

"This is not fair to charter school operators, or the families we serve," Joyner continued. "Because we are expected to do a better job than public schools - and we've shown that we are capable of doing that - we should have more support."

Instead of aiming at charter schools, Joyner said, more attention should be paid to the district's hierarchy and its plans for a new leader, since direction will no doubt come from on high. Joyner has been in education for more than 40 years, and senses a recurring pattern by the SRC.

"The district usually goes outside of Philadelphia to find a superintendent, and that has always been its first failure," Joyner said. "My concern is we keep getting people who, on paper, can do these things, but come in and leave the district in a worse state. There are people right here in Philadelphia who can lead the district. I question [the SRC's] motives."

Sidebar

School Reform Commission member Wendell E. Pritchett, left, speaks with SRC Chairman Pedro Ramos during recent public announcement of reorganizational blueprint.

Dr. Veronica Joyner, founder and CEO of Mathematics, Civics and Sciences Charter School of Philadelphia, in the lobby of her school. - TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

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"Blacks suffer from affirmative inaction"

Linn Washington

Too many things in today's world just make too little sense.

Where's the consumer safety sense in selling snack crackers as a rye-based offering when those crackers contain more wheat than rye?

Many people buy rye as a way of avoiding their allergies to wheat.

Yet, deceptive packaging places persons with wheat allergies buying wheat-laden rye snacks at risk of possible sicknesses ranging from stomach pains to life-threatening breathing stoppage.

Sadly, efforts towards insulating sensical/equitable actions from sabotaging nonsense receive too little support from governmental officials and the general public.

Take the festering issue of minority business inclusion on publicly funded construction projects around Philadelphia.

It is an outrage that after decades of constant battles to secure equitable opportunities black owned construction sector firms remain affirmatively iced-out.

The project to transform Dilworth Plaza on the west side of City Hall into an ice skating rink is proceeding without the participation of any Black-owned architectural/design firms, stress sources who monitor MBE/DBE participation.

One Black firm received a \$25,000 sliver of the \$12-million pie spent for design related services on the construction project for the new Family Court structure.

And, sources stress, there are no local Black-owned firms involved in the architectural/design work on the multi-million-dollar renovation project placing the City's new Police Department headquarters into an existing structure at 46th and Market streets in West Philadelphia.

This on-going exclusion of local Blackowned architectural/design firms from publicly funded projects led one long-time monitor of this exclusion to declare last week that there is "absolute genocide against Black architects in Philadelphia."

Compounding this outrageous exclusion is the nonsense of Blacks at various levels of government constantly consenting to green-light publicly funded projects without even token Black business participation.

These Black-faces-in-high-places refuse to demand enforcement of the regulations implemented to penalize purposeful, illegal exclusion.

Paralleling this Black-out in Philadelphia's construction industry are recently proposed solutions to perennial problems within the city's School District that seemingly sacrifice student benefits and community-based participation on the altar of increasing corporate control.

"Our public school system is being auctioned off," Hospital Workers Union President Henry Nicholas said during remarks at a program last Thursday honoring Martin Delany, a too often forgotten, no-nonsense Black activist/ theoretician in the 1800s.

The proposed reorganization/reduction released by the School Reform Commission advances a dismantling of the existing District by creating clusters - an approach that failed to succeed as projected under former School's Superintendent David Hornbeck.

That proposal advances having (corporate) educational management companies administer those clusters - an approach that failed to succeed as projected under former School's Superintendent Paul Vallas.

And that proposal advances more corporate control of individual schools (public & charter) - an approach that failed to succeed as projected in the past, most recently during the stormy tenure of Schools Superintendent Arlene Ackerman.

Dr. **Walter Palmer**, an activist for educational improvements including community control of schools since the mid-1950s, is highly skeptical of the SRC's proposals, particularly its typical yet non-sensical exclusion of independent, community-based input and operational assistance.

Dr. **Palmer**, during recent testimony at a City Council hearing, said, "What we're experiencing locally and nationally is a hostile white corporate take-over of Black education in urban areas."

Palmer, in an interview Sunday, said the SRC's "whole reorganization is a sham tied to the failure to deal with the [District's] budget."

Palmer, who founded the communitybased Black People's University educational faculty in 1955, opened a charter school in 2000.

The **Walter D. Palmer** Leadership Learning Partners Charter School on 6th Street near Girard Avenue is the largest charter in Philadelphia. This school's earned praise for achievements like a

100 percent graduation rate for its first high school senior class last year - a rate much higher than the graduation rate average for Philly public schools.

Philly's cash strapped public school district, elevating nonsense over common sense again, recently hired another large law firm to appeal another appellate court siding with the Palmer School's efforts to get the District to comply with state laws covering charter schools.

Needless to say the money for that appeal is better spent preserving programming for school students and/or retaining District jobs for city residents rather than dumping dollars into the pockets of high-priced lawyers ... lawyers who mostly live outside Philadelphia and lawyers with children that attend adequately resourced private or suburban schools.

A recent Philadelphia Tribune editorial criticized the nonsense lurking in the "unnecessary" new restrictions slapped on food stamp recipients imposing limits on assets they can maintain, like barring persons 60-and-under from having assets exceeding \$5,500.

Federal officials say food stamp fraud is not a problem in Pennsylvania, but Gov. Tom "The Terrible" Corbett sees a problem and proposes a drastic solution similar to his supporting restrictive Voter ID legislation to attack virtually non-existent voter fraud.

The man responsible for implementing Corbett's food stamp restrictions is his Welfare Department secretary, Gary Alexander.

Alexander caused a stir in the state's Capitol over opening a consulting company in Rhode Island to purchase rental property. Alexander, who will enforce asset limits on desperately needy food stamp recipients, wants extra income from rental properties because his \$139,931 salary for running the state's largest agency isn't enough according to media reports.

The nonsense of depriving the needy while greasing the greedy highlights ills destroying America's extolled democracy.

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"Supporting change"
Damon Williams