] even in a bigger way — down the line. [2] MR. BUTLER: Is there a corollary [3] effort — we're trying to get together as [4] schools and share our common concerns and [5] problems and issues? Is there a corollary [6] effort at the support level or is there [7] meeting — are there meetings going on [8] between CER and FOCUS and resource center [9] and other support groups in the city to — [10] so that they can try to speak with one voice [11] or a more powerful voice in support of the [12] movement.

[13] MS. ALLEN: I think that the [14] meetings that you're having are being viewed [15] as that, because that level — we're not [16] trying to — we're not going to set up [17] anything new. We have what we have. What [18] we do is strategic, capacity building and [19] national awareness for education reform. [20] What we're trying to do is bring more [21] education to that process in each place [22] that's doing it, as well as bring that

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[1] process bigger nationally so that people are [2] actually interested. In coming here, [3] working with you, supporting you, and [4] helping you. Right now look at DC in terms [5] of both a policy perspective, and new school [6] perspective, and a funding perspective. [7] They go, "This is the nation's capital; they [8] can't do any better than that?" There's a [9] lot of dysfunction; there's not a [10] coordinated effort; we don't hear a united [11] voice. You know, everything you're doing [12] has an im-

plication that's much bigger, not [13] just because you're DC, but part of it is [14] because you're DC. So, basically, all those [15] people are talking, which is wonderful. [16] They've all been in the same room for the [17] first time, many of them, in a long time to [18] try to figure out how to better coordinate. [19] The question is, is it a coordination effort [20] or is it trying to supplant what's happening [21] with some additional and new ideas. Once [22] again, you're working on it. But, nothing

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[1] like this — and, I'm the last person in the [2] world as are our facilitators informed us, [3] you know, that would throw people in a room [4] for naught. This is the kind of thing that [5] every level of communication you can have at [6] this point, is going to pay off in dividends [7] later on.

[8] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: To continue, I'm [9] sorry, we've already gone five minutes over, [10] and I don't want to take you guys much [11] longer.

[12] MS. ALLEN: It not as if we have [13] been just sitting here.

[14] MS. GOUBOURN: Hearing you gave us [15] some idea of things that are — we might [16] need, and maybe the way to get to some of [17] those answers, perhaps, grouping schools [18] differently — thinking you'd talk to [19] schools that have been in existence for one [20] year, and some of them that have been three [21] years and some that have been five years, [22] you're going to get different responses. I

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[1] think, it would be much easier to identify [2] the needs, and I think, that's what we're [3] missing. I think we need organizations that [4] say, "Okay, can we do the best job possible [5] for the schools that are — people that are [6] trying to start schools and what do they [7] need?" You know, for example, schools like [8] ours. I know that right now, what I hope and [9] I am in need of — some workshops, some [10] assistance in the strategic planning role. [11] That's unique to me and that's what I'm — [12] and I'm assuming for — and, I think —

[13] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: What I'd like to [14] do is go around the table. What you just [15] said is exactly what we need to close on, [16] what you can identify, the one thing that [17] you need the most, what is it? You know, [18] just so that we've got it on the record, [19] what it is and then it helps us in analysis [20] to be able to say, "Okay, we've got a [21] confluence on the need area of what it is." [22] For this, Iresema, starting with you and

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[1] then heading around the table towards Susan, [2] could you?

[3] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Sure. I would say [4] that my need, right now, is assistance on [5] how do I move forward to do a strategic [6] plan. How do I think of growth and what do [7] I need to take into consideration, and how [8] that is done — what is the process, and how [9] can I get help on that.

[10] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Thank you. [11] Susan?

[12] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** Yeah, I think it [13] is important to look at all the different [14] levels in the different schools, but not to [15] separate them. But, to actually take all [16] those ideas and build an organization that [17] supports all of them. You know, last year, [18] my issue was facility. You asked me, [19] "What's the problem?" Facility. This year, [20] transportation. It's absolutely, we need to [21] start — you know, we need to get a bus [22] service that serves charter schools. Once I

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[1] solve that it will be something totally [2] different. So even though you might be a [3] year or two older, and there's others that [4] are younger, all the needs, believe it or [5] not, are very similar and it's much of — [6] it's very much a cycle. I know what my [7] needs are going to be in a few years, [8] looking at you. I know where the people are [9] going to come from. That is something that [10] the Network has realized that this actually [11] isn't totally out-of-the-blue problems. [12] They're very much in growth, and I think, [13] you know, transportation for me is the hot [14] ticket. But, in reality, I totally support [15] something that you're doing. I hate not [16] having been at all these meetings, as I have [17] very small administrative staff as well. [18] But I do think we need to think big and we [19] need to think something that takes the [20] pressure off of us to coordinate it, and [21] just get the feedback. I know in the [22] Network it's a nuisance for me when they

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[1] call and say, "We need you to send us this, [2] and we need you send this and this." But I [3] do it, and it pays off for me later. It [4] needs — it's something we all kind of have [5] to commit to, so that we can help the [6] younger people, and that the older schools [7] can also say, "You know what, this worked [8] two or three years ago, but this is even [9] better that this new school is doing." So [10] we need to keep those ideas going. I [11] totally support the idea.

[12] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Toni?

[13] **MS. WEBB:** Well, I think that [14] there

is a great need to really, sort of, [15] take a critical look at the per pupil [16] allotment. Even though the, you know, this [17] is, you know, one of the highest allotments [18] in the nation, paradoxically, the greater [19] amount of service — services needed — the [20] less monies there are available. It appears [21] almost arbitrary in that, "Hey, let's toss [22] some money this way; hey, let's take money

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[1] here; let's put" —. We really need to look [2] at that, because what was happening is that [3] we're short changing our future. So —

[4] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Wendell?

[5] **MR. BUTLER:** Our greatest need is [6] to have an infra-structure that addresses [7] our need. The need changes from day to day. [8] One day it's transportation; and one day [9] it's food; one day it's teacher training; [10] the next day it's health care concerns; [11] parent involvement. But there's no infra- [12] structure to address any of those needs. [13] So, rather than my hiring firms to do HR, we [14] need to have an infra-structure that [15] addresses HR for all charter schools, in [16] addition to what public schools may provide [17] to us. So, it doesn't do any good to have [18] the need, unless somebody addresses it. I [19] think that's what this meeting is about, and [20] it should result in something positive.

[21] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Thank you. [22] Patricia?

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[1] **MS. GALARCE:** The thing that's [2] right in the top of mine is the "no child [3] left behind" legislation, and I have [4] fabulous educated trained teachers that are [5] not certified. How do I — I mean, [6] that's —

[7] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Has anyone ever [8] explained to everyone how "no child left [9] behind" is going to work?

[10] **MS. GALARCE:** FOCUS.

[11] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** FOCUS has. [12] Good. So you get teachers, but they're not [13] certified, so —

[14] **MS. ALLEN:** Does anyone work with [15] you to make you — come help you figure out [16] whether you're in compliance or how you can [17] compliance so that no one has to find that [18] out later? Anyone sat down and said, "that [19] you're no charter left behind person"?

[20] **MS. SCHAEFFLER:** Oh, no. Are you [21] kidding? Who would that be?

[22] **MS. GALARCE:** Then, I don't if

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[1] anyone else has tried to call DC public [2] schools to find good certification —

[3] **MS. GOUBOURN:** Josephine Baker, a [4] member of Charter School Board, I know she's [5] very active and she sometime tried to see, [6] for those of us who have been around longer [7] that the yearly progress — whatever that [8] is. You know, it's part of what we already [9] have in place, our accountability planning. [10] So, I'm just surprised that the DC Charter [11] School Board is taking on more of an active [12] role.

[13] **MS. ALLEN:** Just so you know [14] effective authorizers in states did that [15] advance stuff six weeks ago. They sat down. [16] They went through training; they went [17] through what it means for teachers; what it [18] means for your assessment; that's the kind [19] of thing that as a group you all may need.

[20] **MS. HERR:** But they haven't [21] explained it to us.

[22] **MS. ALLEN:** The answer to that is

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[1] they have not.

[2] **CHAIRMAN HAELEY:** Joanne.

[3] **MS. SALCIDO:** I think one of my — [4] facilities is huge for us. It just, we have [5] a charter goal of a thousand, and we're at [6] six hundred and we cannot grow anymore. [7] There are no facility possibilities for us. [8] The other one, I think, is, sort of, what [9] they're saying. It's an organizational [10] structure and strategy. Then I just, in [11] terms of what Jeanne said, I think that, you [12] know, I think I get so focused on what's [13] happening in my building and all of my [14] issues that I think I forget sometimes about [15] the bigger issue and the whole reform [16] movement, and I'm very concerned about that. [17] I don't know if there's a way to channel [18] more information, because I know in the [19] series of meetings that we've gone through [20] is, you know, with the love of children — [21] where'd we go — the things we just do with [22] claim —

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[1] **MS. ALLEN:** Pfifer —

[2] **MS. SALCIDO:** Pfifer children. [3] You know that was very formidable, because [4] you heard from business people and other [5] people that talked about the changes and [6] the, sort of a change in their focus, and [7] what their interest is, and I think that's [8] where you should, sort of, condigned some [9] enthusiasm and know what was going on, and [10] then have an impact. Because, I think, you [11] know, as I said, even listening to you, I'm [12] thinking, "Wow, there's a lot more happening [13] than I'm aware of. I'm just looking at one [14] little piece." So, if there's a way to [15] disseminate more information or to involve [16] us, we're very busy, but I think it's also [17]

very important.

[18] MS. GOUBOURN: Jeanne, one point [19] that I think we need help, and this was one [20] of my teachers that pointed it out. [21] Apparently, when we pay rent, we pay [22] property tax, because it is included in our

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[1] rent. Some — do you know — why should we [2] have to pay that? That's \$40,000 that I can [3] use to hire a teacher. So someone has to [4] help and look into that.

[5] MS. HERR: We tried. We drafted [6] arts — one of our lawyers drafted [7] legislation to make that not to — to exempt [8] charter schools from paying property tax to [9] the landlord, and it's still sitting over [10] there.

[11] MS. GOUBOURN: Someone has to help [12] push for those. You just imagine —

[13] MS. GALARCE: Exactly. Things [14] like that —

[15] MS. HERR: It's a jackass circus.

[16] MS. GALARCE: That's an issue that [17] if someone can do something about it.

[18] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Ann?

[19] MS. HERR: Well, I guess across [20] the range our big consuming issue, like [21] others, is facilities right now. I mean, [22] it's so big that it's pushing everything

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[1] else. Then, you know, after that, I think [2] some — let's strategic look at staffing and [3] how to, sort of, figure out all those things [4] is next. But I think, what in terms of the [5] movement and in terms of what charter [6] schools need, I just see the need for some [7] kind of an organized voice, as the really [8] urgent need. I guess I would call it [9] political infra-structure. Just how you get [10] everybody on the same page, asking for the [11] same thing and really being heard, and —

[12] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Can we all have [13] the same political issue? Same political [14] issues: rent abatement, or tax changes or —

[15] MS. HERR: Money.

[16] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Money, money, [17] money.

[18] MS. ALLEN: So the "no child left [19] behind" and how that is going to be [20] implemented?

[21] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Okay. Well, [22] thank you very much. I really appreciate

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[1] you taking your time.

[2] MS. ALLEN: I will share with you [3] all, the report after this is done.

[4] CHAIRMAN HAELEY: Good.

[5] MS. ALLEN: We're happy to give [6] you the entire transcript — anything you [7] want. We'll start small. If you want more, [8] you can get more. But when we're done —

[9] THE SPEAKER: How soon will it be [10] available?

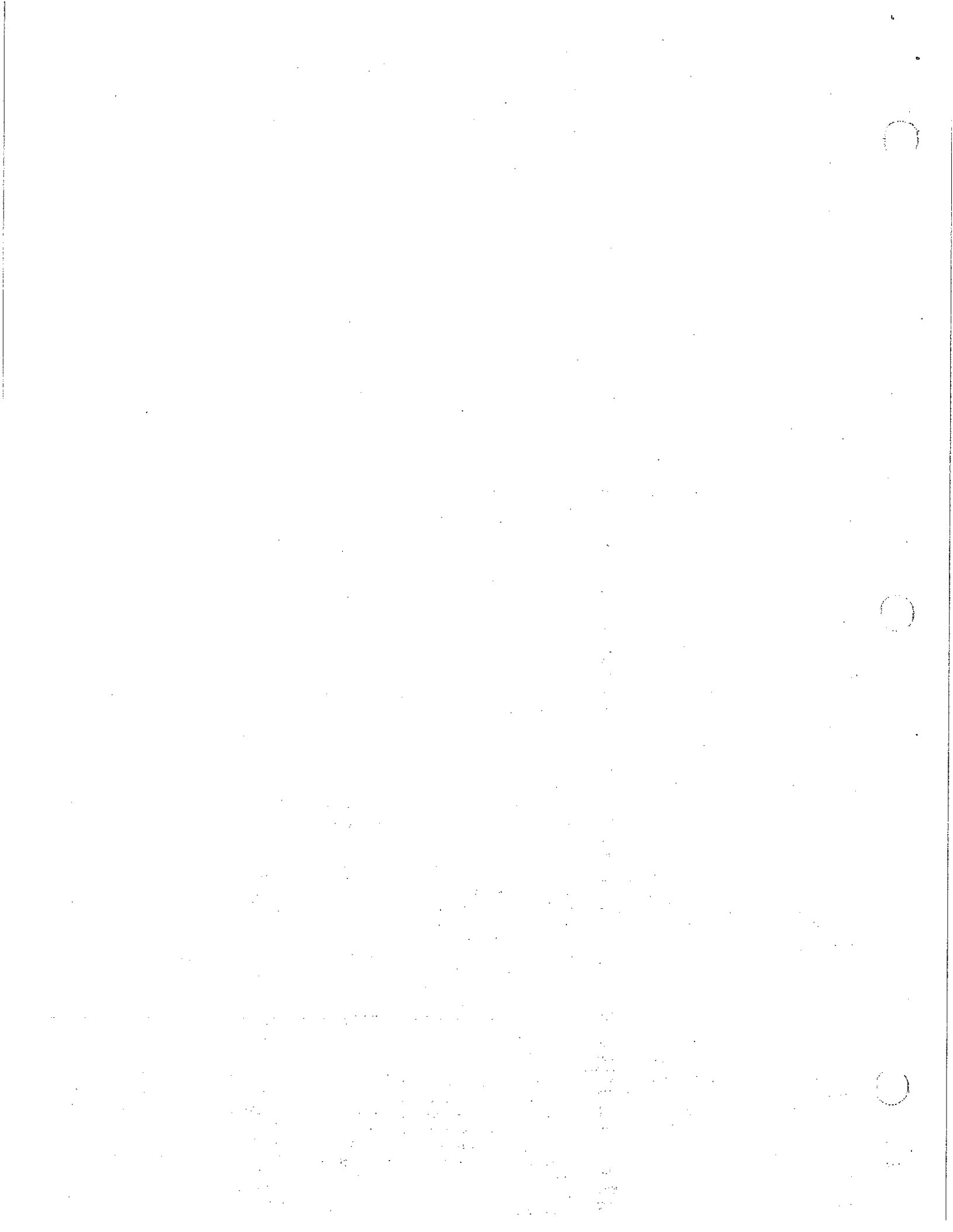
[11] MS. ALLEN: Ten days.

[12] (Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m., the [13] PROCEEDINGS were adjourned.)



**Lawyer's Notes**

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**In The Matter Of:**

*CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATIONS*

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*FOCUS GROUP 2  
February 12, 2003*

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
FOCUS GROUP NO. 2 FOR D.C. CHARTER SCHOOL  
OPERATIONS  
Washington, D.C.

Page 2

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**[1] PROCEEDINGS**

[2] (12:38 p.m.)

[3] **MS. VARGHESE:** We'll just welcome [4] people as they come in. Just wanted to take [5] this time to thank you for getting here on [6] time, or taking time out of your schedules [7] to come to this support meeting. Before I [8] hand it over to Jeannie and Tom, I just [9] wanted to explain to you that this focus [10] group was convened because it's part of a [11] broad national effort to better understand [12] the needs of charter schools, and to help us [13] better influence the development of any [14] organization that is created to serve your [15] needs, both locally and nationally. Jean [16] will fill you in a little bit more.

[17] **MS. ALLEN:** I'm Jeannie Allen, and [18] I run CER, and Ann is our External Affairs [19] Director, and we had — we have basically a [20] multi-state effort going on right now. DC [21] is the only state we're doing this in [22] person.

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[1] The other groups we're doing it by [2] way of telephone survey. Jonathan Baron is [3] with Red Sea, which is doing our survey. [4] Tom Healey is with HG Strategies, which is [5] Ameritrip local consulting firm. The [6] purpose is two-fold: It's really very [7] national and local in scope.

[8] It's to really help define in a [9] very clear and objective way what is the [10] needs and interests in issues really that [11] are facing schools are without the [12] additional filter of other people talking on [13] their behalf. To hear you get it to get it [14] on record, help us both be able to digest [15] it, influence what's happening with you [16] locally as well as nationally.

[17] We had a group of six people [18] earlier. We're going to have, I think, [19]

eight in the next session. There should be [20] about five or six now, and then we're going [21] to follow-ups where we hit every single [22] charter school.

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[1] It is important to do it quickly [2] and to get it off going quickly, so I [3] appreciate your help because there's a lot [4] of things happening that could really help [5] influence what happens here. Tom Healey is [6] your moderator.

[7] **CHAIR HAELEY:** All right. I [8] thought before I'm going to [9] introduce myself. I'm going to give each of [10] you one of these — I'm going to ask you to [11] break a little bit down. Sorry, here's a [12] pencil. What we've been asked to do — [13] well, let me — I'm sorry. I'm a specialist [14] in building small businesses. That's what I [15] really spend most of my life doing.

[16] That's what I know about. For us [17] has been working primarily with [18] companies that are in the influence center [19] and public relations, public affairs, [20] financial communications, and helping [21] companies that help other companies in those [22] areas.

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[1] Our work, the work with Jonathan [2] with Red Sea, and the work that I'm doing [3] with HG Strategy for CER, is to take their [4] organization, which is a small but rapidly [5] growing business, and help it to better [6] define how it can serve its clientele.

[7] So this is really just the — the [8] discussion groups today, plus surveys that [9] we're doing in Indiana and California, and [10] what we're doing in other states, are all [11] part of a process to say that non-profit [12] organizations are not independent from the [13] principles of how you should serve your [14] clients.

