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Thank you for including my testimony on why we support school choice and Senate Bill 1.

Children in our Logan neighborhood of north Philadelphia go to one of two K-8 schools: one that is on the persistently failing list, and one that just misses the list. Both are persistently dangerous. One of our students left the neighborhood school after she received a concussion and fractured skull while standing in the school yard. Both of our neighborhood high schools are among the 20 worst schools in Pennsylvania, and all the neighborhoods bordering ours have high schools that are also on the persistently failing list.

My wife Anita and I started LOGAN Hope School in 2002, with 17 students, in a 3-story single house. We had explored other options to starting our own school – providing after-school tutoring and summer camp and other activities in our community, tutoring in the local public elementary school, helping another neighborhood elementary school get started. We continued to work with children in our neighborhood who were in 2nd or 3rd grade and couldn't read. We recognized that those same students would be disruptive and truant in middle school, and in gangs and out of the school system by high school. Even among the best students in the neighborhood schools, there was a desperation when they approached their high school years, as many were not prepared to attend magnet public schools, and dreaded the prospect of attending their neighborhood high school.

Now, in the ninth year, we have 61 students from grades K-8 in five classes. Anita and I continue to serve as full-time volunteers in leading the school. We have open admission to the extent our space will allow us to add students; we say to parents that if you are poor and live in zip code 19141, you have met our requirements.

So, our student body mirrors the local community. 93% of our students are minorities. Over 90% of our students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Over 75% of our students are eligible for free lunch. More than 25% of our students would otherwise be in persistently failing schools, and 100% of our 8th graders would be destined for persistently failing high schools. In a Christian private school setting, we have students from Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Mormon, and nonreligious families.

Parents choose this school for the quality of the teaching, for the small classes (10 is typical), for the safety, and for the culture that has 8th graders spending time with 2nd graders in a positive way. We have never had an issue with parents or students objecting to faith-based teaching, chapel, or Bible class. We are a real school family; children generally don't want to leave at the end of the day, and young children often ask if they can stay here through college. We are also a nonprofit organization that raises over 90% of our costs from donors.

For our 8th graders, Senate Bill 1 would be a lifesaver. Parents wanting the best for their children now hope that their child qualifies for a good magnet high school in the school district or wins the lottery to enter a good charter high school. They apply to private schools and hope that they will win entry with financial aid that will enable them to attend. Senate Bill 1 would give these students significant aid to give them more choices for high school.

Senate Bill 1 will also enable LOGAN Hope to serve more students in upcoming years. While we understood that families could not afford to pay the real costs of education, we took Jesus' call to "Let the children come to me" literally, and tried everything to allow more children to join us, regardless of their individual or family background, or their ability to pay. We have seen many children thrive in our setting that were lost in a large school with large classes. But we are definitely limited by the finances from expanding to assist more of the families wanting their children to attend. We are gradually renovating a building adjoining ours that will enable up to 150 children to attend LOGAN Hope.

LOGAN Hope is a street school, a part of the StreetSchool Network, which helps direct our approach to education. We try to focus on the most at-risk population in our neighborhood. We are also members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). We are part of Philadelphia Area Christian Schools (PACS), which brought us the amazing Foundations and Frameworks literature curriculum, and also allows us to work with other schools toward excellent professional development. Among these Christian groups, we are unique in many ways (focus on one neighborhood, large Cambodian component in student body, largely non-Christian family base, economic teaching infused throughout the curriculum). But in putting students first, we are not surprised that there is a need for a variety of schools to support a variety of neighborhoods, families, and children.

On accountability - LOGAN Hope tests using the NWEA MAP testing 3 or 4 times a year. We also use the PSSA. We are beginning the accreditation process with StreetSchool Network & Middle States. Our (few) graduates so far have attended Mastery Charter, Eastern Academy Charter, Central, Parkway Center City, and International Christian. Our retention is excellent, with virtually all of our students return

to LOGAN Hope each year. Our attendance is about 95%. We have an independent board.

The growth of LOGAN Hope School has helped the stability of a distressed neighborhood, as families began to move less often to keep their children here. We are committed to Logan and its economic development as well, trying to use our influence to help needy parents find work, and serving families in a variety of social needs through each student's advocate. We hope that many of our graduates will remain in the community after their college years, continuing the renewal of Logan.

Senate Bill 1 will help children. Our desire is to continue to serve the needy children of our community and help parents make responsible decisions to support their children. We are not competing with public schools or other private or Christian schools; we have never lost a child to another Christian school or to a public school (except for the occasional 5th grader who decided being with his friends in middle school was more important than succeeding in the long run).

Please vote yes on Senate Bill 1.