

1 Ferndale, Michigan

2 Thursday, September 25, 2008

3 MR. PRATT: Good afternoon. How you guys doing
4 today? I want to thank you for coming in and taking a
5 couple of minutes. I know people have things to do; it's a
6 gorgeous afternoon out there, so we're going to move
7 through and get you on to your afternoon. But I want to
8 thank you for taking a few minutes to come in and talk with
9 us.

10 We've been working since May having
11 conversations

12 like this all over the state. And we had one in Flint back
13 in June and somebody who got up and testified said, "Have
14 you done one in a school? Have you gone and actually
15 talked to students?" And we've had some students come in
16 and we've heard from them at hearings like this, but we
17 wanted to do one just for you. We wanted to have an
18 environment right here in the building where you can come
19 in and talk with us about the pressures that you're under
20 to drop out. What we're trying to do is help students all
21 over this state graduate from high school. 21,000 students
22 drop out -- dropped out last year.

23 Now, you guys are in this room because you've
24 made the choice to stay and we want to know what worked.
25 We want to know why you're here. We want to know why
26 you're committed to getting your diploma. Okay? We want

1 to have a conversation. What worked; what didn't work?
2 You have friends, family members who dropped out. Why did
3 they leave? We need to hear all this so that we can take
4 this back to the governor and the legislature and people
5 all over this state who work on this problem so that we can
6 do a better job for those 21,000 students who dropped out.
7 We want to bring them back to school. We want to make sure
8 that the next generation doesn't leave. All right?

9 So when you came in a couple of you filled out
10 cards because you wanted to speak, some -- or you just
11 wanted to listen. And if you change your mind and you want
12 to speak, just raise your hand and come on up. Okay? Any
13 questions? Take as much time as you want. We're just
14 going to have a conversation. If you guys have anything to
15 add out there just say so. Okay?

16 All right. I'm going to start out with E'Shawn
17 H. Did I -- and if I maul it I'm sorry. I've been
18 reading these cards for months and I do it every time. I'm
19 not good with names. Come on up.

20 MR. HARRIS: Good afternoon.

21 MR. PRATT: Good afternoon, E'Shawn.

22 MR. HARRIS: My name is E'Shawn Harris. I'm 17;
23 I'm a senior. I have a 3.7 GP average. Why do people drop
24 out? Good question. Some, you know, girls get pregnant,
25 you know, and some do drugs, sell drugs. And I don't know

1 why, you know. I mean, some probably didn't have a good
2 life, you know, or some of them just want to seen what they
3 seen in the past, you know? So I think that why people
4 drop out of school, little kids and -- you know, I think
5 because they concludse (sic) of the population of the
6 community and they solution is what they do, they have to
7 do. And as my friends and family, I mean, they -- you know
8 what I'm saying? -- in predicaments that -- I mean, I ain't
9 saying everybody perfect, you know? But people know wrong
10 from right and like everybody know like if I smoke and he
11 don't smoke, he know wrong from right. You know what I'm
12 saying?

13 I mean, I live -- I don't live in Detroit; I
14 live
15 all the way in Inkster, you know? I'm smart, very
16 educated. In October -- January I'll be going to Kentucky
17 to finish school out there. Then after that I'm going to
18 college out there, Kentucky University. I mean, I really
19 think that my African-American friends and family know that
20 I love them. That's how it is. And I got put back in
21 school because my dad -- you know, he was like, "You're too
22 smart to be out of school." So I got back in this school
23 in Detroit to have -- because I used to go to Inkster High.
24 I got kicked out for fighting because I was defending
25 myself. But I mean, I wasn't a bad student or I always
26 made A's: 3.7, 3.5, 4.0. You know what I'm saying? Don't

1 smoke, don't drink; you know, athlete: football,
2 basketball.

3 My daddy he's a reverend. My grandma on the
4 church out there in Detroit, Biblery (sic) Temple. You
5 know what I'm saying? My sister-in-law she just graduated
6 from Rebel (sic) Forest College in Florida for something; I
7 don't remember. But I mean, that's my motivation: finish
8 college, be successful in life, be the man that God wanted
9 me to be. And just stay in school and don't do drugs.

10 MR. PRATT: Can I ask a quick question? You
11 got kicked out of Inkster for fighting, right? Had you
12 been in any trouble before that?

