



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

CITY COUNCIL

Isaiah Thomas
Council Member, At-Large
City Hall, Room 330
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Good afternoon,

My name is Councilmember Isaiah Thomas and I am an At-Large member of Philadelphia City Council. I want to thank Charmain Harris and the PA House Appropriations and Education Committees for inviting me to testify. As Chair of City Council's Education Committee and a member of our Appropriations Committee, I applaud your efforts on the Pennsylvania Education Tour. We have struggles here in Philadelphia but we also have plenty that we're proud of and happy to share with the rest of PA. I'd like to thank Representatives Grove, Schweyer, and Staats for joining Representative Harris in Philadelphia.

We applaud your diligence in working to better PA's education system for all students. We have learned, in the recent Commonwealth Court ruling, that our school funding formula is unconstitutional. I applaud the lawyers and advocates who helped us reach that legal decision but we now must do the hard work of finding a better path forward.

For me specifically, as an educator, a father, a Councilman, and a coach - I want to discuss how we can best support Black educators and Black students.

In approximately 40% of all public schools, there are no educators of color. We know, from research and student/parent testimony, Black students are more likely to find educational success and improve graduation rates when their educators have similar backgrounds to themselves.

In my work with The Center for Black Educator Development, we have funded and created pipelines for the recruitment, development, and retention of Black teachers. I was proud to fund this organization in the city budget because budgets are reflections of our values and we *must* value our current and future students and educators.

Black students who have at least one Black educator in K-3 are 13% more likely to graduate from high school and 19% more likely to go to college. From a city, state, and even federal governmental standpoint, we need a coordinating approach to the recruitment, development and recruitment of Black educators in the goal of supporting Black students.

Teaching is activism and we must do the work of rebuilding the National Black Teacher Pipeline.

I'm Councilmember Isaiah Thomas, Chair of City Council's Education Committee, but I'm also a father, a coach, and a lifelong educator. Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.