[15] That the responsibilities that you [16] need to — the duties and responsibilities [17] of the small business takes when it's [18] serving its clients, translate almost [19] perfectly into the non-profit area. So this [20] is a market research project. We want to [21] come out of this with ability and a national [22] level for CER, and at the local level.

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[1] So, to help them to interact with, [2] for example, new organizations like this [3] charter school association that's being [4] talked about here in DC, is similar to [5] what's being talked about in other states. [6] How can CER support those efforts here, how [7] can it support elsewhere, both as you look [8] at other infants who are growing, and [9] generally, let's remember the charter [10] schools are an infant industry. It's not [11] established.

[12] We know what the cycle is. We [13] understand how we're going to build

this, [14] and the road blocks that you meet in an [15] infant industry are — well, they can be [16] systematic, meaning that the same per-head [17] student expenditure problems that come in DC [18] can be formulaic, and formulaically based in [19] Indiana.

[20] There's other things which are so [21] cast that are just going to occur. That's [22] based upon your building your businesses,

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[1] and we're trying to define for them how best [2] they can go about taking their finance set [3] of resources and use them to help people [4] here in DC, and translate that also to the [5] national level where they're currently [6] serving other populations.

[7] So, again, it's the small — [8] pieces of paper, because what I'd like to do [9] is start with a very simple exercise, and [10] then we're going to go into a discussion. [11] There are four areas that I would like to [12] talk about today:

[13] 1) is, what do you most need? [14] 2) is, what you most expect. [15] 3) is, what you're most [16] disappointed by; and [17] 4) is what support is most [18] lacking?

[19] Okay? Now what I'm going to ask [20] you to do is write down — we're going to [21] take about a minute, and we're — I'd like [22] you to write down what you most need, what

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[1] you most expect, what you're most [2] disappointed by, and what support is most [3] lacking. In any of these, or all of these [4] five areas:

[5] 1) technical assistance. [6] 2) advocacy [7] 3) communications, which — by [8] "communications" I'm generally thinking PR; [9] to the outside world, discussion with [10] parents, but however you feel like defining [11] communications; [12] 4) and new school development [13] issues; and then [14] 5) other, or general issues. [15] So if each of you could just take [16] a minute, and if you don't have anything [17] in — disappointed, that's just fine. But [18] if you'll just give me a —

[19] **CHAIR HAELEY:** I'm Tom Healey.

[20] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Ms. Abdullah —

[21] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Nice to see you.

[22] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Hello. How are you

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[2] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Okay. If you can [3] just start doing that, and then what I'm [4] going to have you do, frankly, is we're [5] going to go back around the table. I'm [6] going to have you just tell me what jotted [7] down. We're going to have a discussion, and [8] then when we get to the end, I'm going to [9] ask you the next

question, which is: "based [10] upon what we've discussed today, is there [11] anything you would change in your earlier [12] answers?"

[13] This will help our objective [14] record of expectation and change for [15] discussion. Ms. Abdullah?

[16] MS. ABDULLAH: Yes?

[17] CHAIR HAELEY: We have that [18] we each, for each of you — these are my [19] four areas that I'm most interested in [20] finding about what your what your [21] opinions are, as it may relate to any of [22] these five areas, or all of them. I'd just

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[1] like to take a moment and write down —

[2] . I know this is, you know, formulaic [3] exercise, but it helps us in our research.

[4] If you thought that, you know, that the city [5] government would be helpful, but it hasn't [6] been, or if you thought that, you know, [7] support organizations —

[8] SPEAKER: What did you expect from [9] whom?

[10] SPEAKER: From whom?

[11] CHAIR HAELEY: Whoever you want.

[12] SPEAKER: From —

[13] MS. ALLEN: Generally, when you [14] think about people who are probably set up, [15] or should be helping, or institutions, —

[16] CHAIR HAELEY: But we, in the [17] public sector, we have done the support [18] groups. Then you've also got different — [19] it could be expectations of, you know, that, [20] if we had a legislative issue premise, what [21] would be forthcoming? If I had a facilities [22] issue that the DC public schools would

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[1] afford me some support — but I've left it [2] open-ended for "expected", for all forms of [3] the areas, because I don't want — by being [4] able to answer based on an open frame, the [5] responses will be helpful to us.

[6] CHAIR HAELEY: Ms. Mkeon, would [7] you like to start?

[8] MS. MKEON: — gazing our [9] thinking. So, you wanted us to start from [10] the bottom up, is that what you said?

[11] CHAIR HAELEY: Wherever you would [12] like.

[13] MS. MKEON: Well, I was thinking [14] about what we really most needed. It would [15] be for cell advocates that can speak for the [16] needs of the children in this city as well [17] as for the supports of the local school [18] needs. When I was thinking about it, I was [19] thinking that our children in urban settings [20] have very, very special needs. They come to [21] school with needing medical care.

[22] They need social and emotional

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[1] help; support for other types of physicians [2] that are not traditionally found in other [3] schools would be rather helpful. We — I [4] listed that we need those advocates to help [5] us in communications. While communications [6] was a piece, I also saw it as an extension, [7] and that being that they need to help us [8] communicate our successes, to be our PR [9] firm. We're doing a lot of that, but we had [10] the support of a non-profit working with us. [11] The school can't do it alone. They're just [12] trying to —

[13] CHAIR HAELEY: Which non-profit's [14] working with you?

[15] MS. MKEON: We are a school that [16] is working with Washington Very Special [17] Arts —

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay.

[19] MS. MKEON: Our school is actually [20] Washington Very Special Arts/SAIL (School [21] for Arts in Learning). It gives us [22] wrap-around services, it gives us shared

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[1] services, and so we don't have to hire a [2] full-time financial person because we have [3] somebody there — we have people that write [4] grants, and share costs for that. We have [5] community resource people that go out and [6] bring reading to every child. But, you [7] know, when we think about, as we extend and [8] expand, how else can we improve upon what we [9] have? That just seems to be — but it is [10] really of concern. We have children who [11] don't get outside to play in a lot of their [12] communities, so having an occupational [13] therapist or a PT person right as part of [14] the children's everyday learning, would be [15] an added asset that will increase their [16] academic stance in the city, which is what [17] we're all focused in on. I think that part [18] of what has not met our expectation is the [19] city council's ability to help with [20] funding — that it should look like it's a [21] fair and equitable funding across systems. [22] We don't have opportunities for government

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[1] monies by going to other agencies. We've [2] been successful to our — say if school's [3] grant where a group of forward thinkers came [4] together and wrote a grant that covered [5] everybody, and that was really helpful. [6] Otherwise, local schools would not be able [7] to, you know, get these dollars. I don't [8] think we've reached that point where we're [9] disappointed yet. We don't have we try

[10] to figure out what it is that we have to do, [11] and move forward. As far as lacking, [12] there's a lot of organizations that are [13] available to help us. I'm not sure that we [14] always know exactly what they're doing. As [15] much as they try to communicate, there [16] doesn't seem to be a real good mesh of what [17] everybody else is doing. People are still [18] vying for their, and jockeying for their [19] position. At some point it seems that they [20] would like to come in and tell us what we [21] need, rather than seeking to understand [22] where we are in our level of development —

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[1] and then give us, you know, a wide range of [2] choices.

[3] CHAIR HAELEY: How long has SAIL [4] been in operation?

[5] MS. MKEON: This is our fourth [6] year. We were fortunate to partnership with [7] a university. We have had our own research [8] projects. We have several publications [9] which new one just printed. So those [10] kinds of things are happening to inform us [11] about what we need to do. Our focus is [12] really on children. Now, that's the — you [13] know, how I sit here today. I would tell [14] you that if we didn't have the other people [15] in the organization that focus on "where's [16] the money", if you can dream it, you can [17] achieve it. Teachers don't have to say, [18] "Gee, I wish next year we could put this in [19] the budget." If you have something and you [20] want to do it, the CEO is really good at [21] going out and getting grants and getting [22] money so that we can make it a possibility

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[1] for the kids. But, in a school without [2] that, we'd be lost.

[3] CHAIR HAELEY: Ms. Abdullah?

[4] MS. ABDULLAH: Okay. What I need [5] most is board members who are connected to [6] bring in additional resources and services [7] that would offset a lot of our financial [8] needs and shortfalls. I don't think that I [9] know enough of the right people — whoever [10] they are. I just don't know them. As a [11] result of not knowing them, it puts the [12] Village Learning Center at a disadvantage. [13] I don't have family members who are [14] connected either. So, I'm just out, all the [15] way around the board, with that. Also, what [16] do you expect — what do you most expect? I [17] expect assistance from outside organizations [18] that they could come in and not add more [19] work to the overload that we already have. [20] I can't see where I'm going as it is, and [21] everybody wants to take a piece of the pie, [22] but each time each

organization comes to the

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[1] table with their proposal, it's just more [2] work for us. By the time we sort it out, [3] the school year is over. So it's too much. [4] We don't need nobody to ask us what else can [5] we do. We need somebody to come in and say, [6] "This is what I've done for you. Take it, [7] or don't take it." Okay, I mean, that's [8] what I need, if you want —

[9] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Clearly, that's why [10] we're here.

[11] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Okay. All right. [12] Okay.

[13] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Because CER has the [14] ability to take its fi-net resources and [15] make a difference.

[16] **MS. ABDULLAH:** We really just [17] can't afford anymore assignments, like, now, [18] if you're planning to compete. The project [19] really makes it difficult — they want a [20] five year school to compete with a thirty [21] year system and never make a mistake. [22] That's not possible.

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[1] **CHAIR HAELEY:** You've been in that [2] business five years?

[3] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Yes, I'm supposed [4] to do no less than what DC public schools [5] has already done.

[6] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Uh-huh.

[7] **MS. ABDULLAH:** With all of the [8] resources that they had, and with all of the [9] limited resources that we have. That's [10] impossible. Then they actually hold me to [11] that.

[12] **MS. ALLEN:** What assignments are [13] you talking about — [14] organizations coming in [15] ?

[16] **MS. ABDULLAH:** You have your [17] FOCUS, you have your resource center, you [18] have this person and that person that says [19] they want to help chartered schools. They [20] do. But it adds more work on us in addition [21] to the help that they bring. Because we are [22] already overloaded with day-to-day

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[1] operations, and organizing and putting this [2] school together from the ground up, we can't [3] take anything else. Big distraction. It [4] has you going this many directions. So you [5] probably miss something in the process, and [6] then when that falls you run over there and [7] catch that, and then this falls, you run [8] over there and catch this, and it's just — [9] part of your day — every day — something [10] happens that you have to stop and address [11] that distracts you from something else that [12] you may — wanted to do. So you almost [13] can't

finish a particular thing because you [14] don't have either enough people, enough [15] money, or enough time. One of those three [16] elements interfere with the success of [17] whatever it is that you may be trying to do. [18] You want to get it right, but you can't. [19] So, some of us are working around the clock. [20] You're taking it home, you're bringing it [21] back, you're taking it back, you're bringing [22] it home. Try to get enough time to get some

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[1] of these thing tied up.

[2] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Well, with the [3] things you're taking home and bringing back, [4] taking home and bringing back, which — is [5] there anything in particular that these [6] support groups could have taken off your [7] plate, that instead they're creating more [8] work for you to do in the shuffle?

[9] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Me, myself, I [10] stopped going. I just stopped going. I [11] don't come to anything else, because, when [12] I — I used to go, the first two years I was [13] gung-ho, I went to everything. It was so [14] much I stopped going. See, because I [15] couldn't do it. So, I [16] don't even know where they are anymore. [17] That's how much it was for me. I deal with [18] my day-to-day operations, the staff at my [19] school; I'm running a service from two and a [20] half through twelfth grade that's really [21] four different departments. I mean, LEA [22] which means I could do everything as if

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[1] I am a superintendent, principal, mother, [2] father, friend, and then go to all of these [3] other meetings that you all have after I've [4] worked all day. That's too much. So that's [5] the kind of extra — and I need it, but I [6] can't. I need it — like now I'm fighting [7] special ed. If you never majored in special [8] ed., and you didn't teach special ed., how [9] would you know? I mean, what do you want me [10] to know, I don't know. Then when I don't [11] know, you're telling me I have to do all of [12] these things, and it's like I have to be a [13] lawyer to figure it out. I didn't major in [14] law, either. So how do I supposed to know? [15] I need somebody who can come in and say, [16] "Okay, we'll deal with special ed. You're [17] not your own LEA; you don't know. Until you [18] can learn it, we can help you get this [19] situated." Meanwhile, while I don't know, [20] I'm fighting a fire, after a fire, after a [21] fire, with parents who are expecting me to [22] give whatever it was that they weren't

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[1] getting in DC public schools. I'm

trying to [2] figure out, "Okay, Ms., what do you want? [3] You want this, you want that, you want this, [4] you want that." "Okay, DC public schools is [5] our LEA. We're behind DC public schools in [6] the line. What do you want me to do?"

[7] "Well, you better get it. If you don't get [8] it, I'm going to this, and I'm going to [9] that, and I'm going to this, and I'm going [10] to that." All day you've got to be in there [11] calming somebody down. That's facing [12] all day. It's , but it's time [13] consuming. So, I mean, somebody that can [14] help us do that without overloading me any [15] further, because I still have the general [16] population that does not have one of those [17] issues needing me just as much. So, I don't [18] know.

[19] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Okay. Well, we'll [20] come back in with —

[21] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Then, I need — I [22] mean, what was the next question? What are

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[1] we disappointed about? I'm disappointed — [2] I was at private school, but converted to a [3] public chartered school. So when parents [4] put their children in private school they [5] have a different disposition about their [6] education than a public school. I'm [7] disappointed in behavior of the parents of [8] public school student. I mean, what do you [9] mean; you want to cuss somebody out. I [10] mean, somebody told all day, everyday, [11] five days a week, because somebody told your [12] child to stop before they hurt themselves? I [13] just can't imagine that it's a whole [14] barnyard full of them just like that. So [15] they have been disappointed in DC public [16] schools for so long in ranting and raving, [17] and ranting and raving, and ranting and [18] raving for what they want over there was out [19] in — was released, so by the time we get [20] him, we're sitting there saying, "What [21] happened?" We don't even know what they're [22] talking about, so it took us three years to

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[1] understand what was wrong with him.

[2] **MS. ALLEN:** They do even give you [3] a chance. They come in expecting you —

[4] **MS. ABDULLAH:** They don't give you [5] a chance they don't, they say, even know. [6] They don't expect you to fix it. Most [7] to be fixed. But they didn't even expect it [8] to get fixed. So by the time they say, "Oh, [9] you fixed it." They say, "Yeah, we did." [10] You know, by then we're so beat up till [11] we're almost not ready for the next . [12] Those persons, that what I'm most [13] disappointed in, how the district public [14] school system

has allowed this to get that [15] far out of the box, to the point where the [16] parents don't even believe in anything. [17] They have given them the idea that they can [18] just rant and rave with everybody and [19] anybody to get something done. That's not [20] how things are going to get done, and it's [21] not going improve "Yes, the squeaky [22] wheel gets oiled." But after a while you

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[1] have a whole lot of squeaky wheels, nobody [2] is going get any oil. So you got all of [3] them thinking about the squeaky wheel that's [4] going to get oiled, so everybody's [5] squeaking. So you're back to, there's too [6] many of these, and not enough of those. [7] Okay, so that's what I'm most disappointed [8] in. I'm just appalled at that. Then, what [9] support is most lacking? Federal clarity on [10] the special ed. Piece. I just can't make [11] heads or tails out of it.

[12] I have tried and tried and tried. [13] I cannot make heads or tails out — they [14] tell you you're responsible, they tell you [15] you're not responsible. They tell you [16] you're responsible, they tell you you're not [17] responsible. Depending on who's on the [18] phone, that determines what answer you get. [19] All day long. Case by case. I don't know, [20] and I really don't know. I just want [21] somebody to break it down in layman's terms, [22] what is it that you really have to do, so

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[1] that I can break it down in layman's terms [2] to the staff, they don't know either. [3] They're not lawyers or doctors, either. So [4] if I can't educate them on what it is that [5] we're trying to do, can you imagine the [6] chaos? So that's what we're working on. [7] Each day, in all sincerity, we try very, [8] very hard to find out, to learn, to obtain [9] the information, but it's never consistent. [10] You get this straight, and say, okay, you — [11] it's supposed to go like this. Then [12] somebody else comes say knows what to do [13] like this. So, oh, okay, I'm going to — I [14] do like this. Somebody else comes; say "No, [15] you're supposed to do it like this." I [16] mean, it's just constant. So we never [17] really get the full understanding. By the [18] time I get my stuff straight, and on the [19] track, they change it, and say, "No, that's [20] not the track you should be on."

[21] CHAIR HAELEY: The support [22] organizations right now are just useless

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[1] ?

[2] MS. ABDULLAH: I'm not going to [3] say that. I told you I stopped going. I [4] don't know what they're doing. So I cannot [5] say that. I can say that I couldn't

carry [6] that load and this load, too. I need [7] somebody to come in and just give me the [8] assistance that I need without — I'm scared [9] because ever time somebody comes to the [10] table to offer us something, there's [11] something they want, too. So you don't know [12] if you're going to even be able to give them [13] what they want. You got all these "wants" [14] stop in.

[15] CHAIR HAELEY: Is it money that [16] they want, or control?

[17] MS. ABDULLAH: Control, and [18] influence, and power, for the most part. [19] Time. They want to use your school to get [20] money so that they can exist. That is [21] exactly what they want. They want to put [22] your school in the document they get money

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[1] to be in to operate. Then they keep asking [2] you, give me this, give me that, give me [3] this, give me that. I mean, I can't even [4] hardly give the Board of Education what they [5] want. I don't have time to give all you all [6] nothing else. I'm not trying to be funny, [7] but this is — if this is the place where [8] I'm supposed to be saying this, this is what [9] I —

[10] CHAIR HAELEY: This is exactly [11] where you're supposed to be saying this.

[12] MS. ABDULLAH: Okay. That's what [13] I seen.

[14] CHAIR HAELEY: That's really [15] helpful.

[16] MS. ABDULLAH: So I would like to [17] have help in those areas, please.

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: We will do [19] everything possible at the end of the day to [20] make sure that we tell CER that. So, [21] Christina?