13 MR. HARRIS: No.

14 MR. PRATT: It was the first time?

15 MR. HARRIS: Yeah, first time offense you get
16 kicked out. Like this school; if you do anything bad you
17 kicked out, you know.

18 MR. PRATT: All right. So it was just the one
19 time.

20 MS. KROLICKI: That's one of the question that
21 (inaudible) about this whole issue, is the "mandatory
22 expulsion" its called in the law. Could I get you to speak
23 about that a little bit? What do you think about that
24 ruling and you're being removed from Inkster?

25 MR. HARRIS: Well, I lived at Inkster for 14

1 years and I mean I liked it and I liked it out there, you
2 know? And I mean I know everybody out there, but you know,
3 it was just Detroit, you know? They come to our school and
4 think they running it. And then somebody tells me and our
5 fight and our back (inaudible). I mean, I don't showing
6 nobody that I was soft whatever, but you know the first
7 thing I did I told my dad. My dad say put his hands up and
8 defend myself.

9 And then I told the principal. He said he
10 talked

11 to the man, we write a little contract and, you know, we
12 don't talk to each other. So I guess he -- I'm in the
13 bathroom; he's in the bathroom. I guess he wanted to act
14 up around his friends. That's what people do when they
15 act -- I guess they in gangs. You know what I'm saying?
16 And, you know, I guess he wanted to -- tells me. So I mean
17 I was cornered in the bathroom so I have to defend myself.
18 So I mean I got kicked out of there -- I don't know why --
19 for defending myself. Who get kicked out for defending
20 yourself? But, huh, stuff happens.

21 MR. KRESNAK: I have a question. How long were
22 you out of school before you went back to school? And if
23 you had not gone back to school what would you be doing
24 right now?

25 MR. HARRIS: Well, I would be at Job Corp if --
26 after I have a opportunity in this school, and I've been

1 out since -- it been six months; it was six months.

2 MR. KRESNAK: Is that because you had to stay
3 out that six months, or you were --

4 MR. HARRIS: I had to. I had to. Yeah, I had
5 to.

6 MS. WELLS: I have a question. Hi, I'm
7 Nichole.

8 MR. HARRIS: How you doing?

9 MS. WELLS: I'm from Michigan's Charter
10 Schools and my question to you, E'Shawn, is if there would
11 have been one or two things that you would have changed
12 about that situation. You said you didn't really want to
13 get kicked out of Inkster. If you had the choice and if
14 you were to -- if you were the one to make the decision as
15 administrator or a teacher what would you have put in place
16 in order to prevent that situation of someone like yourself
17 being kicked out just for that one-time event?

18 MR. HARRIS: Well, I wouldn't have them kick me
19 out completely; I would have at least got me suspended. I
20 mean, at least three days; not no out eternity. But, I
21 mean, it's the -- I guess it's the school rule: you fight,
22 you kicked out. I mean, I guess you can't defend yourself.
23 I mean, you just like sit there -- like I used to go to
24 Cherry Hill. Like I used to look at these people. They
25 used to get beat up because -- they used to get beat and I

1 talked to them because they was, like, my associates, you
2 know? And they used to tell me that if I get suspended
3 from school I will get a whooping. So I guess people
4 (inaudible); I guess he was, you know, scary, you know
5 scary cat. So people bully on -- he get beat up and he
6 still gets suspended, so -- but not here. Now I talk to
7 him, now he say he defending hisself and now he on drugs
8 now, you know, so --

9 MR. PRATT: E'Shawn, thanks.

10 MR. HARRIS: You're welcome.

11 MS. KROLICKI: Oh, one more question.

12 MR. PRATT: Oh, wait.

13 MS. KROLICKI: What do you want to -- what do

14 you

15 want to do with a career when you're --

16 MR. HARRIS: Oh, well, I'm going for football,

17 (inaudible) engineering and -- what is that called? --

18 languages: Chinese, Porto Rican, Indian and Arab.

