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Comments to School Reform Commission
August 18th, 2010

I would like to thank Chairman Robert Archie, the Commissioners and Superintendent Arlene Ackerman for this opportunity to speak before the School Reform Commission. I am here today to express my full support for the Walter D. Palmer Leadership Learning Partners Charter School and urge the SRC to revise the charter school extension currently being offered to include a full high school for the next 5 years.

The Walter D. Palmer School is located in the heart of the 181st Legislative District. It draws students from across the city; however, as parents from all parts of Philadelphia have increasingly found that it meets their children's educational needs: The school has shown year over year improvement in PSSA scores and has developed a reputation for sky-high attendance rates. Additionally, Dr. Palmer and his dedicated staff have consistently provided a safe and secure learning environment, as evidenced by the very low school-wide suspension and expulsion rates. More importantly, the school has built up a sense of community with its parents and students by extending its services well beyond the typical school hours.

The current Charter School extension contract is structured in a manner that will cause the phase out of the Walter D. Palmer High School and I am very concerned that this not be allowed to happen. In operating the high school, Dr. Palmer is meeting a need that has grown organically as both parents and students have requested a way to stay within the Walter D. Palmer system after the 9th grade.

Since day one, Dr. Palmer has engaged both parents and students and shown himself time & again to be a true partner in the community. He should be commended and rewarded for this commitment to the community. The addition of a high school will allow the Walter D. Palmer Leadership Learning Partners Charter School to become a true K-12 resource for parents &

children across the Philadelphia. I therefore respectfully request that the School Reform Commission revisit the current charter extension contract and provide full funding to the Walter D. Palmer high school.

Thank you,

State Representative W. Curtis Thomas, 181st Legislative District
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