[22] MS. ENCINAS: My name is Christina

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[1] Encinas, and I'm going to tell you where I [2] am right now so that you understand where I [3] come from. The Latin American Montessori [4] Bilingual was founded by the Latin American [5] Youth Center, who already operates a charter [6] school for five years — this is their fifth [7] year, I think. So, we were approved in [8] September 2001, so we had been planning for [9] probably a year, and it will be a year and a [10] half, so we have taken the time to try to [11] get information. You know, one of my [12] comments here, it's that really, it's very [13] hard to understand what the Board of [14] Education wants. I mean, they have, many [15] times out of the exchange staff now, I've [16] not yet met the new person, although we are [17] in the process of having a meeting with that [18] person — that simple questions as, you [19] know,

what, you know — we took a year and a [20] half to plan, and of course our plans look [21] different than a year and a half. So every [22] time I ask somebody, "You know, so how would

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[1] I supposed to do this?" They say, "Well, [2] exactly how you say it in your application." [3] And I say, "But, that's why you have a [4] planning year, because then you figure [5] things out better so you can do better [6] things." So I hardly find any answers on, [7] you know, recruitment, per se. You know, [8] we — our school is going to do a dual [9] English model. We're going to do a [10] Spanish/English, and the dual English model [11] calls for 50 percent of the target language, [12] which is Spanish, and 50 percent — we say, [13] second or third language learners, so that [14] we can pool everybody. But in order for us [15] to have, to follow the model, we need to [16] make sure that that mix happens. The only [17] way, you know, that we think that it can be [18] done is that we have two lotteries. So one [19] is with the type of language, and then, you [20] know, the other one with the other 50 [21] percent of the school who would be learning [22] second or third language. Everybody will

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[1] have to apply. It will be a matter of, you [2] know, whether they go to the native language [3] or the other second or third language [4] learners. Nobody has ever told me if — you [5] know, it depends on who I talk to. It [6] depends on who I talk to. All people say, [7] "What did you say on your application?" I [8] said, "Well, when we, you know, wrote the [9] application, we knew we wouldn't do a [10] bi-lingual — my background is in [11] Montessori, and I was not really sure about [12] the bi-lingual piece. Now I have done all [13] the research; we know what we want, so of [14] course we have different criterias for our [15] program." So I haven't been able to find an [16] answer. I do, you know — our school is [17] going to start very small. We went from [18] wanting to start with 30 — 30 was almost [19] impossible — to starting with 60 students. [20] I still don't know, I called the Board and I [21] said, you know, when do we submit our new [22] plan, our third year plan? When do I tell

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[1] you that, instead of 30 like the original [2] plan we are now going to start with 60. So, [3] I don't know, do you have a budget, will you [4] plan those numbers so that you need to know [5] ahead? I'm thinking in my mind, but no [6] answers. So I called, and they say, "Well, [7] we're just going to go in September and do a [8] count, and whatever number of children that [9] you



have, that's how much money you will [10] get. But I thought that they plan ahead how [11] many students are going to be in the system. [12] Anyway, so, what else? I need, of course, [13] money. You know, we have a treasury [14] director and we have a principal. We're not [15] in operation yet. We felt that it was very, [16] very important to have two people — we have [17] to find the space, a building. We are [18] trying to purchase a building, renovate a [19] building; we are incorporating a program [20] that it's Montessori bi-lingual. It's very, [21] very — it's specific and demanding, because [22] you have to, you know, teacher recruitment

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[1] is a big issue. You know, I might have to [2] go overseas to find teachers who are native [3] and have the specific training for what I [4] need. I think it can be done, and I'm being [5] very successful, you know, in finding [6] teachers, but I also want them to get the [7] money that they need. You know, we have a [8] lot of expenses, of course the Montessori [9] materials are extremely expensive. Thank [10] God they last for a long time. What [11] else? We really need — one — a place [12] where we can go, and I said we need [13] evaluation from day one. Because if you're [14] going to support charter schools and [15] we're going to duplicate programs for [16] exercise, well how do you know they're [17] successful? You need evaluation, you know, [18] professional evaluation from day one so that [19] you can really, you know, show your results [20] in a very professional or scientific way. [21] So I've been trying to do myself by linkage [22] with universities. But, you know, it will

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[1] be nice that advocate group that will go [2] talk to universities and see how to work [3] with, you know, different schools, and [4] is that also extremely expensive if you want [5] to go university. They have a huge [6] overhead, and, yeah — what else? We have [7] a — I mean, pretty much I think that I also [8] am very pleased because I see that having [9] the Latin-American Youth Center as our [10] organization, or parent organization, it's [11] an extremely fortunate for, on our part. [12] Also, some of the laws, if you go to our [13] national charter school conference, then you [14] say, like, "Oh my God, you know, I'm lucky." [15] It's, a — you know, like, I mean, an [16] example is, you know, DC pays for three-year [17] olds, and our program Montessori, three-year [18] olds are a very important part of the [19] program. You have to have three to five, [20] you know, three to six, six to nine, nine to [21] twelve. Some other places they don't pay [22] for three-year olds. So, you know, you have

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[1] to charge tuition for three-year olds. What [2] else? At the new school development, like I [3] said, building — oh, one of the things I [4] want to mention is that DCPS has a number to [5] do it.

[6] They don't know what to do with us [7] either. You know, I talk and I say — I [8] called them and I said — it depends on who [9] I talk, like she said. You know, I need to [10] hire — you know, I called the Embassy of [11] Spain, and I said, you know, "How do you [12] bring teachers from overseas, because I know [13] a public school who has a dual language [14] program has done it." They said, "Well, we [15] have a contract with DCPS." I called DCPS [16] and DCPS said, "We don't know — we've never [17] done — you know, we — we don't know what [18] to do with you guys. We've never done [19] anything with charter schools." Things like [20] that. What else?

[21] CHAIR HAELEY: Expectations, [22] disappointments?

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[1] MS. ENCINAS: Expectations. I [2] mean, I think that what I see when I go to a [3] group charter schools is that we're all in [4] such a different levels. There are — you [5] cannot, you know, there's no "one size fits [6] all", at all. You know, we cannot sit [7] around a table and expect that the [8] information they are giving us is worth for [9] enough time.

[10] It's really limited for going to [11] meetings and listening to things that I'm [12] not even, you know, something that we can [13] use. So it would be nice to have somebody [14] who can sort that out and say, you know, [15] we're going to help schools or assist [16] schools in a way that they can cluster [17] them — in a way that they can really help [18] and strengthen each other, and, you know — [19] I think that also, among charter schools, [20] you know, it's such a big load of work that [21] it's sometimes hard to also get assistance [22] from schools that are being in operation as

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[1] a new school. I think that's it.  
[2] CHAIR HAELEY: Nat?  
[3] MR. BROOKS: Well, I'll start with [4] the last one since get it in, just try [5] to reinforce that a bit. That speaks to the [6] need for, I think charter schools. I [7] think the charter schools have reached — in [8] DC, have reached a point where they're look [9] at organized system stuff. It's got to be, [10] and I think that speaks to the point that [11] you're making here about the languages, [12] understandings, and around a lot of [13] that. I think that is a sore need. But on [14] a very pragmatic level for us, we're in dire [15] need of user-

friendly, environmentally [16] friendly, affordable buildings, building and [17] equipment. I mean, we're really being [18] shafted on that because we're paying rent [19] that is ridiculous. Because we are a school [20] that focuses on building trades — this town [21] needs a lot of building trades people — we [22] have to go out of town in this town. I'm a

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[1] retired DC government employee. I'm aware [2] of some of the problems that present. We [3] have to recruit — this city has to recruit [4] from outside for all kinds of stuff, [5] including some of these beautiful edifices [6] that have been remodeled and built over the [7] past twenty years. That is insane to have [8] to recruit from 100-500 miles away while you [9] have people who are unemployed and costing [10] the city more money. So as a part of our — [11] a major part of our philosophical thrust is [12] to prepare people to enter the industry and [13] to move right up. We have — just take, as [14] an example, on our first graduation class, a [15] young man who was one of our outstanding [16] trades students — he was in, focused on the [17] and electrical wiring. He worked on a [18] big contract downtown during an internship [19] in his senior year that he liked, and, of [20] course, and he got a job them and thought [21] that he was set for life, but he came back [22] the next year, showing us the beginning of

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[1] the next year, his union card, Electrical [2] Workers of America — of course, we can [3] longer afford him, even though he's one of [4] our alumna. The next year he came back [5] saying he just got a new position that he [6] would reach the \$40,000 a year mark, but he [7] said, "I've learned something, so I'm going [8] back to college, because I want to be one of [9] those contractors." That's the way that [10] pathway continuum should work, because [11] that's what we have in mind. But, in order [12] to train people in the building trades, you [13] need certain kinds of space, equipment as [14] well. So buildings and equipment are really [15] at the top of our list, very selfishly, even [16] though there may be more esoteric needs for [17] class support.

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: Can I just [19] clarify —

[20] MR. BROOKS: Sure.

[21] CHAIR HAELEY: Those are functions [22] of buildings and equipment, because they are

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[1] a portion of the curriculum?  
[2] MR. BROOKS: Yes.  
[3] CHAIR HAELEY: Not buildings and [4]

equipment in order for a —

[5] MR. BROOKS: Or a building, or [6] building complex — for the education and [7] training. Classrooms that are also shops. [8] If you're going to teach — train people to [9] build a house, you've got to have a certain [10] kind of space to work in. You can't move [11] into a room like this and very well do that. [12] Now, we have put parts of houses together in [13] our building, in a room.

[14] CHAIR HAELEY: Thank you.

[15] MR. BROOKS: I would also suggest [16] that highly qualified teachers and staff, [17] particularly support staff — support staff [18] is a place we are sorely lacking. As a [19] long-time program manager, I know that it is [20] not — it is an understatement to say that [21] it is not cost-effective to use a \$25 an [22] hour employee to do a \$10 an hour job. Over

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[1] the long run you — there is a severe waste [2] in getting to the evaluation part that's [3] going to show up, and it's not going to be a [4] pretty picture. But, then we're in [5] Washington, D.C., and sometimes that is [6] almost an expectation — because of [7] overrides. So that speaks to a need for a [8] good cost-effectiveness across the board [9] without sacrifice to students and services. [10] I say "students and services" because I hear [11] your frustration. I share it. Sometimes, [12] when I came to Booker T. near the end of the [13] first school year, when I looked around [14] because of the kind of work I had done in my [15] life, I almost said I was in a mental health [16] center. Some of the problems — a lot of [17] the problems we have addressed. It's been a [18] real struggle, but we didn't have the [19] expertise in-house when I arrived. We were [20] attempting to provide educational services [21] where people who were not ready — and there [22] has to be a readiness level, as all

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[1] educators know, because my mother was one, [2] and she's taught that stuff and I had to [3] listen (laughter), around the house about [4] readiness for this and that — reading, and [5] math and so forth. There should be [6] readiness. If you don't have your second [7] medication, so if you're stabilized you [8] can't be expected to understand this math [9] lesson today. So that's — the support [10] staff is very important. You can't operate [11] without support staff; I don't care how [12] sophisticated your professional staff is. [13] But if your professional staff is doing a [14] lot of support staff stuff, you're going to [15] be missing some of what they can do [16] professionally. That's going erode your — [17] the service quality. Most needed, I'm going [18] to put

in good governmental relations [19] because I recognize some of the tricks [20] sabotage. I'll leave it at that and we'll [21] discuss it more when we can.

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: I would.

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[1] MR. BROOKS: All right. I would [2] also suggest that, I think this is related [3] to some of the earlier remarks of good [4] public relations and marketing. Across the [5] board, not just for my school — my school [6] is fairly easy — we started training to [7] address that last — late last year. I [8] brought it up very prominently and pushed [9] mixture of that group on the [10] table, but we're so busy reacting until we [11] had, we hadn't gotten really into proacting. [12] In order to build a good system of [13] educational services as charter schools are [14] supposed to be about — that's what we're [15] supposed to be about — you've got to [16] have — I've got to proact. I've got to [17] recognize needs even before they happen, [18] seeing the symptoms and preparing to address [19] them in a timely fashion. That — so, [20] sometimes I notice people with my first year [21] felt like studies to look like and felt like [22] they were in isolation, because they were

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[1] not relating to those in other schools. I'm [2] not aware of a good meeting place or forum [3] where charter school staff and others — [4] I'll get to in a minute — come together and [5] network. Under "most expected", I expected [6] organizational problems during developmental [7] stages. I mean, I think they are absolutely [8] necessary. It's an indication of growth if [9] there are no organizational problems. But [10] they must be addressed or they start to get [11] out of hand and you start to get feelings [12] like this. Like this lady was [13] expressing so appropriately, I think. This [14] is a town of bureaucrats and "bureauspeak" [15] is the — that's the way it goes. If you [16] don't understand how a lot of it works, you [17] can be made to feel stupid and certainly [18] overwhelmed. You aren't stupid or [19] overwhelmed. This is a game, and don't go [20] for it. There are people actually in [21] bureaucracy who have no idea what they are [22] talking about because they don't even know

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[1] the person next to them. For the past seven [2] or eight years they've been sitting there [3] next to them, and they don't know what they [4] do, and they're not interested. Sometimes [5] it's — the best way, thirty years ago, or [6] more than thirty years ago, I learned the [7] best way to operate in this town is to get [8] to know people socially. It's like any, I [9]

mean, you have variations of this. But in [10] Washington is one of those towns where you [11] can learn more about how things work outside [12] of business hours sometimes than you can [13] inside of business hours. Then when [14] business hours come back around, the next [15] cycle, the next day, you can pick up the [16] phone and cut through 18 yards of red tape [17] with one telephone call. XXX (END OF TAPE [18] SIDE A)

[19] CHAIR HAELEY: Do you think that [20] federal function can be centralized in the [21] support organizations?

[22] MR. BROOKS: Sure. Sure. I mean,

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[1] I'm sure Homeland Security is doing that [2] right now. They probably have more inside [3] tracks than you can possibly imagine. Every [4] bureaucracy that sets up attempts to attract [5] people who already have knowledge and a [6] track record in that area. You can buy the [7] expertise, the technical expertise, on the [8] open market, no matter how sophisticated. [9] Schools are producing people like that, but [10] those Phi Beta Kappa, I would — probably [11] could walk in here and be snowed by the next [12] seven or eight years if they're — if they [13] don't know somebody, depending on what the [14] charge is. So we need — that goes back to [15] the whole business of organized systems that [16] affects the behavior. When you know [17] somebody who you can call, no matter [18] something really works, you become more [19] self-competent, and you become more [20] self-competent as a result. You're going to [21] be more effective. I just made a note that [22] you were speaking about that, about the

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[1] demystification of systems and processes. [2] We need a support organization — let's see, [3] what did I write here? Support [4] organizations are not useless. It's just [5] that there is some coordination of what they [6] do, may need some real serious and close [7] examination so that — certainly don't need [8] overlap, and there's still plenty of gap out [9] there to be filled in. But who identifies [10] what the big picture is? This is a [11] political town, and never forget that. As a [12] young man I said I was apolitical, because I [13] studied political science in college and I [14] discovered, by the time that I graduated [15] that I don't want to have anything to do [16] with it after working on a couple of [17] campaigns. But then I came to Washington [18] and I found out about the politics and the [19] bureaucracies. Then I taught at a couple of [20] universities and I found out about the [21] politics in universities. Wow. So you [22] can't get

away from politics, and you can't

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[1] get away from it, and you've got to survive [2] so that you can move on to a point where you [3] thrive. You'd better become politically [4] astute. So if there is an organizational [5] unit that can — it's like a clearing [6] house — I'm not sure, Tom, I'm not sure how [7] to articulate this, but it's got to be 'a' [8] place as opposed to seven places. Because [9] you can't go to all those places all the [10] time.

[11] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Dream big, right? [12] I mean, if we had all the money in the [13] world, and we had the ability to be kings of [14] the world, and say, "Here's what we can give [15] you. What do you want?" Now that's — you [16] know, this is a — you know, we don't have [17] all the money in the world. We don't have [18] the ability to tell you what you want. But [19] we've got a chance to be able to take a [20] finite set of resources and direct them to [21] solve a set of problems which will both [22] benefit the DC schools plus charter schools

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[1] nationally. That's the goal of the [2] research. So think there again — it's okay [3] to say "I don't know how to say it", because [4] that's, frankly, Jonathan's job to figure [5] out what it means and to put it into context [6] based upon all the rest of the information [7] we have. So don't let that stop you. Just [8] throw out exactly, you know, if we could [9] give you anything in the world, what would [10] it be?

[11] **MR. BROOKS:** A centralized, like a [12] nerve center, with the lobbying capacity, [13] public relations, marketing, communications, [14] making sure that we're all aware of what we [15] need to be aware of. The monitoring of it, [16] even, you may not like big brother, but it [17] is necessary to have the certain functions [18] out of that, in order to be more efficient [19] and effective. That's the way you [20] demonstrate success and your necessity. [21] Soft money, for instance — I keep saying [22] I'm not a grants labor — I just have some

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[1] experience in sitting with them, and while [2] they pick my head so they can throw it [3] together. Because you've got to start up [4] sometimes — if you can just get it started [5] up, it will sustain itself, or you can plan [6] other ways, effective ways, to sustain it. [7] But you can't even start it up. You have [8] nothing to sustain. So soft money has its [9] place. I went to a university — I attended [10] a university where they were very big on [11] soft money, and everybody knew it wouldn't

[12] last forever. But you keep piling it [13] through until you get these institutions set [14] up. Then you can go with it, and a lot of [15] us know what that means. Then you become so [16] essential as to how they can't do without [17] you, and the hard money will follow. So [18] it's something more centralized so that you [19] don't have to go to seven meetings a week in [20] order to find out that three of them are [21] going to be saying, talking about the same [22] stuff. Two of them won't have any answers

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[1] to it, so you become frustrated because [2] you've got these things back home to do to [3] manage their more individual items. But [4] they're all part of the processes necessary. [5] Everybody's doing it. When you go to these [6] meetings, you find out that everybody's [7] sharing the same problems, but you haven't [8] had an opportunity to talk to one another [9] about them. If you had more face to face [10] opportunities for face to face, you would [11] find out that is all commonplace stuff. So [12] it's — it requires highly paid personnel to [13] do that. It requires smart people who don't [14] work free. Sometimes we get into expecting [15] that stuff will be done free as a welfare [16] mentality. I talking about our city and I'm [17] talking about our country. In many ways we [18] get to thinking that somebody should come in [19] and volunteer this and that. If it's highly [20] skilled stuff requiring great credentials, [21] that goes with — that's what I mean about [22] good teachers, too. I expect for them to be

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[1] paid. If we can't afford to pay a good [2] teacher, and if we say we should pay [3] have that teacher to come in and, I mean, [4] that teacher has a mortgage, or should be [5] aspiring to have one, and send the kids to [6] college and all of that, and so they don't [7] have four or five years to take out of their [8] lives to do almost volunteer work, to work [9] at a sub-standard, sub-par salaries. So, [10] in order to be competitive, we've got to [11] have some kind of incentives. It's not just [12] salary, because anybody who knows anything [13] about salary knows that people don't really [14] work for money, they just need a certain [15] amount of money. They work for the way it [16] makes them feel, because it's the [17] self-esteem and worthiness.

