

PHILADELPHIA

1800 JFK Blvd., Suite 1900A
Philadelphia, PA 19103
T 215-238-6970
F 215-772-3125
[WWW. ELC-PA.ORG](http://WWW.ELC-PA.ORG)

PITTSBURGH

429 Fourth Ave., Suite 1910
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
T 412-258-2120
F 412-535-8225

Testimony to the Pittsburgh Public Schools Board of Directors
by Christine Porter, Staff Attorney
Education Law Center (ELC) March 24, 2025

I'm Christine Porter, an attorney with the Education Law Center's Pittsburgh office. We are a statewide nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education, particularly the most underserved students. I'm urging you tonight to continue to center equity and the voices of students and families while considering whether to close any schools, including the ten schools on the current list, and to share some specific concerns raised with Education Law Center about the potential closing of Conroy.

As we have testified in the past, the District must focus on the potential impact on underserved students, including Black and Brown students, students with disabilities and multilingual learners at each step, with racial equity as an explicit and fundamental component of the decision-making process. We ask the District and the Board to engage meaningfully with the community, including by gathering and presenting answers to the community's questions before moving forward to the public hearing process.

We run a Helpline at Education Law Center, and we are hearing from a significant number of families concerned about potential school closures. Specifically, we have received a high number of calls from parents of students at Conroy, a school where 100% of students have an IEP. As you have heard tonight, these parents are concerned about the proposed move to the South Brook building and whether such a move could meet their students' educational needs.

A closure of Conroy and a move of those students to South Brook would presumably require extensive renovations. Conroy has features not present at South Brook, such as the classrooms with bathrooms inside them for students who need support with toileting skills and community partnerships set up to promote inclusion and transition programming. Many students at Conroy have difficulty

adjusting to new settings. Moreover, there may be increased transportation costs associated with the move.

Even if closing and moving Conroy would save money, which we don't know at this point, moving hundreds of educationally vulnerable children without sufficient planning during a time of diminished federal protections is not the way to lower the District's costs.

I recognize that the District must make difficult financial decisions. But as is clear from the community voices, Pittsburgh's neighborhood schools are more than just buildings. They are critical community institutions. We at ELC share concerns raised by other speakers tonight about the potential impact of school closures on the District's most underserved students. Please ensure that the students, families, and communities are centered in the decision-making process and are a critical part of constructing solutions.

Thank you for listening.

***Who we are:** Education Law Center (ELC) is a non-profit legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all of Pennsylvania's children have access to a quality public education, in particular the most underserved students: children living in poverty, children of color, children with disabilities, children in the foster and juvenile justice systems, children experiencing homelessness, multilingual learners, LGBTQ and gender-nonconforming students, and students at the intersection of those identities. For 50 years, ELC has provided legal advice, consultation, and technical assistance to thousands of parents, advocates, and other professionals on issues of public education.*