19 PANEL MEMBER: Thank you.

20 PANEL MEMBER: Thanks.

21 MR. PRATT: Next up we have Christian Loggins.

22 MR. LOGGINS: All right. The reason why I think
23 people willing to get kicked out is because when I went to
24 (inaudible) High it was like if you don't stop (inaudible)
25 problems (inaudible) no matter what. If you stay quiet
26 it's either they want people (inaudible) because they think

1 you soft or you just a little weakling or something like
2 that. So the reason why is because -- it was like a couple
3 gang fights up there, you know, when we had to defend
4 ourselves and just because these other gangs think they big
5 and badder. You know, they want to throw stuff in the back
6 of the, you know, classroom and stuff. So, you know, and
7 plus the reason why many of these people smoke out here is
8 because, you know, it's like because me -- all my brothers
9 and sisters ain't graduated; right? So I like, you know,
10 went behind what they did and I grow up thinking what they
11 did was, you know, cool and all that.

12 So what the point is, the reason why I'm trying
13 to graduate from this school is really to make my mom
14 proud. So like, you know, at least one of her kids
15 graduated from, you know, school. And plus I'm trying to
16 go to college so I can get a scholarship for football; you
17 know, see me on TV one day. So, you know, I ain't trying
18 to be out here being funny. Ain't got no job because, you
19 know, it's hard right now, so --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) I'll get your
21 books.

22 MR. LOGGINS: And plus it's hard out here my
23 momma tell me all the time, you know. So that's it.

24 MR. PRATT: Why do you -- why do you think --
25 you're talking about the students in the back of the class

1 throwing things, acting tough. Why do you think that is?
2 Why do they -- why do they do it?

3 MR. LOGGINS? Because they think they hard;
4 anybody can't touch them, like they're unstoppable or
5 something. That's what I think. And they think they the
6 most popular kid, you know; have -- they have backup to
7 help with fight. They (inaudible) fight, so -- see me, I
8 had to -- I was -- it was a gang fight, but you know, I'm
9 not even carrying a knife. It was like just me and my
10 mans, you know, protect myself, you know, so we had to
11 fight them. We got kicked out of school, so -- then I went
12 to -- it took me -- it took me awhile because I
13 (inaudible) -- this is my last chance of getting in school
14 in the first place. Because without this school I really
15 didn't know which school I was gonna go to, so --

16 MR. KRESNAK: Christian, I've got a couple
17 questions. How old are you?

18 MR. LOGGINS: Seventeen.

19 MR. KRESNAK: And you are a sophomore, junior,
20 senior?

21 MR. LOGGINS: Senior.

22 MR. KRESNAK: Senior? And these gang fights you
23 were involved in; you weren't in a gang and you got caught
24 somehow and were suspended or expelled. Were you arrested?

25 MR. LOGGINS: Huh?

1 MR. KRESNAK: Were you arrested?

2 MR. LOGGINS: Unh-unh (negative).

3 MR. KRESNAK: Were the police involved in any
4 way?

5 MR. LOGGINS: Uh-huh (affirmative). It's just -
6 -

7 MR. KRESNAK: Did they arrest anybody?

8 MR. LOGGINS: They arrested a couple people, the
9 main starters.

10 MR. KRESNAK: The main people that were --

11 MR. LOGGINS: Yeah.

12 MR. KRESNAK: Were they on your side or the
13 other side?

14 MR. LOGGINS: On our side.

15 MR. KRESNAK: I'm sorry?

16 MR. LOGGINS: On our side, yeah.

17 MR. KRESNAK: And so the people involved in the
18 fight who were arrested were kind of friends of yours?

19 MR. LOGGINS: No, they was -- it was like --
20 'cause the people that I knew that was on my side, they was
21 already through juvie (sic) and all that stuff. But you
22 know, they tried to come in school and get they act
23 together. But these other boys that -- you know, they have
24 (inaudible). You know how they set claims: 7 Mile,
25 (inaudible) and all that? They claim one hood and the
26 other one claim the other hood, see? So they're -- you

1 know they trying to fight them, so there was a big fight.