[18] **CHAIR HAELEY:** One of the things [19] that came up in the earlier discussion was [20] just the simple problem of not being able to [21] find comparative salary data. If you want [22] to hire somebody, what's a principal cost?

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[1] What is a fifth grade Spanish teacher cost?

[2] **MS. MKEON:** It's out there. I [3] mean, you can get that information.

[4] **MS. ENCINAS:** I hit the DCPS [5] website, and I, you know, when people asked [6] me, I said I won't pay you based on DCPS, [7] because, you know, I think that that's the [8] people that I'm competing with in terms of [9] the job market and salaries. If people want [10] to move to Washington —

[11] **MS. MKEON:** Then the counties, you [12] can get theirs as well.

[13] **MS. ENCINAS:** Yeah.

[14] **MS. MKEON:** I agree with you.

[15] **MR. BROOKS:** That stuff is not [16] that difficult to get, but suppose you want [17] to get somebody who has the potential for [18] providing more. There's got to be some [19] additional incentive there.

[20] **MS. ENCINAS:** I agree with you.

[21] **MR. BROOKS:** A savings plan, some [22] tuition monies for further study, and other

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[1] things. We've got to be a little more [2] creative. Because you may even be able to [3] pay a few dollars less if you've got [4] something else available to this person that [5] has value.

[6] **MS. ENCINAS:** I think that also [7] the DCPS people are, you know, the benefits [8] of retirement. It's a big issue, like, you [9] know, working in the system for seven years, [10] and I leave now, then, I lose, you know, my [11] retirement. But for a couple of years they [12] don't, right?

[13] **MS. MKEON:** You can keep rolling [14] over, and apply for a leave of absence. [15] Then the school district — and then the [16] charter school pays DCPS for your retirement [17] so that when you leave you can —

[18] **MS. ABDULLAH:** Okay.

[19] **MS. MKEON:** In the same —

[20] **MS. ENCINAS:** But if you're new to [21] your charter school, then you have your own [22] plan for retirement.

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[1] **MS. MKEON:** Thank you.

[2] **CHAIR HAELEY:**

[3] **MS. ABDULLAH:** I think what would [4] help, from what I've experienced after five [5] years, is an organization that's the center [6] for charter schools. When we need legal [7] advice we can call any of these two or three [8] lawyers in that staff that helps us with [9] whatever the legal parts. There's somebody [10] there that would do the retirement plan for [11] us,

and we just send the money for the [12] employees to that central office, and they [13] handle it. But we, you know, let's say we [14] want to give the staff bonuses or special [15] certificates, and little things like that, [16] that we can call to that organization and [17] say, "Look, did anybody donate anything? We [18] need two or three special bonuses for a [19] couple of staff members." You could get [20] maybe four bonuses out of this organization [21] a year. Not bonuses, but incentives — I'm [22] saying the wrong word — incentives.

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[1] Because maybe we can't give our teacher an [2] incentive. They did something really nice, [3] and we really want to give just some [4] flowers. We may not even be in a position [5] of giving flowers on the spot. Did [6] any — and you all would do — whoever this [7] organization is, would get florists and [8] people like that to donate a certificate, [9] and then you all can give them to us, versus [10] we running around getting all of those kinds [11] of things. Then, I just think that you all [12] should — whoever this person — I'm saying [13] "you all", but whoever this organization is, [14] should deal with the electric, the gas, and [15] the water regardless of where we are. [16] Because we are gypsy organizations, but we [17] can't even put our roots down. We're in [18] this building this year, we're in that [19] building next year, we're in this building [20] the year after that, so we don't want to put [21] anything in a building that we can't take [22] with us. But we're going to have to pay the

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[1] gas, electric, and water regardless of where [2] we go. So maybe that would be centralized. [3] You all can make a deal with the gas and [4] electric and water company on charter [5] schools for a period of time, where, okay, [6] like the building I'm in, I've got a gas [7] bill that is \$10,000; I've got a water bill [8] that's \$10,000; I've got an electric bill [9] that's \$10,000 in a one month — and that's [10] not even talking about my mortgage or lease [11] amount. I didn't know it. I don't know [12] anybody down there to call and say anything. [13] Will it get cut off? I don't know. There's [14] children in the building. Will they cut it [15] off? Can we call you all and trouble-shoot [16] that kind of information to you all, and you [17] all go out, whoever this organization is —

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: Mm-hmm.

[19] MS. ABDULLAH: Work it through. [20] Then call back and say, "The Village [21] Learning Center, this is the bottom line of [22] your situation on gas. This is the bottom

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[1] line for your situation on electric." Other [2] things that fall in those type of [3] categories. But for sure, the legal, the [4] retirement, the incentives, and special [5] education. If we had a special education [6] situation and we are not in LEA, because [7] some of those to be LEA and some of us [8] didn't. But if we're not in LEA, DC public [9] schools is our LEA. But it's hard getting [10] through to them. Can you all trouble-shoot [11] that through them? Then if you are in LEA, [12] there would be another approach to that. [13] Can you trouble-shoot some of their problems [14] for them? So it's two different [15] perspectives when it comes to special ed. [16] But there shouldn't be something where the [17] principal or a director of the school gets [18] burdened with for doing all these.

[19] You know, trying to resolve it on [20] your own. So, I don't know what you all are [21] planning to do, but something like that [22] would be a good service to the charter

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[1] schools. Then, the other meeting was when, [2] how — when do we all get together and be [3] able to share and network? I mean, she may [4] know how to do something that I'm over there [5] knocking my head off trying to figure out. [6] She'd probably say, "Oh, I have a template. [7] You just do it like this." I may be doing [8] something that she's over —

[9] CHAIR HAELEY: Food services came [10] up in our last discussion. People are [11] calling to say, "Is there a good food [12] service organization?" Someone would say [13] "Ah". Well, you know, I'd call another [14] principal. So having a clearing house for [15] this type of information will be, you know, [16] freely termed against their trademark, even [17] charter schools.

[18] MS. ABDULLAH: That's right. Then [19] we will come to you all. That's right. Get [20] this food service — because we here filling [21] the number on these applications, getting [22] all these independent people coming and

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[1] going. We don't know them. Then the people [2] are complaining about them. I mean, are we [3] liable? You know, so food service is [4] another one. That type of thing.

[5] CHAIR HAELEY: Trying to find who [6] is a good quality, even if the organization [7] couldn't do it, you would at least have a [8] backboard to be able to say, "This is a [9] five-star rated food service according to [10] SAIL."

[11] MS. ABDULLAH: Right. Right. [12] There you go.

[13] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay.

[14] MS. ABDULLAH: Then we'll get that [15] information from you. What I do —

[16] CHAIR HAELEY: That is correct. [17] Just say "us", well enough.

[18] MS. ABDULLAH: This [19] organization — whoever this organization [20] is.

[21] MS. ALLEN: Because you commented [22] earlier on going to meetings and other

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[1] people are doing things that you don't [2] necessarily think are helpful. Do you think [3] that there — that an organization that got [4] set up to provide those services, or at [5] least offer those, is something that the [6] Greater Charter School want? It just [7] needs to be — it just needs to be improved?

[8] MS. ABDULLAH: I didn't hear [9] anyone offer this type of service, where I [10] can come and get at least six or seven [11] things in one place. I've known to offer [12] assistance, but they make it so political [13] and so bureaucratic, I'm telling you, [14] sometimes I just sit there and say, "What [15] are they talking about?" So I couldn't even [16] figure out, all the time, what was going on, [17] because, like you said, this is a political [18] town. You have to already know what the [19] thing is. I mean, you can't go to a hockey [20] game with a football helmet on. So if you [21] don't know, you're sitting there saying, [22] "Well —

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[1] MR. BROOKS: I don't know, these [2] days maybe you probably can.

[3] MS. ABDULLAH: So — and I'm going [4] to be honest with you, you're just a [5] political part of DC. That should be part [6] of — I should know now who, how this [7] political setup is. I'm not even sure who's [8] who, what they do, not names. I'm talking [9] about positions. I'm not even sure how this [10] trickles down to affect me. Who is on the [11] top, who is in the middle, who's in — at [12] the vet and how does it affect me. We [13] haven't even really been exposed to that a [14] hundred percent. I mean, right now, [15] Mr. Lockridge wants me to write something to [16] him. Am I knocking something over, or am I [17] building something up? I don't know, [18] because I don't even know what kind of power [19] Mr. Lockridge has for career. I really [20] don't know. So, I may give him the letter, [21] but maybe I better not give it to him, I [22] don't know. So you all could educate us on

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[1] how that works.

[2] CHAIR HAELEY: Correct. Well, [3] it's —

[4] MR. BROOKS: It's — I think I [5] agree, but it's a process — it's a [6] developmental — it's development of the [7] system. It's going on. This is part of it. [8] But this kind of thing had to happen because [9] the way it started was an evolutionary [10] process. When evolve, you don't control. [11] That's when nature does —

[12] MS. ABDULLAH: I mean, I agree, [13] but when she comes as her first year, how [14] does she get the same induction that I [15] received the first year that I was here?

[16] MR. BROOKS: I think we're [17] speaking to it, though. I think you are [18] speaking to it. If you have the centralized [19] place for clearing house, it not only [20] provides the administrative service pieces, [21] but orientation and training, and there is a [22] facilities and management office that is

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[1] aware of all of the buildings and the costs [2] and the utilities and so forth for them, [3] because there isn't a piece of turf in this [4] town that isn't on a computer bank. It — [5] somebody knows about it. So if you tap into [6] all of those — if you're able to tap into [7] virtually all of those, you can begin to [8] manage how you develop your facilities. If [9] you know that you can only afford \$8 dollars [10] a square foot, and you're — you shouldn't [11] be looking at a \$20 a square foot facility. [12] So, if I wanted something when I used to [13] look for spaces that belonged to the [14] government by and large, I would go to the [15] experts in their office and say, "This is [16] what I'm going to do. This is what I need." [17] You know, and then, somebody would be [18] assigned to work with me and I would start [19] looking, and I would have choices to go look [20] at. I am not a facilities manager; I [21] happened to work with one who knows about [22] that kind of stuff. But I don't talk the

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[1] language, but I've never had — it wasn't [2] necessary for me to talk the language as [3] long as I could speak our common language to [4] facilities manager. I understood the common [5] language. Then he or she would identify [6] options for me. I think that's what you're [7] speaking to, somewhat, because that gas bill [8] and that water bill can be projected and [9] estimated for projections.

[10] MS. ABDULLAH: I agree with you, [11] sir, but I obtain my billing from the [12] District. It's a DC public school; we ask [13] all them — we have enough sense to say, [14] "Can you tell us what the gas bill was, the [15] electric bill was, the telephone bill, et [16] cetera, et cetera, et

cetera, over the [17] years?" Nobody would give us the [18] information. Nobody. Ms. Reed wouldn't [19] give it to us; the people in the electric [20] company wouldn't give it to us. First of [21] all, they didn't even want to turn this [22] stuff on because whoever was in the building

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[1] prior to us getting it, left with a lot of [2] bills. They really didn't want to turn it [3] on. Then they wanted us to put down a large [4] deposit, which wasn't our fault that what [5] happened to them before. You know, that, [6] anyway, all of that to say, if this [7] organization existed, then I can find out [8] without running all around. We've got to [9] cut down on the "run-around" time. The [10] "run-around" time is eating into our other [11] issues and concerns that we may have to [12] address in the course of the day. I don't [13] want to keep looking for lawyers; I don't [14] want to keep looking for special ed.; I [15] don't want to keep looking for food. I've [16] been trying to get my food program up since [17] I started. I still don't have the right [18] food program. Then, the way I understand [19] it, I might be wrong, but just trying to cut [20] through the chase, we pay \$4 a meal. The [21] school system gives us back \$1.25 for [22] every \$4 we spend. I mean, what are you

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[1] giving that money for? Just keep the money. [2] I don't like that. I don't like you giving [3] me \$4 and making me think you gave me [4] something, and then, I mean, I spent \$4 and [5] you give me a dollar and something back. [6] Then, okay, now on the free lunch program is [7] on us individually. You have to do yours, I [8] have to do mine, she has to do hers. But [9] it's not free. It's on us. When we get [10] into the charter movement, we really don't [11] clearly understand that that means you've [12] got to pay for all of the children's food, [13] even if they throw it in the trash every [14] day. Okay, then you've got an electric bill [15] sitting there and children throwing food in [16] the trash. Do you give the children the [17] food, or you pay the electric bill? You're [18] almost like the mother now. "Okay, you [19] know, I'm not going to buy no more food [20] because you all are wasting the food. I'm [21] going to go ahead and pay the electric." [22] You can't do that, but you're almost being

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[1] put in a position to think like that. [2] CHAIR HAELEY: [3] MR. BROOKS: May I finish my — I [4] just, real briefly, my most disappointing [5] relationship with DC school personnel? [6] You're getting the run-around.

The [7] secondly, budgetary constraints. They are [8] artificial — you put a number on it, this [9] is what it should be. But we service [10] individuals, so the numbers are not [11] realistic per pupil expenditure. There are [12] students with special needs. Then — so [13] it's a question of whether or not you have [14] the capability for identifying those special [15] needs, and are to increase the allotment, [16] and sometimes that doesn't meet the company [17] school system. Finally, parent knowledge [18] and understanding of where the charter [19] schools are. Then, under most lacking — [20] parent support — any tie-in to that lack of [21] knowledge and understanding. Would they [22] dumped on — I thought it was just Booker T.

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[1] the first year until I talked to other [2] people who were being dumped on with soft [3] referrals of students who are considered [4] problem students. Because if there is no [5] paper trail, you can't prove that. But if I [6] have a school up the street that says to [7] this parent that this child they don't want [8] anymore, "Why don't you try Booker T.?" [9] They've got a fine program." The parent [10] shows up dragging this child in and says, [11] "You know, I understand that you all have a [12] great school here." You know, well, what's [13] wrong with him. He's just a level four and [14] a half, special ed., something like that. [15] That's an old game of informal referral [16] where there's no way to prove it.

[17] CHAIR HAELEY: We're booked to go [18] to 1:45, right? We're basically there, [19] which — but I'd to go, if you have a few [20] more minutes, just to circle back around to [21] discuss the one, the crucial point to us [22] again which you want to hit. I mean, I

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[1] don't have time to go back to him and say, [2] "Ah, you've changed your mind on many things. [3] I don't think you've far enough there to [4] change minds." But just so we've got it [5] clearly in the record, and that it's, you [6] know, public forum, what is the one thing, [7] if you could have one problem solved by an [8] outside service organization, regardless of [9] whether it costs money or not, what would [10] that one thing be?

[11] MS. ALLEN: Just let me add, I'd [12] like to also ask the question Cathy and [13] Imani you've heard everybody else talk [14] since you started the and you wanted [15] to — I saw you kind of —

[16] MS. MKEON: Yes, thank you. [17] Well —

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: So then, anyone [19] else wants to change their mind —

[20] MS. MKEON: Yeah, sure, go right [21] ahead. I'll tell you very briefly.

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay.

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[1] MS. MKEON: You know, the special [2] ed. is a major problem in any — anybody [3] that wants to become an organization within [4] the city has to understand that, probably [5] with facilities, although it doesn't affect [6] me personally right now, special ed. is [7] there, because it wouldn't even matter if [8] you had a facility. If you don't get [9] control of the special ed. issue in this [10] city. By that I mean, and we are pretty [11] much on good terms. We, too, have been [12] dragged through the courts. Our legal [13] bills, to just support yourself because you [14] didn't dot an "I", and you wrote something [15] two minutes sooner than you were supposed [16] to, you could be looking at a \$27,000 bill. [17] We just had — we won a case recently where [18] we were going to get to pay \$27,000 for a [19] legal fee. But it cost us close to \$36,000 [20] to win so we didn't have to pay \$27,000. So [21] that's a real big issue in the city, even [22] when you're working very diligently to

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[1] monitor everything that's going on. Schools [2] cannot operate without a special ed. [3] coordinator. You need to have a [4] knowledgeable person that's going to make [5] that work in your school, because even with [6] it you still face these cases. DC is unique [7] to any other place in this country as far as [8] what the can charge us for legal fees. They [9] will send you — there isn't a firm in this [10] city that will send you a notice telling you [11] that somebody's up for a re-vow.

[12] They may not even attend your [13] school. Grandparents, or parents that had [14] signed with them years ago, thought it was a [15] done deal — over — and they're still [16] saying they're representing you. So there's [17] a big gap. It's going to take somebody, a [18] real giant who can stay focused on this [19] issue. They've been moving closer to [20] cleaning it up in DCPS. The charter schools [21] are really going to — they don't a [22] facility. It's the truth. It will just

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[1] wipe you out. You can't even know why, [2] budget-wise, how much something like that [3] is going to cost you. The monitoring is a [4] real big issue, but you know, there's [5] different criteria for everybody. How do [6] you hold charter schools to a standard that [7] makes a difference? How do they provide [8] support, because there's all these [9] organizations that say, "Now submit to us [10] this proposal because we're going after [11] grant money." They're not going

after grant [12] money. So you're giving them your time, and [13] you're writing these proposals, and it [14] doesn't go anywhere. We were told at one [15] point that we would have a CEO from a [16] business partner with our CEO to give [17] additional added value to what we're doing. [18] We're doing our. That doesn't mean we [19] can't be better. We should be all working [20] towards that. Those things fall through the [21] cracks, and there's really nobody to go to. [22] Having two chartering authorities offers a

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[1] major challenge for schools. Schools sort [2] of let these authorities have their own [3] life, if you will, because there's laws that [4] say they're supposed to do one thing, and [5] then they do something else, and we all [6] said, sort of quietly, and we said, and [7] passively, "Okay, so they want this one [8] report." So you do one more report. Before [9] you know it, you snowballing, and you've got [10] another bureaucracy going. That's sort of [11] what really, I mean, I think there is a real [12] need for an association in this city. But I [13] think that we have to be real cognizant of [14] the fact that we don't want to turn an [15] association into another bureaucratic [16] landmark that's going to start, you know, [17] doling out — you know, it's sort of like [18] that whole notion around west of the park, [19] and, you know, those schools got this, and [20] that school got that, and so how do you keep [21] it fair and equitably balanced? The last [22] thing I'd say is that — which, I know these

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[1] other issues are very pressing. The [2] standard for teaching and learning, and the [3] "no child left behind" legislation, is going [4] to be a real challenge for to public charter [5] schools. We have teachers that are not — [6] there was no law that required that they be [7] certified. Certification is maybe not the [8] only answer in the world for quality [9] education, but the fact is people have to be [10] knowledgeable about the process of teaching [11] children how to read so that they can be [12] successful. Until we develop some standard [13] for what it is that's important, not just in [14] accountability, but tying into "no child [15] left behind", schools again are going to [16] find themselves in limbo because they will [17] not have certified teachers or teachers that [18] meet this criteria that's out there. You [19] will jeopardize all the work that people [20] have done because it will take an enormous [21] amount of time for people to get that, kind [22] of, highly qualified staff.

