



**Jim Kenney Responses to Additional Questions from
PFT's February 25, 2015 Mayoral Candidates Forum**

How will you address the needs of children outside of school differently than the current social programs being offered holding parents to a higher standard for the expectation of supporting their children before they enter kindergarten or if they are struggling in school, or have behavioral health issues stemming from the home environment which pose a barrier to learning?

I will make the development of community schools a top priority by working with educators to identify, align, and provide city services to support schools and develop them as centers of learning, support, and community in their neighborhoods. There are numerous resources that can be aligned to meet the needs of children and families and to strengthen schools as centers of their communities, including health and human services and educational and recreational resources. By supporting the physical, social and emotional needs of children, we can improve their chances of success both in and out of the classroom. Developing schools into centers of their communities will help strengthen neighborhoods and families. Furthermore, this collaboration will result in teachers being better supported in their jobs.

My administration will also make developing partnerships with community organizations, non-profits and businesses a priority. Smart partnerships will expand the resources and opportunities available to children and strengthen the learning environment, especially when it comes to after school programs. After school programs ensure our children are in a safe, supervised environment at an influential age, and they also encourage our students to develop healthy, productive academic, athletic or artistic interests. They also support families by making child care accessible and reducing costs, allowing families to have more of their income. This also puts children into constructive environments. Broader participation in schools from institutions will increase the connections to neighborhoods and help facilitate economic development.

It is important that people understand that the notion of community schools and community partnerships is based on a reciprocal relationship, not a charitable one. Community institutions and business are also made stronger when students are healthier, grow up with access to the arts, and are more economically stable.

Another area of focus will be expansion of the CTE program and other job skills programs for high schools students. I have worked personally with the amazing students and teachers of the

Philly Hybrid X program that began at West Philadelphia High School, and their enthusiasm for the project and tremendous skills are truly inspiring. I have also spoken with administrators from South Philadelphia High School, who rave that CTE keeps students engaged and interested in coming to school every day. As Mayor I will work to expand and grow programs like this so that we are training students for the 21st Century, and giving some the extra reason they need to come to school instead of dropping out.

How do you plan to fund education in Philadelphia?

The big picture is that a fairly and adequately funded system depends on an adequate level of funding coming from both the state and the City. There are numerous problems resulting from years of not having a formula, the Corbett cuts, the addition of charter schools without appropriate funding, the funding of cyber charters, the role of debt, which was created because of the funding shortages. We need to understand what it costs to provide a quality education and then work with our delegation to, and leaders in, Harrisburg to ensure there is a formula in place. There needs to be a fair state share and an appropriate local share to set the appropriate funding level - the City needs to cover our share of the costs - no more, no less. I am committed to advocating for a fair allocation from Harrisburg and making sure the City does its part.

As Mayor, I will work with Harrisburg to eliminate the Uniformity Clause of the Pennsylvania Constitution so that we can use the revenue generated from increased commercial property tax rates to ensure that our schools get the resources they need. I will also work to reduce wage and BIRT taxes to encourage job growth and an expansion of our tax base. In the long term, that model will also increase commercial development in Philadelphia, which will increase commercial property values and provide a more stable funding source for our schools that does not increase the burden on our working families. I will also conduct an analysis of all tax incentive programs on our books to make sure we aren't leaving money the table or paying for economic development programs that aren't working.

I will also work with the state legislature and Governor Wolf for a fair funding formula that increases our District's funding, including ensuring that charter funding is addressed so that the existence of charter schools does not disadvantage district schools or the taxpayers. The District must be reimbursed for all of our charter costs, and, until that happens, I oppose the expansion of any additional charter schools. I will also work to help our schools identify more local resources, including appropriate and fair sources of funding and an expanded, aggressive effort by my administration to identify federal dollars and other grants to support these programs.

Do you plan on putting the sales tax back to 6%? Under Nutter it was suppose to have been temporary.

Last year I voted to make the 1% additional sales tax permanent, which gives the School District an additional \$120 million. At time, it was the only way for the city to quickly raise the revenue

it needed for our schools but it is long past time that we stopped placing the burden for funding our public schools on working families. As I said above, I will reform the tax structure so that we're growing our tax base and no longer wasting taxpayer money on ineffective tax incentive programs.

What is your position on charter schools?

Our current charter school law is inherently flawed. The funding system neglects our district schools' fixed costs, and it overcompensates charter schools for special education services that they don't always provide. It was for that reason that I publicly opposed the Philadelphia School Partnerships' \$25 million donation to develop new charters, which ignores the District's fixed costs and covers a fraction of the nearly \$500 million required to enroll just 15,000 more students in charters.

As Mayor, I will work with our representatives in Harrisburg to push for a funding formula that accounts for charter schools and asks Harrisburg for full reimbursement for any expenses related to the establishment of a new charter school. My administration will also oppose expansion of any charter schools until that reimbursement is restored and a full review of existing charters is completed. I will also work with the departments responsible for planning and economic development to make sure we have a long term approach to ensuring that every neighborhood has a strong community school in place as our first priority.