2 MR. KRESNAK: And school is where they kind of
3 come together?

4 MR. LOGGINS: Yeah.

5 PANEL MEMBER: Question; are you in any
6 gang yourself?

7 MR. LOGGINS: No.

8 MR. KRESNAK: I think he said he was not.

9 MS. KROLICKI: So you were expelled or
10 suspended; which?

11 MR. LOGGINS: Expelled.

12 MS. KROLICKI: Expelled. Okay. And you were
13 expelled in what time?

14 MR. LOGGINS: Huh?

15 MS. KROLICKI: How long were you expelled?

16 MR. LOGGINS: For the school -- I couldn't go to
17 no Detroit Public Schools.

18 MS. KROLICKI: And that was what -- when did
19 that happen?

20 MR. LOGGINS: It like in the middle, close to
21 the middle of the school year.

22 MS. KROLICKI: Like last winter or spring?

23 MR. LOGGINS: Two years ago.

24 MS. KROLICKI: Two years ago?

25 MR. LOGGINS: Yeah.

1 MS. KROLICKI: So you've been out since then?

2 MR. LOGGINS: Unh-unh (negative).

3 MS. KROLICKI: Oh, okay. You've been where
4 you're going?

5 MR. LOGGINS: See, I went to Crossroads; messed
6 up in Crossroads, yeah.

7 MS. KROLICKI: Okay. You went to Crossroads?

8 MR. LOGGINS: Yeah. And I don't think

9 Crossroads

10 was right for me, because you know it's a little small bed
11 there. Always it's people that clown around, you know. In
12 here are these older people so, you know, they don't act
13 all childish and stuff. But I think it's kind of like you
14 could do the work but still have a little fun; that's what
15 I think of the school. To me I think it's kind of boring,
16 'cause mainly stuff I knew that I -- they teach it now; I
17 been -- knew since I been going to middle school. So
18 that's what I think. It's just easy but I just don't want
19 to sit here doing the same thing I been doing like I'm six
20 or seven years old.

21 MR. KRESNAK: Are you saying that about this
22 school or Henry Ford?

23 MR. LOGGINS: Huh?

24 MR. KRESNAK: Are you --

25 MR. LOGGINS: No, at Henry Ford, that was a bad
26 school; they don't teach nothing. You go to the teacher

1 and I -- "could you show me how to do it?" "Yeah, if I
2 showed you that before, I'm not showing you again," so --

3 MS. WELLS: I'm just curious about a little
4 something. Because you mentioned that there would be --
5 there would be people starting fights in the classroom, so
6 just describe a typical day in -- so you go into class?

7 MR. LOGGINS: You sit down, you know, you do
8 your
9 work. See, one day I'm here for -- like it was in the
10 middle of April. It was a real smart boy. Hey, man, you
11 know, he's smart; he's the smartest kid in the classroom.
12 So they had water balloons; right? So they expect 'cause
13 he's so smart that he don't do nothing. They just threw
14 water balloons at him.

15 MS. WELLS: Where is the -- and the teacher in
16 the room?

17 MR. LOGGINS: The teacher already walked out for
18 a minute. So he went to go tell and they -- you know, they
19 jumped on him because he told.

20 MS. WELLS: Okay.

21 MR. KRESNAK: In Henry Ford High School -- we're
22 talking about Henry Ford; right?

23 MR. LOGGINS: Uh-huh (affirmative).

24 MR. KRESNAK: Were there any kind of mentorship
25 programs or anything for, you know, kids to link up with
26 someone older? Not necessarily my age but, you know, in

1 their 20's or something.

2 MR. LOGGINS: Nope.

3 MR. KRESNAK: Nothing?

4 MR. LOGGINS: I think they had -- the only thing
5 that was actually -- there was something; there was ROTC.
6 That's the only main thing.

7 MS. KROLICKI: Both in the previous conversation
8 the fight broke out in the bathroom; yours, you're
9 saying -- the incident you're describing is when the
10 teacher left the room. Would you -- and you might shine on
11 that too. Would you both say it's when the teachers are
12 not present?

13 MR. LOGGINS: Yeah, when they not around; that's
14 when they mainly happen.

15 MS. KROLICKI: On the bus or the bathroom or the
16 hallway or --

17 MR. LOGGINS: No. Because on the one fight it
18 was in the restroom. You know, they got (inaudible),
19 everybody watching out. But some kids just don't care
20 because they parents don't do nothing to them, so they just
21 go in and fight, get suspended; don't get in trouble, come
22 back to school, do the same thing over and over.