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[1] MS. ALLEN: Let me ask you a [2] tech-

nical question that has come up in [3] lately. There are a lot respects of DC law. [4] It says a qualified teacher has to have [5] certain criteria.

[6] MS. MKEON: Yes.

[7] MS. ALLEN: Do you think a lot of [8] your teachers wouldn't meet the "qualified", [9] not just the "certified"? Not to be [10] certified if DC law says you have to be [11] certified. But are they qualified to teach [12] reading under what's being put out, or are [13] you not sure?

[14] MS. MKEON: I don't — I —

[15] MS. ALLEN: The other group also [16] said they haven't heard anything about us.

[17] MS. MKEON: I've been sitting on [18] the DC Board's "no child left behind", and [19] I'm trying to get clarity from them, and [20] they're still working on their [21] certification. But if you're in an [22] elementary — they're re-doing the

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[1] certification — but if you're in elementary [2] school level, you — even if you have a [3] master's degree in education, or in special [4] ed. if you will, you still have to have [5] content for reading, writing, or reading, [6] mathematics, and science. So, people — I [7] just don't see how they're going to do it at [8] this point. It's not that far behind that, [9] if we, next year have to send letters to [10] parents and tell them that the teachers of [11] the children — their children's teachers — [12] are not highly qualified staff members, it [13] will send many people running away from [14] schools again.

[15] MS. ALLEN: We'll have to look in [16] other —

[17] MS. MKEON: Thank you.

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: Imani?

[19] MS. ABDULLAH: Can I ask a [20] question again?

[21] CHAIR HAELEY: This — I'm — If [22] there's one sole thing — we've only got a

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[1] couple of moments. But if there's one [2] thing, just, bang, with give me one single [3] thing, what is it? What's your biggest need [4] that we can fill?

[5] MS. ABDULLAH: The central office. [6] The central office being and providing the [7] services. That's the one thing I will —

[8] CHAIR HAELEY: Right. Can I have [9] your diagram? Okay, and for the record, [10] we're submitting a diagram, labeled Exhibit [11] A —

[12] MS. ALLEN: The record isn't going [13] outside, and let me just say also, when [14] we get a report, and it's going to be [15] synthesized based on all the day's worth of [16] discussions, and we'll get you summaries, [17] you can have the entire

transcript if you [18] want, you know, without — anything, any [19] level that you want. We'll start out small, [20] just so we can give you feedback. I'll be [21] working to post it up before this goes. [22] There is a real difference between what

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[1] schools that have been around for a long [2] time want, what think they need, and what [3] your schools need. That's something that [4] not everybody is cognizant of. I think [5] that's a real neat thing that you guys help [6] us understand, as well as some of the [7] technical issues surrounding —

[8] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Christina?

[9] **MS. ENCINAS:** I'm still in the [10] process of understanding all this be [11] able to hear what experience people have [12] said. This is very helpful in a way. I [13] think I need more right now. It's [14] sometimes — help me to start with the [15] right — you know, in terms of [16] facilities. We have a very big issue with [17] trying to purchase a building, and remodel [18] the building.

[19] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Right. Nat?

[20] **MR. BROOKS:** I'm torn while we're [21] in building here. Selfishly, we need [22] building. But unselfishly, I think that a

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[1] centralized organizational structure that [2] feeds into building all of these aspects as [3] important pieces, is needed probably more [4] importantly. But if I went back to my [5] place, we would all vote for a building [6] versus —

[7] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Great. Well, thank [8] you all for taking the time today, and [9] please contact CER if you have any [10] questions. It's really a pleasure to have [11] had you come.

[12] (Whereupon, at 1:58 p.m., the [13] PROCEEDINGS were adjourned.)

**Lawyer's Notes**

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**In The Matter Of:**

*CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATIONS*

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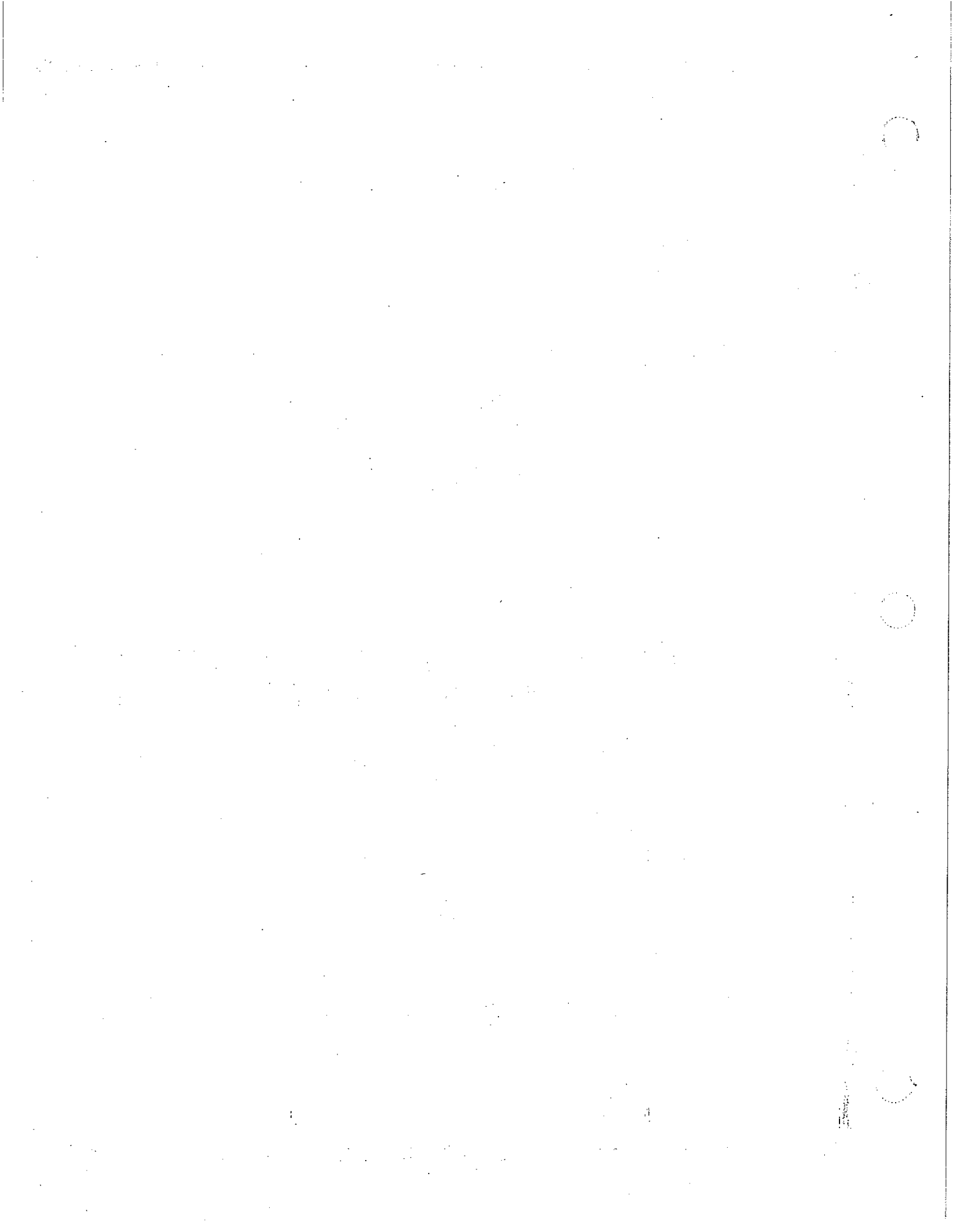
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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM  
FOCUS GROUP NO. 3 FOR D.C. CHARTER SCHOOL  
OPERATIONS  
Washington, D.C.

Page 2

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[1] PROCEEDINGS

[2] (2:00 p.m.)

[3] MS. VARGHESE: Again, I thank you [4] both for being here, getting here on time. [5] As Tom said, we are expecting about three or [6] four other people to join a little later. [7] All right, my name's Ann Varghese. I'm the [8] External Affairs Director here at the Center [9] for Educational Reform. This focus group [10] was convened because we wanted — it's part [11] of a broad, national effort, and we wanted [12] to identify what charter schools need most, [13] and so we better influence the development [14] of any organization that is created to fit [15] or to serve your needs, both locally and [16] nationally. We're conducting similar [17] meetings in several states, and where — [18] we're doing it differently in other states. [19] We thought this would be — a focus group in [20] DC would be better than a telephone survey [21] which we're doing in Indiana and in [22] California. Jonathan Baron is part of Red

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[1] Sea Communications, and he is going to be [2] facilitating those surveys.

[3] Since he's agreed to help us [4] understand what the needs are among charter [5] school operators, and we want to find some [6] universal themes and some common themes, and [7] identify those so we can move forward in our [8] national efforts. That said, Jeannie, I'm [9] not sure I've abstained myself in what we're [10] doing here, and if you want to —

[11] MS. ALLEN: No, just go ahead. I [12] run the Center, and I — as a — external [13] affairs person. This is kind of her [14] project, and I'm here to throw in input

when [15] I can and to offer any help.

[16] MS. VARGHESE: Tom Healey is going [17] to be our facilitator for today, and Tom, [18] I'll just hand it off to you.

[19] CHAIR HAELEY: CER came to me with [20] the question of how they can better help, [21] given their financial resources, to serve [22] the charter school community. Now, they

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[1] work nationally and they work locally. [2] They've engaged both myself and Jonathan [3] Baron, who is the head of Red Sea Research, [4] and also Basswood Research — Red Sea is one [5] company, and Basswood is another, but [6] Jonathan runs both, and they've primarily [7] become a specialist in building small [8] businesses. They have been primarily [9] working in the area of influence — small [10] influence businesses.

[11] We are conducting this — people [12] often think, when there's non-profits, that, [13] gee, the rules of for-profit companies don't [14] really apply. But of course they do. The [15] market research study that we're undertaking [16] with — for CER is along the classic lines [17] of trying to define exactly what the [18] potential consumers of this services need; [19] how they value those needs, because there [20] can often be a dislocation between people's [21] preference for what they want and what they [22] might actually want; and a, sort of higher

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[1] level, what we really wanted to do is get as [2] many charter schools operators together as [3] possible to discuss with among themselves [4] what they needed.

[5] Now this is the third session that [6] we've had today, and it's been very [7] interesting so far where the discussion has [8] gone. What I'd like to do to start the [9] discussion is, basically what we're going to [10] call a "speed exercise". I've got four — [11] just so you can — I've got four areas — [12] they're supposed to make me write this down [13] with us.

[14] There's only the two of you here. [15] They're supposed to — there's four areas [16] that we really want to go through, and [17] they're: what do you need? What do you most [18] expect? What are you disappointed by? What [19] are you most lacking, what support are you [20] most lacking? Then there's five general [21] areas of support: technical assistance, [22] advocacy, communications, new school

Page 7

[1] development, and general issues that come [2] into play.

[3] What I'd like to do right now is [4] just

take a minute, and if you could for [5] each of the four areas: What do you most [6] need, what do you most expect, what are you [7] disappointed by, what support is most [8] lacking — right one sentence, one point for [9] each of those. Then I'm going to ask you to [10] state them on the record, and then we're [11] going to discuss that.

[12] Then at the end of the session [13] today we're going to come back and see [14] whether there's been any change in your [15] mind. Now, with only the two of you here, [16] it might not be such a — enough of a [17] discussion that you end up changing your [18] mind, but we'll move along with that as it [19] goes.

[20] But the earlier sessions, this [21] actually produced some changes in thought. [22] Now, the one question that came up

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[1] immediately upon doing this before was, [2] "Well, who are you talking about?" If you [3] say, "What do I most expect?" "What do I [4] most expect from who?" Well, it could be [5] from the government, it could be from [6] private supporters, it could be from [7] parents, it could be from students.

[8] But just in your own mind in [9] running your school, what do you most [10] expect? What do you want the most? We're [11] trying to find that out. The other thing [12] that's come through consistently is the [13] question of focus. What I'd really like you [14] to do is think big.

[15] If all the money in the world and [16] all the power in the world could be thrown [17] itself in your problem, then when you think [18] about what your need is, then choose that. [19] Don't let it be constrained by, "Ah, well [20] that's impractical. Therefore I don't want [21] it." Okay? So if we could just take a [22] minute, and try and really confine your

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[1] answers to one sentence, so then we can go [2] more deeply into them as we go further.

[3] (Recess)

[4] CHAIR HAELEY: Ana Maria, would [5] you lead off?

[6] MS. NUEVO: Sure.

[7] CHAIR HAELEY: What do you — [8] what — let's run down the list. Actually, [9] I'm going to take my list back from you, [10] simply because I'm about to —

[11] MS. NUEVO: Oh, sure. Okay.

[12] CHAIR HAELEY: But, what do you [13] most need?

[14] MS. NUEVO: Right now, I feel that [15] we most need news of secure, stable, future [16] funding to allow for the

growth and [17] expansion of the programs that we currently [18] have. Right now it just seems like we are [19] getting a lot of news of future budget [20] projections for charter schools, and I don't [21] see how we can improve upon what we've [22] already established and, become even better

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[1] with that kind of depressing news.

[2] CHAIR HAELEY: The projections are [3] coming out of the Department of Education?

[4] MS. NUEVO: Right. I've only [5] become aware of them myself through a [6] meeting that I was at from the Charter [7] School Resource Center. But that, I think, [8] is what we most needed to have the security. [9] You know, are we going to go all the way [10] with the charter school movement and follow [11] through on it, or are we go on and not let [12] it spend ten years? I hope, of course, [13] that's not going to happen. But I think [14] that's one of, I think, one of the most [15] critical needs right now for me, as I see [16] it.

[17] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay.

[18] MS. NUEVO: I didn't feel that [19] technical assistance was really something at [20] my school most needed in this time, but we [21] were a school before having become a [22] charter, so the technical assistance side,

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[1] from our experience, was pretty much [2] satisfied. So —

[3] CHAIR HAELEY: Good. George, what [4] do you most need?

[5] DR. GORDON: Well, I said we [6] needed technical support in responding to [7] special education monitoring requests, and [8] sites, and visits. I only said that in the [9] sense that we seem to be in the monitoring [10] process, getting very negative kinds of [11] comments because we are not able to respond [12] to their — to request for process kinds of [13] issues in terms of special ed. — the [14] student evaluations, the IEP kinds of [15] things. Back to, again, a funding issue [16] there, who's going to pay for it, and that [17] kind of thing? It's an issue. The other [18] comments here, as we move along, sort of get [19] into budget how we, when it where it [20] comes up. But I would agree with your first [21] comment there.

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: Good. The, Ana

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[1] Maria, what do you most expect?

[2] MS. NUEVO: Well, I have to say [3] from the things that I have expected, I have [4] been getting them, these expectations met. [5] One of them, I think, that I have been [6] getting is support from the

Charter School [7] Board in terms of keeping us not only [8] accountable for what we've set our goals to [9] be, but also allowing us to have the [10] flexibility to set our own goals. I've [11] appreciated that tremendously.

[12] CHAIR HAELEY: You mentioned the [13] Charter Resource Center?

[14] MS. NUEVO: Correct.

[15] CHAIR HAELEY: What other support [16] groups do you generally use?

[17] MS. NUEVO: Charter School [18] Resource Center, I would say, is the [19] principle one. Our school, just because of [20] the student demographics has to hold a lot [21] of partnerships with the National Council of [22] Latin, which is the Hispanic

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[1] organization, of course. Those are the two [2] that are — come into my mind right now.

[3] CHAIR HAELEY: Good. George, [4] expectations? I'll go back and forth [5] no problem.

[6] DR. GORDON: Funds should be [7] provided in a timely manner, enabling better [8] program planning and evaluation activities. [9] Similarly the same thing.

[10] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay.

[11] DR. GORDON: When I say "timely [12] fashion", what I'm speaking of is that, [13] usually the funds should be in the bank — [14] and they are on the 15th of each month. But [15] what happens is there may be, as we've noted [16] during my years experience here, those funds [17] ought to go on down constantly. We're [18] always in a negative kind of — they are [19] less than what we got in September, and less [20] than what we expected.

[21] MS. ALLEN: How would you expect [22] those, how would you expect that —

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[1] we've got to get fixed — individually, [2] collectively?

[3] DR. GORDON: See, we get Montalvo [4] here. The Montalvos are kind of difficult [5] to deal with. You only hear from Montalvo [6] when you've had a problem, or you're late [7] with a report, and it can be very, very [8] direct. What I'm saying is, rather than him [9] calling and getting this information in a [10] negative fashion, we could meet with him, we [11] could say, "Look, this is the big picture [12] here — this is how the funds are doled out, [13] and these are the problems that I'm having." [14] Because what I'm hearing from him is that it [15] is not his problem per se. As I understand [16] the budget process in the District, he's [17] responding to some things cut

on his side. [18] So we're all in this together. But what we [19] get is, you're out there and you're pretty [20] much on your own. To fix it, this is just a [21] communication problem. As far as I'm [22] concerned, it can be written, it can be

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[1] verbal, but people are going to have to sit [2] around the table and say, "Well, look, this [3] is what the problem is, and these are some [4] of the means that I think that we can come [5] to some resolution."

[7] CHAIR HAELEY: Then, Ana Maria, [8] moving back over to you, can we talk about [9] disappointments?