I will also oppose any other attempt to privatize our school system, including vouchers. While even I was hopeful that programs like vouchers could aid the city's education crisis in the 1990s, time and research have proved that the only way for all of our children to have access to the high-quality education they deserve is to sufficiently fund our public school system.

Pennsylvania is one of a few states that does not have an education funding formula. As a result, our schools receive some of the lowest levels of state funding in the country. Please discuss in detail how you will work with the law-makers in Harrisburg to create a funding formula that is fair to poverty stricken districts such as Philadelphia?

It is absolutely vital that the state legislature implement a fair funding formula. Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate of any big city in the country. It's unacceptable that that is not currently factored into how funding is allocated to our school district. A good formula should provide for cost factors such as poverty and ELL services and ensure that every child is provided with the programs they need to meet state standards.

As Mayor, I will lead a bipartisan coalition of advocates from distressed school districts throughout the Commonwealth to convince legislators that properly funding education -- which they are Constitutionally required to do -- should be the first priority of state government, not an afterthought. Our legislators also need to reinstate the reimbursements for charter schools, and

end the privatization of our schools through vouchers and other similar programs. And at home, I will gather a coalition of stakeholders made up of parents and guardians, as well as leaders in government, business, non-profits, and education to ensure we're considering every option that gets Philadelphia school children the level of funding they deserve.

Many teachers haven't gotten their contractual raises for 3 years. How will you help to retain talented teachers?

The SRC's actions on the PFT's contract are making it impossible to retain talented teachers for the long-haul. I have said from the beginning that the fate of our teachers contracts must not be decided in a courtroom. We will never create a high-quality, well-funded school system until all stakeholders return to negotiations and agree on a shared sacrifice. Creating additional revenue does limited good if at the same time we deter dedicated, motivated teachers by balancing the budget entirely on their backs. As mayor, I will stop treating our teachers as the problem and involve them in the solution.

Good teachers want to work in a place that values and supports their work. I believe if the teachers of Philadelphia see that 1) the leadership of the City wants them to have a fair contract; and 2) that additional services are being provided to/aligned with schools both as part of a community schools initiative so that teachers can focus on teaching, and 3) the condition of schools is a priority of the City we will make a significant step forward in improving people's ability and capacity to do their jobs well.

To ensure our teachers also have students who are ready to learn and interested in the classroom, I will also provide access to high-quality Pre-K to three and four year old Philadelphians in need over the next five years. Studies show that students who attend high quality Pre-K programs have fewer special education needs, and they are far more likely to graduate high school and attend college.

As Mayor, I will also facilitate partnerships with outside community organizations and local businesses to increase the resources available to our students and teachers. Additionally, I will require better coordination among City departments to help schools meet those needs. To personally ensure the implementation of this agenda, I will give principals and school administrations a monthly opportunity to meet directly with him and city department leaders to ensure our schools are getting the resources they need to provide a high-quality education. Our school system is too important for its leaders to have only indirect access to the Mayor.

Who would you select for the SRC if it is an appointed board?

It's essential that we have veteran public school educators represented on the SRC. I was very excited to see Marjorie Neff appointed to lead the SRC, and we need more appointees with her experience and perspective. So many of the challenges facing our kids occur outside school hours as , so having an individual sensitive to the socio-economic challenges facing our children, and the challenges the district faces is also important to me. We can't only focus on what happens to our kids between the morning and dismissal bells. I would look for someone with

both a strong background in public education, with added experience working in the social services arena.

How do you propose bringing the school district back to the collective bargaining table to negotiate our contract?

I wholeheartedly support the right of teachers to collective bargaining, and I recognize -- as do the teachers -- that all parties need to work together to build a system that fits our budget, protects our teachers, and provides our students with a high-quality education. To move negotiations forward, our teachers need to know they have an advocate in City Hall, and the District needs a mayor with experience in City policy and getting tough compromises done. I've been a proud ally of the teachers union for my entire twenty-three career in council, but I've also built the broadest, cross-cultural coalition of any of my opponents. Whether it was passing domestic partnership protections in the early 1990s or ending racially-motivated violence at South Philly High, I know how to bring people to the table to get things done.

You have the power as mayor to raise revenue in Philadelphia, how will you do this?

We've got a lot of work to do to get us to year-to-year revenue stability that will provide both the General Fund and the School District with predictable and steady revenues that meet service needs. As Mayor, we will generate additional revenue by eliminating ineffective programs and making targeted investments to create an environment in Philadelphia that will attract jobs and businesses and grow our tax base.

As Mayor, I will transition City departments to a zero-based budgeting model, where instead of asking for incremental or program specific budget increases, each department will be responsible for explaining the need and efficiency of its programming and services. This method will cut waste, and enhance high-performing programs so that taxpayers are getting their moneys worth.

We must also take a serious and holistic look at our tax structure. The City must tackle our dependency on the wage tax, for a variety of critical reasons. First, it is an extremely regressive tax that is particularly devastating to our low-income workers. Second, it's hard to collect. We've got thousands of people that work in our city every day that aren't paying their share of the wage tax. Lastly, it's a known job killer. Businesses constantly cite the wage tax as one of the top reasons why they choose to locate outside of the city.

