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## House of Representatives

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Harrisburg

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Dear Superintendent Hite and incoming Superintendent Tony Watlington Sr.

Board of Education President Joyce Wilkerson and Board Members,

Along with our constituents, we are greatly concerned with the recent news reports about the Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference which Philadelphia Teachers were encouraged and sanctioned to attend by the Philadelphia School District. The conference, organized by the Mazzoni Center, covered highly sexually explicit material that is inappropriate for our classrooms. The School District of Philadelphia has partnered with the Mazzoni Center to develop sex education programs for our students.

From the portions of the virtual conference that have been brought to light, it is clear it goes far beyond health education. There are legitimate concerns about how this type of “education” can be equated to grooming and the conflicts that may arise from school employees who are mandated reporters. For example, the National Center for Victims of Crime describes the grooming dynamic as follows:

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse (CSA) may gain the trust of potential child victims and their caregivers by methodically “grooming” them. This process begins with identifying potential victims, gaining their trust, and breaking down their defenses. These grooming tactics are often directed at potential youth victims as well as the adult caregivers—parents, other youth-serving professionals, and the community-at-large. After gaining access to children and youth by achieving this trust, the perpetrator initiates some kind of contact that s/he finds sexually gratifying. This sexual contact may range from voyeurism to rape and other forms of child sexual abuse. Grooming helps the offender gain access to the victim, and sets up a relationship grounded in secrecy so that the crime is less likely to be discovered.

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse are often individuals known to the family; they may be acquaintances, influential members of the community, trusted friends and even family members. Sometimes the offender is known to the family through association with an organization or activity in which the child or youth participates, such as school, a community club, sports team, recreation center or camp.

One reason that the perpetrator is able to exploit the child is because he or she holds the power in the relationship based on age and experience, size and strength, and adult status. A perpetrator may manipulate and use those power differences to gain the youth’s trust and confidence, and/or to create fear that enables the perpetrator to coerce the child or youth.

Given the influence educators have as adults, authority figures and mentors, they have a great responsibility to ensure the safety of our impressionable youth as well as their physical and mental well-being.

The school district also has a duty to parents. A large part of that duty is transparency. A conference or event like this should never have to be discovered by an investigative journalist on national news. The school district and board of education should have been proactive about disclosing this type of professional training and give parents a strong voice in the sex education that may be taught to their children in school.

Accordingly, we have the following questions regarding this incident:

- What school district funds were allocated toward this conference if any?
- What funding did the school district provide or secure for the teachers and the Mazzoni Center?
- Were teachers given continuing educational credits, time off, financial compensation or any other benefit for their attendance?
- How did the school district intend to use the materials taught during the conference in our classrooms?
- What is your policy of informing parents on this subject matter?
- How many educators or school employees attended the conference and from what schools?
- What is the school districts policy on encouraging sexual mutilation?
- Did any employee of the school district confer with a pediatrician or any type of health facility regarding this conference? And if so who and when?
- Did the School District Solicitor approve this training?
- Were the titles of the seminars within the conference and the content of the presentations known in advance? Who in the PSD authorized the sanctioning of educators attending?
- As part of the journalist's investigation, it was discovered the school district's Director of Teacher Leadership, Amy Summa, sits on Mazzoni's board of directors. What are Amy Summa's duties as Director of Teacher Leadership within the school district? What are Amy's responsibilities with the Mazzoni Center? What role did Amy play in promoting the Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference?
- Has the School District purchased and/or been supplied with sex education or other educational materials from the Mazzoni Center? Please provide an example or description of the materials. If materials were purchased by the School District, please provide the amount and source of the expenditure.

Due to the severity of these issues, we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Martina White  
PA House Majority Caucus Secretary



Curt Sonney, Chairman  
Majority Education Committee