[10] MS. NUEVO: Disappointments, I'm [11] afraid, just kind of — particular to our [12] experience as a charter school for adults — [13] adult immigrants — and I think that just [14] the idea that, whenever it comes — [15] sometimes we'll say we've had to match up, [16] whether that be in "No Child Left Behind" [17] Act funding, or anything that's particular [18] to making sure that DC public schools and [19] charter schools are doing the same thing. [20] We are constantly being pigeonholed as a — [21] there are other charter schools as charter [22] schools for children, and we constantly have

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[1] to make exceptions and do reminders. Just [2] to give you an example, the Office of [3] Federal Grants and Programs, they wanted to [4] send — they wanted to know how many [5] teachers were giving out — were teaching [6] certain subjects, because they wanted to [7] send out their DC school's contact standards [8] and curriculum guides. You know, at work, [9] it's for adults. I'll take it, but, if not, [10] you know, I don't know how applicable it's [11] going to be. So just that constant [12] pigeonholing is frustrating for and I've [13] been disappointed by it. But I guess it's [14] to be expected. That's my main [15] disappointment.

[16] CHAIR HAELEY: Mm-hmm.

[17] MS. NUEVO: Right now.

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: That's more of a [19] PR/Communications problem, isn't it?

[20] MS. NUEVO: Yes. I mean, given [21] the — I mean, it is. Then, also, just the [22] turn over at these offices, too, doesn't

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[1] help because, you know, you make an [2] agreement with — you've written the letter, [3] you've said, you know, we have — we [4] make — for example, we make these plans for [5] special ed. Students, or have these [6] programs, and we have an agreement, and [7] then, you know, someone new comes in, and [8] it's explain the story all over again, why [9] you don't do

something the way it's been [10] delineated. So that's my disappointment.

[11] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay. George, can [12] you talk about disappointments?

[13] DR. GORDON: A lot of paperwork [14] and reports, as usual. Redundancy. It [15] seems like we get —

[16] MS. NUEVO: What have you —

[17] DR. GORDON: Well, see, we might [18] be in a unique position because we've just [19] finished two monitoring sessions. We're [20] just getting requests for reports from five [21] years ago — information, database kind of [22] things that we may or may not have had privy

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[1] to, being that we've just started in [2] September. School, incidentally, is on [3] probation, and we have been doing our best [4] to erase that kind of status in terms of [5] shaping the curriculum, a lot of different [6] kinds of concerns. But again, we've had, I [7] guess, about 80 or 90 percent staff turn [8] over. That, in and of itself, causes a lot [9] of problems in terms of record maintenance [10] and that kind of situation.

[11] MS. NUEVO: What have you — by [12] the way —

[13] MS. ALLEN: Are there [14] opportunities for you all to sit down? I'm [15] Jeannie Allen, by the way. We had to meet [16] Hi.

[17] MS. CASSEUS: Nadia Casseus.

[18] MS. ALLEN: Hi. Good to see you. [19] Had — are there opportunities for you all [20] to be together and kind of explore if there [21] are ways to help each other?

[22] MS. NUEVO: Well, I would say

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[1] that — I mean, the Charter School Board [2] does have its principals' meeting, leaders [3] meeting. Charter School Resource Center [4] also has projects coming up of — that allow [5] for — that are going to allow for [6] moderation. But I am — I'm going to have [7] to go with what — taking a off of what [8] George was saying, that, you know, you're a [9] school that's in trouble. It's hard, I [10] would think, to get help. I mean, just to [11] give you an example, a charter school [12] resource center is having this project [13] called the Nexus Project. It's a way for — [14] to promote schools of excellence. But they [15] only want you, you know — you have to fill [16] out the application. They only want you if, [17] you know, you're to be one of those [18] schools of excellence. Whereas, I would [19] want to have an opportunity to provide [20] assistance to a school that would, you know, [21] really get something out of it. So, I [22] don't — maybe I might be misconstruing of

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[1] the application process works and all that [2] resource center —

[3] MS. ALLEN: No. You're right. [4] No, no. You're right. That is the program.

[5] MS. NUEVO: Yes.

[6] CHAIR HAELEY: So, Nadia, just to [7] catch everybody up with where we are and [8] what we're doing, I'll give you a little [9] exercise that we're working on. We're going [10] to circle back at the end of the discussion [11] and review these points, just to see if [12] there's anything about the discussion that [13] might have changed your mind. But just — [14] also as a matter of, you know, where we've [15] been and what we're doing — CER, which [16] serves both a national constituency as well [17] as charter schools in Washington, is really [18] looking to try and determine what of its [19] resources can be used to help make problems [20] go away for charter schools, both here in DC [21] and nationally. The project work involved [22] in today's, is really trying to put on

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[1] record the, you know, from the most [2] miniscule need to the largest, grandest, if [3] there was no resources — you know, no [4] resource limitations, what problem would I [5] most want to have solved. So, what we're [6] really asking you to do with your colleagues [7] is sort of tell us, you know, again, the [8] needs, the problems, the disappointments, [9] and Jonathan Baron is from Red Sea, which is [10] a research firm, and we're putting — and I [11] run a strategy firm for the goal and legal [12] issues, and we're trying to help CER really [13] define how they best can use their resources [14] to go forward in solving the problems of [15] charter schools. So —

[16] MS. ALLEN: I mean, because some [17] of those very issues are right now being [18] discussed here in Washington, about groups [19] to help you. We'd like to at least be able [20] to learn what we can and influence that [21] process so it's the best process.

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: So it's

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[1] supplementary to a complementary, to not a [2] substitute for, the discussions that are [3] currently going on in DC for a potentially [4] charter school association.

[5] MS. ALLEN: Yes.

[6] CHAIR HAELEY: Just as it isn't — [7] it's a supplement or complement to the same [8] discussions going on in Indiana, California, [9] Arizona, and Michigan, and many of the other [10] states around the country. CER has the [11] ability to — say there's some best [12] practices that

should be coming together, or [13] different discussions have come up on what [14] type of services could be best provided that [15] every school could avail themselves of. So, [16] just to bring you further along in the [17] group, if you wouldn't mind just telling us [18] what your greatest need is.

[19] MS. CASSEUS: Our greatest needs [20] are kind of twofold. One is facilities. [21] Facility is the issue — we are currently in [22] a renovated Safeway building. It was

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[1] originally designed to house about 250 [2] students. Our current enrollment is 670, so [3] we have about 14 portable classrooms on the [4] campus, on three different site parts of the [5] main — we're kind of on a cul-de-sac. So [6] we've bought lots, empty lots on that [7] cul-de-sac and placed our classrooms around [8] that way. So we have 14 classrooms in [9] portables, and the other 14 classrooms are [10] in the main building. So are able to [11] serve really 50 percent of our population in [12] our — at our site. So that's a huge issue [13] in trying to even get access to how to begin [14] to research open facilities, and, you know, [15] where can we go, other than having to break [16] ground and build something new. We know [17] there are buildings available that are not [18] in use. It's just, you hit a brick wall [19] every time you try to find out how to get [20] these things, and how to kind of access [21] them, and get around to it. Second to that [22] is, I think we need — there is a need for

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[1] board development and training for charter [2] schools. I think a lot of these charter [3] schools are kind of sprung up through some [4] kind of grass roots movement a lot of the [5] times, and the people who we have sitting on [6] the boards are not necessarily trained as [7] board members prior to them considering this [8] event, or wanting to do this for their [9] communities. So the kind of basic board [10] training and responsibilities aspect gets [11] missed in them actually doing their [12] function. So when it's actually time to do [13] certain things, and we split operations from [14] board functions, it gets confused. So those [15] are probably the two things that kind of [16] stick out in my head as I think about that [17] question.

[18] CHAIR HAELEY: How about [19] expectations?

[20] MS. CASSEUS: What I expect [21] from — my question was, "From whom?"

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: That's an open

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[1] question. From government, it could be from [2] parents, it could be from private service [3] providers.

[4] **MS. CASSEUS:** I sort of answered [5] it from, sort of a department of charter [6] school board. I was thinking, one of the [7] things we delve in today I don't feel is [8] being fostered as partnerships among charter [9] schools. We've kind of done our own [10] breaking ground with some charter schools in [11] our neighborhood, because we do feed our [12] children to some school at some point. [13] We're not the beginning and the end — we [14] end at eighth grade. So we need to feed our [15] children to another school. So we sort of [16] have partnered with some schools on our own [17] in order to begin to that. That — sort of [18] to dove tail on your comment, there really [19] is an opportunity to sit down and kind of [20] partner among charter schools just as a [21] think tank or just as a group of people [22] sharing needs and concerns and issues. For

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[1] a lot of it, I know a lot of the middle [2] schools last — this beginning of this [3] school year, you had a lot of problems with [4] enrollment. We had tons of children who [5] didn't know where they were going until [6] September. You know, so we were, like, [7] well, we've got kids. We just can't make [8] contact with anybody to — you know, "We've [9] got these 45 children. Do you want them?" [10] It's just impossible. It's impossible in — [11] so just to be able to kind of foster that [12] partnership, a time when charter school [13] leaders can sit down and, you know, not have [14] an agenda on the table, but an open meeting [15] to say, "This is kind of what I need. I [16] know that you're doing this well. We need [17] help here." As Dr. Gordon mentioned —

[18] **DR. GORDON:** George.

[19] **MS. CASSEUS:** George, turnover is [20] enormous. Is enormous. I am the fifth [21] principal in the fourth year of my school. [22] We, too, are in a probationary status right

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[1] now. A lot of it is due to turnover. So [2] there is no historical data. There is no, [3] you know, trying to get reports due — that [4] was due six years ago — no longer exist. [5] You know, it's kind of that deficient status [6] that you can't make up from if you don't have [7] the bodies, you know, to give you the [8] answers. So some kind of partnership or [9] support for those type of things are not [10] always a slap on the wrist for what you're [11] not doing, but kind of just how you need to [12] do them. Here's a model of how you need to [13] do it. It would be really, really helpful [14] to get.

[15] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Good. Marcia [16] McDonnell has joined us, so I'm speaking for [17] the record, Marcia. We're recording. [18] Marcia —

[19] **MS. McDONNELL:** Mar-cee'-ah.

[20] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Marcia.

[21] **MS. ALLEN:** Marcia.

[22] **CHAIR HAELEY:** So, what we're

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[1] talking about is what schools could most [2] need, expect, what's been the most [3] disappointing, and what's been the most [4] lacking. This exercise is basically just a [5] brief, one line, here's the thing that I [6] would most need if I could have anything. [7] So I wondered if you could answer that [8] question, not having had the chance to think [9] of an answer?

[10] **MS. McDONNELL:** Oh, that deals [11] with my note to you: "Please tell me what [12] are the questions you have so I won't [13] mention everything at once." So —

[14] **CHAIR HAELEY:** That's great. So [15] we'll just run through them, if you don't [16] mind doing it this way, so —

[17] **MS. McDONNELL:** No, no. I didn't [18] think you just want one thing, the most [19] important —

[20] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Just one thing. If [21] you could have one thing for your school, [22] what would it be?

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[1] **MS. McDONNELL:** Okay. A sack of [2] money.

[3] **CHAIR HAELEY:** Aside from money.

[4] **MS. McDONNELL:** Aside from money, it [5] would be our biggest need for 25 years, and it [6] hasn't changed — it's changed slightly in the [7] last five to six years, is the people who [8] understand what we're doing who are the artist [9] teachers that we seek. The faculty are the [10] hardest to find in the world. I guess that's [11] why we haven't been eminently [12] Popular. Precisely, because it [13] is hard. So that's the hardest [14] thing for our school is to find [15] the appropriate —

[16] **SPEAKER:** Accredited?

[17] **MS. McDONNELL:** Yes, that's the [18] generic, but it's because of our peculiarity of [19] our schools.

[20] **MS. NUEVO:** I would have to agree [21] with you on that. Our school is principally [22] English as a second language. So that for

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[1] us it's also a struggle to find teachers [2] with the appropriate qualifications in adult [3] education, and English language teaching to [4] language minority students. I mean, and [5] the — yes.

[6] **MS. CASSEUS:** Can I just say [7] that — I know I said it facetiously [8] again — and besides money, but actually [9] that is the first — in our case, because we [10] try to stay small, so we don't have the [11] economy of scale. So money is the first [12] thing.

[13] **MS. ALLEN:** So let me jump in. I [14] told Tom before we asked him to be objective [15] and an impartial moderator for all of you, [16] that I may jump in if I thought there was a [17] germ of something I wanted to pull out, or [18] if I thought there was something missing. [19] But because of some things you all just [20] said, and given your limited time, I wanted [21] to posit something to you. That is: if you [22] had a centralized place that actually would

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[1] help you in a very global way to do [2] recruiting, or service your recruiting needs [3] as you chose — could be everything from [4] full service to maybe combining a number of [5] advertising, whatever. The sky's the limit. [6] Would that be the kind of thing a) you'd like [7] to see, and b) that you even ever heard of [8] being introduced? Or do you think it's [9] under discussion right now? In other words, [10] to what extent are some of the things you've [11] mentioned, things that you could load off on [12] a group?

[13] **DR. GORDON:** Is that recruiting [14] for staff, or students, or what do you —

[15] **MS. ALLEN:** Any of it. But [16] recruiting for staff is what made me think [17] of it.

[18] **MS. NUEVO:** I would be very — I [19] mean, for what you're sounding, what you're [20] talking about, reminds me of how our [21] executive director was saying, "Well, that [22] won't go in the school system." You know,

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[1] it was terrible because we had to get — you [2] know, we couldn't do anything. We had to [3] do, you know, for supplies, for recruitment, [4] you know, whatever they sent you, you were [5] stuck with. So, in terms of your idea, I [6] would think that charter schools could [7] benefit from that type of group. But I [8] would be very concerned about the nature of [9] obligation and relationship between that [10] group and the charter schools. Is it more [11] of a resource or is it something that's kind [12] of the mouth that feeds you, I mean, type [13] of —

[14] **MS. ALLEN:** However you design it?

[15] **MS. NUEVO:** Right. However [16] was designed, I think most charter schools [17] would like to see it more as a resource in [18] the sense that we each have our own [19] individual needs in different areas. But I [20] would hesitate to make it

more resembling of [21] a public school system.

[22] MS. CASSEUS: BU staff that you

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[1] can't get rid of. So there is an [2] organization that contacts us on a regular [3] basis that does do something like that. But [4] what they do is kind of ask you what you're [5] looking for. You know, what — to what [6] vacancies do you have in your school, if [7] any, and then salary. It is a really very, [8] very basic information sheet that you fax [9] back and then they call you and say "Well, [10] I've got three resumes. Would you like to [11] see them?" That kind of thing. I think [12] something like that is very — I'd like it [13] to be a little more technologically sound — [14] something you could look on the website, or [15] something that can be done via e-mail. I [16] hate faxes. So, it's the worst invention in [17] life. But, something like, that can be, you [18] know, on the e-mail, or on the server on [19] the web that you can access and kind of look [20] at resumes, maybe preview, you know, preview [21] them on your own. So like — but, [22] definitely not, "I need six teachers, and

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[1] here is six teachers we delivered to you." [2] You, you know, kind of obligated to keep [3] them.

[4] CHAIR HAELEY: Would you trust a [5] group like that to do the background checks [6] for you?

[7] MS. CASSEUS: If I saw them, [8] after —

[9] CHAIR HAELEY: If you chose [10] them —

[11] MS. CASSEUS: Mm-hmm.

[12] CHAIR HAELEY: Knew that they had [13] been pre-qualified, then you'd be [14] comfortable in all the back end being done. [15] But you want to choose?

[16] MS. CASSEUS: Mm-hmm. But I'd [17] want to be able to make the final decision.

[18] DR. GORDON: Then they would be [19] responsive if one slips through and the [20] Washington Post is on your back, if you see [21] what I'm saying. In other words, if — [22] well, I don't have to go into that. But I

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[1] know you can — the responsibility you might [2] be able to, at least initiate to the point [3] that you're saying, "Well, look, if you — [4] this organization is here, and you sent me [5] someone who slips through the screening [6] process, and all of a sudden you had the [7] problem, you just don't run and hide when [8] the Post comes says, "Well, look, how did [9] you get this came in that we sent you?"

[10] CHAIR HAELEY: You need a partner, [11] someone to —

[12] DR. GORDON: Yes, you need [13] somebody to say, "Well, look, it's not only [14] your fault as a principal for accepting this [15] particular case here: We've got some other [16] people involved here." It's neither here [17] nor there, but then the trouble is, you [18] know, doo-dah.

[19] CHAIR HAELEY: But you could hire [20] the [21] DR. GORDON: Pardon?

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: I mean, you

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[1] couldn't take from your budget a set of [2] money and hire a professional human [3] resources agency to do that?

[4] DR. GORDON: They — yes. [5] Outside of the fact —

[6] MS. CASSEUS: Someone who would [7] like to volunteer?

[8] CHAIR HAELEY: So really, what [9] you're asking for is the level of [10] professionalism that you can be purchased to [11] be provided through — if it was possible, [12] to be provided through a support [13] organization?

[14] DR. GORDON: Right.

[15] CHAIR HAELEY: So degradation [16] of quality.

[17] DR. GORDON: Right. is the [18] opposite side of that coin, there is, as a [19] charter school you have some leverage in [20] doing some unique kinds of recruiting — and [21] what you didn't have while you were in the [22] school system. So if you want to put in

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[1] a — run a two-day advertisement in the Post [2] seeking certain kinds you can do that.

[3] CHAIR HAELEY: Mm-hmm.

[4] DR. GORDON: You might be bending [5] a rule here or there, but it can be done. [6] You could also say you need downtown. [7] Put some signs up. You know, you can do [8] some creative kinds of — and you don't want [9] to lose that at a — well, I guess I'm [10] saying, you don't — we have to be careful [11] what you set up, so that you don't lose some [12] autonomy that you have. End of process.

[13] CHAIR HAELEY: How about other [14] areas than human resources? We've had food [15] service come up — questions of not even [16] being able to find if — one of the things [17] that seems to be almost a principal's [18] network of — they know who these, you know, [19] for food services — calling other [20] principals to say, "Who do you use? Are [21] they okay?" Would being able to have [22] resources that you could look at the would.

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[1] identify, "These are, you know, a series of [2] food service providers with ratings from the [3] other schools." Would that be helpful? [4] Systems of services like that: lawyers, [5] accountants?