We've also got to take a comprehensive look at all of the various abatements, tax credits, and exemptions that are currently on the books. These tax relief measures exist because we have created such a toxic tax system that we need put in place work-arounds to try to offset the expense of doing business here. The problem with these measures is that they address the symptoms but do nothing to cure the underlying condition. They require significant resources to administer and we have little to no data about their effectiveness. The Revenue Department

should be focused on collecting the taxes that are owed to the city, not wasting resources on administering a tax credit program that doesn't work.

The business community is going to be a key partner in this discussion. We have a good idea of what stops businesses from moving into the City, but we need more information on what matters in attracting them to the City. It is highly likely that we are spending money on tax incentives or exemptions that don't impact a business' decision whether to stay or leave the city. Those are lost dollars that could be put towards lowering people's wage taxes - a proven factor in attracting jobs and a direct tax cut for working Philadelphians.

How can the mayor impact on moving to charter accountability transparency equity? How will you advocate on this issue?

Charter transparency and accountability has to be a top priority for both the District and the City. As an increasingly larger funding source for the District, the City must have a voice in this discussion. As mayor, I will establish more accountability through a collaboration between my administration and the District's oversight staff to monitor the finances and performance of charter schools. We will not promote failing charters or allow charter schools to grow in neighborhoods that already have high-quality public schools. There are a number of potential vehicles for achieving this accountability, whether through a voluntary review committee or through collaboration with City Council during the budget process. The Home Rule Charter grants City Council broad investigatory powers.

How are you proposing to assist the school district of Philadelphia, other than opening new charter schools?

I called for a moratorium on all charter expansion until Harrisburg agrees to reimburse the District for all charter costs, and a complete, independent review is completed of all existing charters.

As Councilman, I publicly called on Harrisburg to provide Philadelphia schools with a fair education funding formula and to return control of the School District to Philadelphia citizens. As Mayor, I will also pursue the development of a community school model that provides services to children and their families and ensures our students have the freedom to learn. My vision is that in community schools, children and their families can easily access a high-quality education, basic medical care, nutrition, and other social services beyond normal school hours. Too often, these services are only available in Center City during the school day -- too far for many parents to travel, and at inconvenient times for many parents who work. By piloting successful models already implemented in major cities across the country, I will help create community schools that address the child's whole learning environment.

How will you adjust the real estate tax so that it is equitable for everyone, especially low and middle income families?

I believe that we must undertake a comprehensive review of all of the various tax programs, credits, abatements and exemptions on our books to find out how much they are costing us and how well they work. The City should only maintain such tax abatement programs that are effective in attracting or retaining jobs and ensure we are not leaving money on the table by paying from programs that aren't working, and putting unnecessary burden on our working families. Any analysis would also include ways that we can improve and expand the tax programs that exist to protect our low and middle income families. For instance, both the Homestead Exemption and Longtime Owner Occupied Program have been extremely effective at insulating lower income individuals from AVI. We need to take a look at these programs to make sure that we have a 100% participation rate from eligible residents. We also need to regularly revisit these programs to make sure that their effectiveness isn't being diminished by other factors, such as other increases in cost of living, wage stagnation, etc. When taxpayer money is involved, we must always be looking for ways to stretch those dollars for our residents.

I also support the plan put forward by Paul Levy and others. It calls for a modification to the Uniformity Clause so that we can increase commercial property taxes which will provide more financial support for our schools and decrease the burden on our families.

What are you proposing to change that will provide revenue for our city, other than privatization of public utilities?

If we're going to privatize our utilities, we have to make sure our workers are protected and our citizen customers aren't abused. As I said previously, new sources of revenue for our city will primarily come from zero-based budgeting and tax reform. I will also increase the City's collaboration with non-profits, community organizations and businesses, so that we're not using taxpayer money to provide a service other organizations are already doing more efficiently. I will also work with our hospitals, universities, and other large institutions to ensure they increase their contributions to Philadelphia, whether it be through PILOTs or SILOTs .

Do you think we should dissolve the SRC? If so, what should our school board be, appointed by the mayor or democratically elected?

While the mayor cannot directly dissolve the SRC, I will work to make our schools financially stable so that Harrisburg has no reason to continue to saddle Philadelphia with the SRC. If the SRC does vote to disband itself, I will welcome a new locally-controlled governing body as an opportunity for parents to hold their elected officials responsible for the quality of our schools.

Do you plan on removing snow from the side streets?

As mayor, I'll make planning for extreme weather events a priority for every city department. It's a fact that our climate is changing, and we need to increase preparedness for everything from snow and flooding to drought.

To ensure that our principals are also getting what they need from city services, Jim will give principals and school administrations a monthly opportunity to meet directly with him and city department leaders to ensure our schools are getting the resources they need to provide a high-quality education. Only by coordinating with our City Departments, neighborhood businesses and advocacy group can we create a neighborhood schools that is the centerpiece of the community.