23 MS. KROLICKI: One follow-up. What career do
24 you want to go into?

25 MR. LOGGINS: Who, me? Let's see. I was --
26 see,

1 I was thinking about being a police officer, but you
2 know -- 'cause I like -- you know. Police they -- you
3 know, they do what they want to do. They do the -- I
4 swear, 'cause they just actually do what they want to do.
5 They beat you, you know?

6 MS. KROLICKI: Oh, my goodness.

7 MR. LOGGINS: Not saying I want to beat somebody
8 just for fun, but I'm saying they got they own rights what
9 they want to do to you. They can lock you up. 'Cause some
10 police officers is phony out here. They actually -- 'cause
11 one time when I was getting arrested, it was me and my men,
12 we were walking on the street, so then they play "eenie,
13 meenie, minie, moe" for whoever they want to, you know,
14 take to jail. And one person left and I got arrested. To
15 me that's not -- that's unfair, you know, so --

16 MR. PRATT: Thanks, Christian.

17 MR. LOGGINS: All right.

18 MR. PRATT: All right. I've got a bunch of

19 cards

20 here, but folks who were checking you guys in said a lot of
21 you didn't want to come up and talk. I'm just going to
22 call out your name. If you don't want to come up here it's
23 okay. If you don't have anything to say that's perfectly
24 cool; I understand. But if you want to come up and talk
25 about things, that's cool; we'd love to hear from you.
26 Okay. So David Singleton?

1 MR. SINGLETON: (Inaudible)

2 PANEL MEMBER: Okay. No problem.

3 MR. SINGLETON: My name is David -- I mean is
4 this thing -- sure. Okay. Now you can. Yeah, my name is
5 David Singleton. I'm not giving out my age, I'm sorry; I'm
6 not comfortable with that --

7 MR. PRATT: That's okay.

8 MR. SINGLETON: But I think stereotypically to
9 society is their view of black people; and not even just
10 that but teenagers as far as dropping out. I think it
11 depends on the student and where they are in life and what
12 they've been through. I didn't drop out of school; I got
13 expelled twice from high school. I couldn't go to Detroit
14 Public Schools for like maybe I say a year. I got into a
15 fight myself. It was a racial -- like a racist fight. I
16 went to Northern Clairmont, Detroit, Michigan. It's like
17 over there towards downtown area. I went there for two
18 years; got expelled for buying a bus pass in order to get to
19 school.

20 And basically when I started back -- going back
21 to school, you know, like everybody else knew me, so pretty
22 much quiet; basically just trying to keep my grades up now.
23 Some of the days I came to school I didn't -- I told the
24 teachers, it was like I don't -- just give us some easier
25 work, just -- well give us actual work because the work was

1 too easy. Like the work they give us here, usually done;
2 we're done in like ten minutes; it's like no challenge. I
3 got friends, people that's younger than me; I try to stay
4 cool with them, tell them to go to school, you know, be
5 something.

6 And as far as everybody else, like people that I
7 know, they ask me questions and things and they -- like the
8 teachers, the students they ask me what I'm gonna do with
9 my life. I say I want to be a registered nurse; lot
10 friends, male friends start laughing. I say whatever, you
11 know. Say, you know, I'd rather have two careers than one;
12 be better to have one job that's successful than none at
13 all.

14 But I say my views on people dropping out of
15 school and everything else, I think it depends on the
16 person. Not necessarily that because a lot of people drop
17 out due to, yeah, drugs and everything else. Sometimes
18 students drop out of school because they get picked on. I
19 used to get picked on. I started to fight back when I was
20 little. But that's why I'm in this situation now. But if
21 I didn't do that, yeah, I'd be out of -- I wouldn't be
22 here; I'd be like finishing my last year in college and I'd
23 be doing better things than I'm doing now. It sounds like
24 I chose to do this, but it was better for me to do this and
25 finish this anyway. The best thing I'm doing right now is

1 counting down the weeks I'm out of here. That's pretty
2 much all I got to say.

3 PANEL MEMBER: Questions? Anything?

4 PANEL MEMBER: No.

5 MR. PRATT: Thanks, man.

6 PANEL MEMBER: Thank you.

7 MR. PRATT: All right. Again, no pressure.

8 Keisha Campbell.

9 MS. CAMPBELL: (Inaudible)

10 MR. PRATT: Okay. C.C. Clarke.

11 MR. CLARK: C.L. Clark.

12 MR. PRATT: C.L. Clark. I'm sorry, man. My

13 handwriting.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's bathroom.