[6] MS. CASSEUS: Immensely helpful. [7] I think all of that would be helpful. Some [8] way of gauging people with experience with [9] charter school servicing — all levels of [10] service delivery. Our food services are [11]. I can't even begin to talk about [12] them. They're so disgusting. I can't [13] even — if I began to talk, we'd run over in [14] time. But it's a — I think all, just [15] general service providers from food service [16] down to, you know, electricians, and who are [17] you're using for your phone service, who are [18] you using for your internet service? Things [19] like that, because we spend a lot of time [20] jumping around different vendors trying to [21] get things done. Everyone doesn't know how [22] to deal with the needs of a school. It's

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[1] not a Fortune 500 company. It's not a bunch [2] of adults, you know, who will be using these [3] services, so they have to be a lot more [4] durable and child-friendly and all of that, [5] which takes a different level of, you know, [6] use. Then, because of the use there's [7] being installed provided their services. So [8] it would be great to be able to call, and [9] look somewhere and say these are the vendors [10] that all these schools are using, and we can [11] call someone and say, "How do you like the [12] service?" You don't find out too often [13] until you have a problem that this was not a [14] good vendor. Then somewhere in the meeting [15] someone will say, "Oh, gosh, I had them in [16] my apartment two years ago." So you say, [17] "Well, it would have been nice to know, and [18] then we wouldn't have had to go down the [19] same road and make the same mistakes for [20] it."

[21] MS. ALLEN: So no one showed up [22] when you got started or when you arrived as

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[1] principal. Or at least you didn't have any [2] kind of little handbook that said, "There [3] are these various things available, and this [4] is how you can avail themselves, and if you [5] dial this number, so-and-so will show up to [6] help?"

[7] MS. CASSEUS: Absolutely not.

[8] MS. ALLEN: Did that exist when —

[9] MS. McDONNELL: No, but I do have to [10] give credit. Definitely between FOCUS and the [11] research center, all the things you've [12] mentioned have been more than available in [13] terms of

evaluation even of vendors — by the [14] group, not by them, not by the providing [15] support group but by the individual schools, [16] commentaries — and there's been a good e-mail [17] system of commentary about the — as far as [18] recruitment is concerned, the resource center [19] has put that on for some of us —

[20] MS. NUEVO: I have a job there.  
[21] MS. McDONNELL: Yes, and you're [22] probably talking much wider — I like the idea

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[1] of being able to look at .

[2] MS. ALLEN: How is that —

[3] MS. McDONNELL: For some of us it [4] hasn't worked for us at all for faculty. It [5] still doesn't answer us because it's not a [6] typical person who would apply — but, yes, for [7] resource people, and when there's the special [8] education supports, you know, system that [9] allows you to find vendors — vendor fare, [10] through that. So there — I didn't know if you [11] meant more the national scale. Possibly that [12] would make a difference, where this was a [13] little more local what they're doing. But they [14] have been doing almost every one of those [15] areas, one or another institution has. I [16] haven't seen any of them come up with, like, [17] "Here is \$5,000, and you can have it in ones, [18] or, you know, twenties, you know.

[19] CHAIR HAELEY: Right, then, you [20] know, one of the questions that was brought [21] up earlier today was simple benefits that [22] can be given to teachers coupons for

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[1] florists that the centralized organization [2] could round up and have available for [3] distribution. I mean, what need do you [4] think is the most that you could really [5] off-load, Marcia? What's the number one [6] thing you can get rid of?

[7] MS. McDONNELL: Oh, for off-load?

[8] CHAIR HAELEY: Sorry. Off-load.

[9] MS. McDONNELL: That's [10] COL. JOHNSON: I'm Colonel [11] Johnson.

[12] CHAIR HAELEY: I'm Tom Healey, and [13] is that sun bugging you?

[14] COL. JOHNSON: No, it's fine. It [15] feels great. The school is cold right now.

[16] CHAIR HAELEY: So, we've been [17] going through an exercise of answering [18] essentially four questions: 1) what do you [19] need the most; 2) what do you expect the [20] most; 3) what most disappointed; [21] and 4) where you've found just the whole [22] charter experience lacking.

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[1] MS. McDONNELL: Oh, today?

[2] CHAIR HAELEY: But as opposed [3] to — we haven't gotten to "lacking" yet. [4] We've a little exercise which we're not [5] going to go back through. But that's sort [6] of our context. So as a practical matter, [7] you know, as we talk about needs and things [8] that can be off-loaded, some of the [9] questions that came up quite a bit earlier [10] was the discussions with governmental [11] entities.

[12] MS. McDONNELL: I was going to [13] address that.

[14] CHAIR HAELEY: Definitions of [15] formulas for — per child, per head [16] payments, the request for special [17] legislation, the lobbying area, and general [18] advocacy work. Is this an area that — if [19] any would like to discuss this now, so [20] Colonel Johnson, since you just joined us, [21] perhaps you can tell me about the need of [22] your organization — your school, for, you

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[1] know, outreach efforts, people to walk out [2] in the community and speak out on issues [3] that not just affect your school, but the [4] general DC charter area.

[5] COL. JOHNSON: Right. The issue [6] you just addressed, I think that affects all [7] schools, because what has happened — and I [8] am just going to talk about my school, but I [9] think it affects all schools — is the [10] bureaucracy has found us. You know that the [11] first year, you know, you running very hard [12] trying to get everything together. Now, [13] because the bureaucracy has found you, you [14] are pulled so many different directions in [15] order to provide the paperwork here, a [16] report here and a report there, and so when [17] we talk about going out and doing the [18] outreach, it's been very, very difficult. [19] We have a person who is a volunteer that [20] does a lot of our outreach. It's very [21] difficult for even that one person to do [22] that, to go talk to the local ANC's in the

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[1] community, the local politicians, to talk to [2] some of the businesses in the area. We want [3] people to talk to the different churches and [4] just people in the community. We found that [5] very, very difficult now. Just like me, I [6] mean, I the meeting person. That's what I [7] do. I do meetings and graphs. It's hard [8] for me to even know the kids anymore. In [9] fact, that's difficult for me to take, [10] because I like that interaction with the [11] kids. So when you're talking about one of [12] the difficulties, absolutely, as I said, the [13] bureaucracy has just kind of,

just sucked us [14] in.

[15] CHAIR HAELEY: Well then, in going [16] out to churches, is it a matter of, you [17] know, the general community not really [18] knowing what the school does, or not even [19] knowing it exists, or do find it's more than [20] a persuasive case of — they know who you [21] are, but you've got to identify where you're [22] solving one of their needs?

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[1] COL. JOHNSON: Well, we had to get [2] a little smarter, because I said it was [3] difficult for us to get out. Because in our [4] community, within about a mile radius, [5] there's about 27 churches. So in that case [6] we've got three that border our property. [7] So one of the ways we got smart, we invited [8] them to be part of our local school [9] restructuring team. So, they're partnered [10] with us, so now that's how we get a little [11] outreach that way, through them.

[12] CHAIR HAELEY: Nadia, could you — [13] sorry, I saw you with a bottle at your [14] mouth, and that's just something I do with [15] my kids all the time. Advocacy, is this an [16] area that you think there's a need for? [17] Public relations, communications?

[18] MS. CASSEUS: I think some kind of [19] public relations needs to be done. I'm not [20] certain what level we would need [21] consistently, but at different times we need [22] different things. So someone who can

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[1] provide the gamut of services and we could [2] kind of a la carte pick what we need at a [3] certain time. I think during recruitment [4] time it's imperative if we had someplace [5] where we would run ads, if there were [6] someplace where we would know all of the [7] schools — all of the elementary schools or [8] whomever, who are looking to, you know, feed [9] their children somewhere else — if we could [10] find out where all of the area job fares are [11] so we can be there to recruit rather than [12] calling 18 different schools every time to [13] find out when they're having a —

[14] CHAIR HAELEY: Do you all [15] advertise at the same time?

[16] MS. CASSEUS: Not usually.

[17] SPEAKER:

[18] MS. CASSEUS: No.

[19] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay.

[20] SPEAKER:

[21] MS. CASSEUS: Yes.

[22] MS. McDONNELL: Yes, we all hear

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[1] stories [2] CHAIR HAELEY: I'm sorry?



[3] MS. McDONNELL: Stories — you know, [4] getting stories of people the PR, the [5] stories —

[6] COL. JOHNSON: See, we used to use [7] the radios, but we found that not [8] necessarily non-productive, but we found [9] that the best way for us to do it was by [10] word of mouth, actually going to — talking [11] to different schools, different agencies.

[12] MS. CASSEUS:

[13] MS. NUEVO:

[14] COL. JOHNSON: Yes, absolutely.

[15] MS. McDONNELL: Are we talking about [16] recruitment here, or just general information?

[17] COL. JOHNSON: A little of both.

[18] MS. McDONNELL: I mean, we also try [19] to get out press releases to the different news [20] organizations. We've also — our school is [21] also a part of the Council of Latino Agencies, [22] which is a local agency that — so we mail

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[1] stuff to the community that way. Just, you [2] know, people that we've — organizations that [3] we've kept up with in the past huge mailing [4] lists, and that's a lot of the ways that we [5] announce what's going on at the school, whether [6] that be the school's groundbreaking ceremony [7] for the new building, or commencement [8] ceremonies, or any festivals that we're having. [9] We usually have these festivals that celebrate [10] the students' heritages throughout the year. [11] We definitely make that a PR event to invite, [12] and we've had — at the last one we had someone [13] from WETA, and the Washington Post was at the [14] last graduation ceremony, so we're trying to [15] definitely make sure that our school is getting [16] showcased, because it definitely helps later [17] on.

[18] MS. CASSEUS: It's difficult [19] finding "school-friendly" reporters. I [20] think a lot of the reporters come looking [21] for the bad story at the school — what's [22] wrong with the school? What's happening

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[1] incorrectly, or who's mismanaging — or [2] things like that.

[3] MS. NUEVO: It's a sexier story.

[4] MS. CASSEUS: Right. Right. [5] Rather than finding the good news people, [6] when we want to hear about the commencement [7] ceremonies, we want to hear about, you know, [8] the volunteering, and all the civil duties [9] that the children are doing, the community [10] service that they're doing, they really [11] don't want to cover stuff like that. We did [12] a huge event on the King holiday where we [13] had 125 students come in

and partnered with [14] DC Cares and the Red Cross, to paint the [15] building. It was all volunteers, and it was [16] a huge effort, and we got stuff donated from [17] Home Depot, and stuff donated from [18] McDonald's lunches, and everything from [19] them, and then we put a big press release [20] out and we got one reporter from Fox, I [21] think, who came out. I think it ran, like, [22] Saturday night at 10:30 when everybody's at

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[1] dream. So, you know, how do we get that out [2] there, you know, versus if we had, you know, [3] the water main break or some kids couldn't [4] get into the school on Tuesday — that would [5] have been all over the front page.

[6] CHAIR HAELEY: Did you put a press [7] release out that you were on TV?

[8] MS. CASSEUS: That we were on TV?

[9] CHAIR HAELEY: After they did it?

[10] MS. CASSEUS: No, we didn't do [11] that.

[12] CHAIR HAELEY: You should have.

[13] MS. CASSEUS: Well, see, I didn't [14] know that. It would be nice to have someone [15] tell me that then.

[16] (Laughter)

[17] CHAIR HAELEY: But if there was a [18] central place that could do that type of [19] stuff —

[20] MS. CASSEUS: Absolutely.

[21] CHAIR HAELEY: But that that would [22] be helpful. That type of general image for

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[1] both the school as well as charter schools [2] generally. How about direct lobbying [3] efforts — have any of you engaged in [4] lobbying efforts to try and actually get [5] special appropriations for your schools [6] earmarked phonies —

[7] MS. McDONNELL: Oh, that kind of —

[8] MS. ALLEN: What kind of lobbying? [9] Marcie, you were shaking your head "yes"?

[10] MS. McDONNELL: I was just saying [11] that we do so lobby since we have to [12] the lobbyists directly.

[13] MS. ALLEN: Right.

[14] MS. McDONNELL: But we've left it, [15] again, to some of the — some of the, what [16] you're talking about, some of the wider [17] institutions to do the more provocative [18] lobbying with Congress. But on a local level, [19] so with — I'm sure with each board, we [20] constantly in one way or another are having to [21] communicate that they — someone else might [22] interpret it as lobbying about legislation.

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[1] That's the area I think that is one of the most [2] needed. Like, we're all talking about things [3] that disappear. Sound like fearful, but it [4] doesn't have to be, about, of what could be [5] imposed by the unifying in certain ways. But [6] there are some things that are unifying is [7] essential, and that's the legislative aspects. [8] But on a local level, I'm sure with each board [9] unifying such as, I guess I have to say a [10] unified feeling about the imposition of the [11] federal education legislation has effected — [12] is bothering almost everybody then from the [13] survey we get with Stokes. Our school, a part [14] of the responses we got — the two areas, [15] everybody is unified on the two areas that we [16] really need to be on. That would be to be able [17] to affect federal legislation. I think that's [18] where we need the most help, because of the [19] nature of DC, and because it is — well, not [20] just — no — not just DC in this case. This [21] is affecting every state, federal legislation, [22] and the way it's being interpreted in terms of

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[1] high staked testing, which I know, you know, [2] there's some difference on, maybe here at this [3] table. But for the most part in public charter [4] schools they are unified, except for maybe [5] three exceptions that I know of, about that [6] issue. About the interpretation of highly [7] qualified teacher, which is almost the essence [8] of what or descriptive of whether our [9] public charter schools to be able to decide [10] what that means to us, as long as the outcomes [11] are strong, and that we should have — and just [12] finally, that we should have varied ways of [13] assessing those outcomes. So, I'm just laying [14] out what I think are currently some of the [15] major lobbying efforts that are needed as.

[16] MS. ALLEN: We learned earlier, [17] that, unlike a handful of states where the [18] authorizers have, in fact, sat down and made [19] an attempt to explain and to work with [20] charter schools directly on how to align [21] themselves with these things without [22] compromising their mission — that none of

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[1] that has been done here. It sounds like [2] there's a lot confusion on the teacher piece [3] itself. That's actually a surprise, because [4] that's something that we would have expected [5] that be done right out of the box by any [6] number of groups working here on behalf of [7] charter schools.

[8] CHAIR HAELEY: An unintended [9] consequence of research, right? This [10] just is not something that — I think, what

[11] Jeanne was saying earlier was that — she [12] just expected or CER expected that the DC [13] Charter Schools had this qualified teacher [14] issue in hand, like the other states do. [15] But, in fact, it's almost unanimous among [16] the groups today, that no one's come and [17] presented the qualified teacher issue or the [18] other elements of "no child left behind", to [19] you as a group or individually. Has anyone [20] received any individual counseling on this [21] area?

[22] MS. McDONNELL: Yes, by — by

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[1] calling up our state and communicating — [2] taking the initiative to do that — hearing [3] their interpretation. Also, the person at [4] FOCUS who — what's her name?

[5] COL. JOHNSON: Shirley?

[6] MS. McDONNELL: No.

[7] COL. JOHNSON: Or Natasha?

[8] MS. McDONNELL: Yeah. She and [9] someone else have been, sort of, running the [10] state — the federal level meetings to — [11] they've been interpreting it. There's been [12] interpretation, but that's not what I'm talking [13] about — I'm talking about being able to make [14] our response from our state being a part of it, [15] and so by talking to DCPS, we at least got [16] involved now. In the little area — the little [17] room there is to — for the state to respond — [18] so it's more than just hearing what is, it's [19] lobbying we need, I think, to affect change.

[20] MS. ALLEN: But since you're not a [21] part of DCPS, shouldn't you have your own [22] voice going directly to the feds?

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[1] MS. McDONNELL: Oh, yes. I would [2] think — as we exist as a state and dealing [3] with DCPS as its role in the state, they've [4] been — the new people in place are somewhat [5] open.

[6] MS. ALLEN: But, you're different. [7] In fact, we worked really hard to make sure [8] there was a clause in the federal law [9] saying, that while a lot of these things [10] must apply, they have to be handled [11] differently, because charters are different. [12] That itself gets lost in the absence of you [13] all having a way to communicate.

[14] MS. McDONNELL: Can — even though [15] maybe it's not your intent, in this, can you [16] respond and say that FOCUS — if you had an [17] affect on federal law, because a lot of this [18] stuff is — that we — the two areas we are [19] real concerned about seem to be very narrow, [20] but we — hoping the interpretation can be [21] made, and some say it can, that our federal [22] law for public charter schools, to public

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[1] charter school law here trumps the —

[2] MS. ALLEN: Yes, although not in [3] terms of testing. I know you don't like to [4] hear that, Marcia. But, that said, and [5] again, this is one of those areas where the [6] really strong state infra-structures have [7] figured out how to help their charter [8] schools work with the within the eyes of [9] this law without comprising. That's part of [10] the void that we're hearing all day, but [11] what may be working towards filling that [12] void, we're not sure where that's coming [13] down.

[14] MS. McDONNELL: Can you just [15] answer one other thing, and what about the [16] other one that we thought were the two [17] strongest things were — even stronger one [18] was qualified teachers, is that according to [19] the public charter school — that's what [20] we've heard — we can interpret it as long [21] as they're highly qualified for the [22] individual school. Is that as you interpret

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[1] it?

[2] MS. ALLEN: It is very flexible.

[3] MS. McDONNELL: Okay. Thank you.

[4] MS. ALLEN: He's looking at me, [5] like, where did she come from.

[6] COL. JOHNSON: No. No. No. You [7] were mentioning someone talking about some [8] of the direct line, and I was thinking that [9] in reference to a couple of things. One, [10] that the highly qualified teacher which, I [11] know that everybody in here knows for the [12] charter schools in DC, it says that we don't [13] have to be certified. So, we've been [14] grappling as a group among the traditional [15] public schools and the charter schools to [16] see what "highly qualified" means in DC. [17] Well, also, because there is two chartering [18] boards here, and I have to speak for the [19] Board of Education, because that's what [20] we're chartered under — and I know you're [21] under the Public Charter School Board — so, [22] it's two boards and there's a different

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[1] focus on different things. Because, with [2] the Board of Education — the Board of [3] Education speaks for DCPS, but we're also [4] chartered by the Board of Education. So [5] they have to have enough knowledge in order [6] to capture what our concerns are, and some [7] of the concerns of DCPS, and carry them [8] forward. That is supposed to be our quote [9] federal voice. But this somehow gets lost [10] as it goes forward.

[11] MS. McDONNELL: So that's why we

[12] have that need — that you've been asking — [13] that's the biggest need.

