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House of Representatives
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 2011
TO: ALL HOUSE MEMBERS
FROM: REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE WILLIAMS BISHOP
SUBJECT: SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that amends the Public School Code to allow the Philadelphia Public School System to regain control of its affairs by removing the current School Reform Commission.

In 2001, Secretary of Education Charles Zogby declared Philadelphia schools to be in distress. Under Act 88 of that year, such a declaration turned the schools over to the state and the City of Philadelphia to be run by the School Reform Commission.

Ten years later it is highly questionable whether this arrangement still makes sense. Back in 2001 a school district could be considered distressed for major offenses like being out of compliance with state laws, not remaining open for a full school year, defaulting on financial obligations and other similar serious breaches. While there may have been serious concerns such as these in 2001, it is unlikely that these concerns remain today.

As long as the Philadelphia School District remains under the control of the School Reform Commission, the state and city have the right under Act 88 to appoint leaders without public involvement. If my bill becomes law, it would allow the current school directors to take full charge of the district's affairs within six months of enactment.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this bill, please contact Heather in my office at 3-2192, or at hwalsh@pahouse.net, as soon as possible. Thank you.