[14] MS. ALLEN: Independent from your [15] authorizers' voice, that can help you [16] through your authorizers — sounds like [17] you're saying.

[18] COL. JOHNSON: Yes. Yes.

[19] DR. GORDON: In addition to this, [20] I think I heard mentioned [21] newsletters/newspapers that are generated by [22] the charter school, or whatever organization

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[1] might come out as a result of this. On air [2] time, you mentioned — someone mentioned [3] here — dealing with reporters. Principals [4] can't deal with reporters. They're — the [5] whole process is different. There's no news [6] but bad news, and when you deal with [7] reporters you have to assume that that's the [8] position they are going to take, but we all [9] understand that. What I am saying though [10] is, if we're going to create an entity here, [11] that it's highly possible we're talking [12] about communications here. If a group got [13] together and developed a professional [14] publication of what's going on in each [15] charter school, providing some air time, [16] get — the whole process of getting fifteen [17] minutes on a local station, the amount of [18] time it would take before a principal would [19] do that it's just enormous. Even having the [20] context, it would make it prohibitive at [21] best.

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: So, someone to

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[1] pitch your story — someone to come up with [2] the editorial matrix for the written [3] publication —

[4] DR. GORDON: Professionally done.

[5] MS. McDONNELL: Kind of like, the [6] Washington Post — the Washington Post had a [7] piece on each of the charter schools — that [8] was a while back.

[9] DR. GORDON: We need a constant [10] piece coming out.

[11] MS. McDONNELL: You mean [12] something —

[13] CHAIR HAELEY: That was Nadia [14] speaking, who just said, he sent me the [15] e-mail. When we all speak at once then the [16] transcription falls apart. So, but the [17] question was: has the article been [18] published? Consensus earlier was, that no, [19] the article has not been published yet. So [20] then, we only have about 15 to 20 minutes [21] left, so I would like to run through the [22] question of what's most lacking again,

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[1] although we seem to hit on that fairly

[2] clearly with lobbying and advocacy, [3] communications, different PR efforts, [4] coordinated media presence. Special ed. [5] hasn't come up in this discussion at all. [6] The rules of special ed., the questions of [7] special ed., is there any other areas, in [8] particular, that you'd like to bring up [9] that's been lacking, which you would value [10] What's most lacking from your school?

[11] MS. CASSEUS: I put here, some [12] kind of a constant flow of documentation, [13] information, and controls. I think everyday [14] we wake up, the rules have changed. So, [15] it's always impossible to know if you're [16] playing basketball or we're playing football [17] today. I think that's the — probably the [18] most difficult aspect of, kind of, keeping [19] the stream steady.

[20] CHAIR HAELEY: So, there's no — [21] for a lack of better terms — attorneys [22] overseeing the regulators, and in turn the

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[1] regulators are changing the rules on you.

[2] MS. CASSEUS: Right. For example, [3] this is — most of us deal with [4] out-of-boundary children, because our [5] children don't need to be in certain [6] boundaries within neighborhoods. They just [7] have to be District residents. When I move [8] my children from my school to neighborhood [9] schools, then the boundary issue becomes an [10] issue for them, although it was — it hasn't [11] been — maybe for the time they've been with [12] us. Some huge thing happened with the way [13] the out-of-boundary process is to happen [14] this year. The only reason why we found out [15] about it is a parent, who had a child in [16] another school, in a DC public school, said, [17] "Did you guys hear about this?" We hadn't [18] heard about it. For our eighth graders and [19] some of our sixth graders, potentially, [20] that's huge. If they weren't housed with us [21] and continued to go through the process as [22] we typically do, and by the time March came

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[1] around, and April, they would have missed [2] their opportunity for the out-of-bound [3] replacements. So, that was not the rule [4] last year, and we were, kind of, going with [5] everything last year, and if that was to be [6] changed, then it would have been great to [7] know in December, this is what you need to [8] do in January or by February, rather than [9] assuming that it goes the same way and not [10] getting notified of the detail. It's a [11] problem. That happens in many different [12] arenas, not just, you know, that — you [13] know, what you need to

report one month, you [14] report — you turn in eighteen different [15] reports — the next month, well, you really [16] need to have those two; you shouldn't have [17] turned in those eighteen. Anyway, but [18] you're really late on this other thing that [19] we didn't tell you that you should've turned [20] instead of eighteen things that you did turn [21] in. So, it's, you know, it's just, can we [22] have in September, all of this, what you

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[1] need for the entire year — with knowing, [2] and knowing on the back of your head, yes, [3] there will be exceptions based on emergency [4] situations — but, if we know September [5] through June, these are the things that you [6] are going to need from us, and when, and in [7] what form, then we can always comply. But, [8] it seems to change quite frequently.

[9] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay, George.

[10] DR. GORDON: Let me preface my [11] statement — I got to follow-up on something [12] that Marcia said here earlier. It may be [13] that much of what we've discussed already [14] exists, the technical support kind of thing [15] at the charter school office and in a number [16] of other existing organizations — we don't [17] want to leave you with the impression —

[18] MS. ALLEN: Can you name what [19] those are so we make sure that we've got [20] some —

[21] DR. GORDON: Well, when I deal [22] with the Charter School Board, it's charter

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[1] school office or resource center. Most of [2] the requests that I've made I've been able [3] to get. They come through. The issue is, [4] do you have enough time to really sit down [5] and make — get away from your desk and the [6] school to go pick it up or do whatever have [7] you — but the — when you ask for [8] assistance, generally it's there. Now, I [9] cannot say that I've had an instance yet in [10] which we've asked for technical assistance [11] and which it was not either responded to by [12] saying, "Well, look, we're going to have a [13] session within the next two months regarding [14] this issue, or if you'd like you might want [15] to come by and pick up this memo, or maybe [16] you want to go through this document here to [17] find out what the answer is". Okay, that's [18] one. Now, let me go back and respond to [19] what you were saying here. What support is [20] most lacking? I said, the technical support [21] in terms of managing these accounts and your [22] monies. This seems to be a big issue,

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[1] because we're all using different kinds of [2] bookkeeping systems. When you get — when [3] the monitor comes out, I have never seen a [4] case yet in which we are in congruence with [5] what they expect. Case in point, are you [6] using Quick Books; are you using Quicken; [7] what kind of system are you using? But, [8] these are very simple kinds of things to me. [9] We all should be using the same doggone [10] system, if you got money. So, you know what [11] to expect when they come out, especially [12] when you're standing with an auditor, you're [13] in education, and what are you supposed to [14] do except get creamed in the process. [15] That's my only comment.

[16] CHAIR HAELEY: Well, the question [17] of control and treasury functions came up [18] earlier with accounting, and whether some of [19] that can be standardized. They'd let you [20] use Quicken. Anyone?

[21] DR. GORDON: Not Quicken.

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: Quick Books has

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[1] double sided accounting. Quicken is [2] one-sided.

[3] MS. McDONNELL: Requirements must [4] be in both, but under that Board of Ed. [5] they, kind of, want us to do whatever the [6] CFO is wanting. Now, not that what we do [7] internally — internally — but the outcomes [8] have to be pretty standardized. If certain [9] systems — I imagine to some people's [10] disdain, when they were going in other [11] direction — about a year ago, so there was [12] some unification. Can I bring up the need [13] that, you know, we have — keep passing by, [14] as though it were impossible? Suddenly I [15] thought, let's be creative, because you [16] brought us together. There is something [17] that I mentioned that really could happen if [18] we had a unified group of fundraisers. [19] Instead of just doing what we've been doing [20] up to now, which is helping some support [21] agency — support organization help us, [22] which takes a lot of — it takes a lot of

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[1] money and gives us some actual support like [2] a particular person might be able to do a [3] particular function, and it does support us, [4] so that's helpful. But, what could be much [5] more economical, I just thought of, with [6] fundraisers, is literally, if we raise for [7] DC, for example, if somewhat unified could [8] raise \$10 million dollars and we'd each [9] have \$300,000 a year, that's just an [10] example — that would be putting all our [11] efforts together, and really raising money. [12] I mean, that is

what the individual [13] creativity of public charter schools could [14] well use. That's just going right to the [15] guts of one of the things that we need. We, [16] sort of, by-pass it, because we think — I [17] think, we think, we're — this isn't the [18] place to talk about it.

[19] CHAIR HAELEY: Earlier on, we [20] talked about the idea of — think as large [21] as you possibly can.

[22] MS. McDONNELL: Oh. Okay.

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[1] CHAIR HAELEY: We have no limit. [2] If you — if there was no constraint for [3] funding, no constraint for the amount of [4] effort that could be put toward something, [5] what do you want most? Which was going to [6] be our closing question again too, but we'll [7] go there in a second, because I want to go [8] back to: Colonel Johnson, what's most [9] lacking?

[10] COL. JOHNSON: Well, I'm glad [11] we're talking about the resources. Marcia [12] talked about it; George has talked about it, [13] and Nadia has alluded to it. One of things [14] would be great if we did have a central [15] clearing house for say, grant writing or [16] something like that, that could help support [17] all charter schools. Because, let's face [18] it, all of us know that we never have enough [19] money to do all the things we want to do. [20] We have barely enough to do the things that [21] we need to do. One of the issues that we're [22] addressing right now — in fact, there's a

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[1] budget meeting tomorrow on — it deals with [2] the per pupil allocation. I would just like [3] to see a fair and equitable way of [4] addressing that per pupil allocation. [5] Because, both from the facilities, and also [6] for the regular student formulas, the [7] charter schools have been really cut back — [8] cut, based on what was in your budget, but a [9] real drop-off from what we received last [10] year. I think there's some inequitable [11] areas in the way that funding formula is [12] addressed. Just like in our school it is [13] about \$80,000. Now that might not be a lot [14] for a lot of organizations, but I don't [15] have \$80,000 in my wallet. So, it's [16] sufficient funding that we have to address [17] by budget reduction and reducing some actual [18] expenses. So, that's what I'd like to see, [19] something that's fair on the per pupil [20] putting out formula.

[21] MS. McDONNELL: That's back to [22] advocacy, right?

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[1] COL. JOHNSON: Oh, yes. That, [2] too.  
[3] MS. McDONNELL: Advocacy. Then,

can [4] I just start, the clearing was for the other [5] would be — I just want to say, that for the [6] actual money — we need more than a clearing [7] house. We need, actual grant writers, because [8] there is a clearing house of, like, grants that [9] are — that you can find out about.

[10] MS. ALLEN: One of the ideas that [11] I raised earlier with the group that was [12] talking about this fundraising, was rather [13] than have people say, "Oh, there's a great [14] grant we want to write. Will you [15] participate?" They come to you. They ask [16] you for all this information, and you may [17] touch the surface. What about thinking in [18] terms of having resources that you could tap [19] into, where maybe somebody has already [20] identified 300 foundations that like to [21] provide services to groups like yours, and, [22] "Hey, Marcia, I just found five that really

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[1] do meet an arts' charter school" — and [2] where you might be able to make some [3] headway, and here's the contact information, [4] and I've already dropped them a note about [5] you. So, you need — so in other words, cut [6] out some of the process, so that at least [7] you've got a clear path — is one model that [8] you could consider.

[9] MS. McDONNELL: Except for that [10] last thing, I dropped you a note depending [11] on who it was. The awareness of where we [12] can get support, I found is more available [13] than getting someone who is a poetic grant [14] writer. That's a real need — is grant [15] writing for us. But it doesn't hurt, but [16] we've got a lot of knowledge.

[17] CHAIR HAELEY: Ana Maria.

[18] MS. NUEVO: Support most [19] lacking — I already have technical [20] assistance. I feel that our school has been [21] able to accomplish that mostly by outside [22] partnerships and carrying through our own

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[1] institutional memory, but after hearing what [2] Nadia was saying about documentation, [3] information and controls, I really did [4] relate to that in the sense of what we've [5] had to report to our Charter School Board, [6] and what we've had to report to the Office [7] of Federal Grants & Programs in terms of "no [8] child left behind". I'm a little bit more [9] prone to cut some slack to the Charter [10] School Board, because in a sense, they were [11] created at the same time we were, more or [12] less, and have kind of grown with us, and [13] they've changed some things. What, for [14] example, what we've had to report in our [15] annual report, our accountability

plan and [16] such. But it — how do you collect data [17] from year to year, when every year you're [18] asked to report something different. So, [19] every year, you say to yourself, "I'm [20] collecting this, and let's remember, so next [21] year, it won't be a problem," and the next [22] year, it is something else that they're

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[1] asking for. So the sense of historical data [2] does become quite an issue. So, I'm hoping [3] that with the stability of the movement, [4] that we'll reach some type of consistency.

[5] CHAIR HAELEY: Now, we're getting [6] near closing time — or in fact, if you all [7] don't mind staying a few extra minutes, [8] since we're at closing time — I'd like to [9] just run — is that okay? A couple of extra [10] minutes. I want to go back around the table [11] and discuss this question of greatest need [12] again, and although it may be pedantic and [13] sometimes to define greatest need, for the [14] research purposes of what Jonathan is doing [15] and what I'm doing — to hear it straight [16] from your mouth again, you know, answering [17] the question — my single greatest need is [18] "X" and why, would be very helpful. So Ana [19] Maria, I'm taking it right back at you, and [20] if can please define your greatest need, and [21] why it is your greatest need?

[22] MS. NUEVO: I'm just going to have

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[1] to go with what I said in the beginning, and [2] just, the stability of future funding in [3] terms of the sense that, hopefully we will [4] chartered for another fifteen years. We [5] need to know that we can count on the [6] stability and growth in order to do what we [7] need to do. I'll leave it at that.

[8] CHAIR HAELEY: Okay, Marcia, are [9] you getting coffee or are you leaving?

[10] MS. McDONNELL: I was going to, and [11] then, I — you see, I have to get that — a [12] hundred dollar fine would be a little [13] difficult right now. The car: Four [14] o'clock.

[15] CHAIR HAELEY: What do you most [16] need?

[17] MS. McDONNELL: So, I've mentioned [18] most of them: advocacy, and faculty, and money. [19] So, I think you've heard a lot from me in this [20] short time.

[21] CHAIR HAELEY: Colonel Johnson?

[22] COL. JOHNSON: Marcia put it well

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[1] for the advocacy; money to include what I've [2] already indicated; and then obviously, grant [3] writing.

[4] CHAIR HAELEY: Nadia?

[5] MS. CASSEUS: Okay. What we need [6] mostly, is that SouthEast Academy is a [7] facility that can grow with us, and [8] information, so we know ahead of time what [9] we need to do.

[10] CHAIR HAELEY: Thank you, George? [11] I've got no one else to go to but Jeannie.

[12] MS. ALLEN: I need —

[13] MS. NUEVO: I need a vacation.

[14] DR. GORDON: Well, everybody is [15] talking about money, so we'll — my belief [16] on the money issue is you give me the money; [17] I can do my own advocacy. I'd just say [18] technical assistance probably, number three. [19] That should permeated much of what I was [20] saying, being able to pick up the phone and [21] say, "I need this. I need the assistance in [22] doing this or that". That's — would be my

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[1] number three.

[2] CHAIR HAELEY: Now, one of the [3] discussions on the assistance earlier was [4] almost saying — one of the other principal [5] was saying — when she picks up the phone, [6] what she ends up is being told, "Ah, here's [7] more work you can do to solve your problem". [8] Do you find when you currently ask for [9] assistance that you — and, you know, almost [10] defined it to some extent earlier, when you [11] said, people say, "Pick up this paper; [12] here's this book to read".

[13] DR. GORDON: Yeah. I almost went [14] into that.

[15] CHAIR HAELEY: Is that the kind of [16] problem when you seek technical assistance?

[17] DR. GORDON: Get off your duff. [18] Come out — come out to the school, sit down [19] and talk with people. We've got students. [20] You can't leave the building. That's number [21] one. If you leave, you better back on time. [22] But, if you have an organization, that

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[1] person should be able to get in his or her [2] car, go out to the facility, bring whatever [3] you have — or use media or appropriate [4] media and respond — that's all I'm saying.

[5] MS. CASSEUS: Kind of, to dovetail [6] on that, it's answers. We need answers to [7] questions that we ask, not another road to [8] go down to find another question. That's, [9] kind of, what we end up doing. So, when we [10] ask a question, we'd like to have an answer.

[11] SPEAKER: Somebody will respond to [12] this.

[13] MS. ALLEN: Can I just throw out [14]

since Marcia's car hasn't been towed yet, [15] what do you think the public perception of [16] charter schools in DC is, both by the local [17] public as well as the, kind of, the greater [18] federal city? Do you have a sense of what [19] you think?

[20] MS. McDONNELL: We have to [21] constantly put out there, from a number of [22] us with whom I've spoken, is our whole

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[1] growingness — growingness is an important [2] issue with the local level. That's not [3] saying everything else, but it's implying [4] all the other issues.

[5] MS. ALLEN: But, do they think [6] you're important, a political force, a [7] strong group they should fear when you walk, [8] they don't care, I mean, what's the kind of [9] general —

[10] MS. McDONNELL: Money is getting [11] taken away from DCPS. Fear.

[12] MS. CASSEUS: They see us as a [13] kind of competition, but very temporary [14] competition. This is kind of a new fangled [15] thing, and eventually it will go away. You [16] know, they kind of backing us right now, but [17] eventually they'll go away. I think that's [18] kind of where we are, and most — I think, [19] it's two tiered. Either you have people who [20] are, you know, really, really in your [21] corner, and will bend over backwards to do [22] it, and that's probably about 8 percent.

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[1] Then, the other 92 percent are just — [2] that's why my school is half empty, because [3] you took part of my kids and my money. So, [4] we don't have these children, but these [5] children weren't in your building before I [6] was here. So, it's, kind of, that kind [7] of —

[8] DR. GORDON: I'll take it to a [9] personal level. My wife is in the public [10] school system, and there are certain aspects [11] of what we do, myself, in terms of the [12] charter school, we don't discuss at the [13] dinner table.

[14] (Laughter)

[15] MS. ALLEN: I want to come to your [16] house.

[17] MS. CASSEUS: I share George's [18] view. My husband works for the DC public [19] schools as well, and we don't talk about [20] work at all — at home.

[21] (Laughter)

[22] CHAIR HAELEY: Very good, well,

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[1] thank you everyone for coming in today and [2] for making the time. The transcript of this [3] session will be available in about ten [4] business days or sometime after ten business [5] days.

[6] (Whereupon, at 3:36 p.m., the [7] PROCEEDINGS were was adjourned.)

**Lawyer's Notes**

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