15 MR. PRATT: He's bathroom? Okay. Venus Powell?

16 (No verbal response)

17 MR. PRATT: Geneva Hawkins?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

19 MR. PRATT: Starletta McGee.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If we let you stay right

21 there, (inaudible)? You can stay if you want.

22 MR. PRATT: That's okay. Don't worry about it.

23 Kiera Houston.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

25 MR. PRATT: Okay. What do you -- that's okay.

1 What's your name?

2 MS. MCGEE: Starletta McGee.

3 MR. PRATT: Starletta? Okay.

4 MS. MCGEE: Yeah, you can be my mentor. Hi. My
5 name is Starlette McGee. Well, the reason -- well, I'm 26
6 years old. The main reason I dropped out of school because
7 I got pregnant. I had two kids and I was finding it very
8 difficult to come to school and have kids. And there was a
9 time where I almost got kicked out; I actually almost got
10 kicked out of school because I did used to fight a lot too.
11 I used to get a -- there was a time where I used to get
12 suspended. I'd go to school, get suspended for three days;
13 come back, the next day I got suspended again. Because
14 it's like he said; it's -- you do have some people that if
15 they know -- they can figure you out. They can picture and
16 figure you out. If they know that you ain't gonna say
17 nothing bad to them or you try to avoid them and leave them
18 alone, then they gonna pick with you anyway and force you
19 to do something and after a while you gonna do something.
20 And sometimes it may not be the right thing to do and
21 sometimes you might just be trying to defend yourself and
22 you go overboard and you may hurt somebody.

23 But too, people have family problems too.

24 Another reason why kids drop out of school too because they
25 have problems at home and they can't -- and people got --

1 people also believe -- and I got parents that can't help
2 them with they schoolwork when they teachers is not around.
3 You got teachers that can't help them. Sometimes you got
4 teachers that can't explain it to them the way that they
5 need to -- that they can understand. And you got the
6 parents that can't help them. So then if they don't got
7 neither one of them that they feel that they can trust,
8 then they feel they can't trust nobody else, so they feel,
9 "What's the use?" so --

10 I used to do good in school. I used to like
11 school. Math was my favorite subject; still is. I liked
12 that better than reading and stuff. I don't like that; I
13 like math. But I just think that people -- I just -- I
14 think that the government should be able to come and try to
15 find a program where they can have more tutors to tutor
16 young people and to help them and they -- maybe they can
17 come out with a program to help with they self esteem, to
18 help them -- maybe want to help them do their work, because
19 you never know what's going on.

20 MR. PRATT: You said you had two kids?

21 MS. MCGEE: Yeah, I have two kids.

22 MR. PRATT: Two kids. How old are they?

23 MS. MCGEE: They seven and five now.

24 MR. PRATT: Okay. Now, are they in school now,
25 or is that --

1 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

2 MR. PRATT: During the day? Okay.

3 MS. MCGEE: And right now --

4 MR. PRATT: How long have you been back in
5 school?

6 MR. MCGEE: For a year and this is going on my
7 second year.

8 MR. PRATT: Okay.

9 MS. MCGEE: And what I realized what I had to do
10 since last year, I decided this year I will let them go
11 with their father and go to -- they father stay in Ann
12 Arbor; I let them stay down there with their father and go
13 to school out there 'cause -- with their father until I get
14 finished with school. And that would be a better help on
15 me; because like I told him, he is their father. I didn't
16 have them by myself.

17 MR. KRESNAK: Ms. McGee, when you got pregnant
18 and dropped out was there an -- was there some alternative
19 that you could have gone to as a pregnant, you know,
20 student?

21 MS. MCGEE: Well, see, I have seizures too, see?
22 And when I had my first child my seizures started acting up
23 really bad too, so --

24 MR. KRESNAK: So you had other health issues?

25 MS. MCGEE: Yeah. So that was something too.

1 MR. KRESNAK: Was there anyone, an adult in your
2 family or at the school or somewhere who --

3 MS. MCGEE: My mother and them and stuff, but my
4 mother felt that she thought that it would be too much
5 stress, and my doctor agreed -- eventually agreed with it,
6 that it would be too much stress for me to try to go to
7 school and have my kid and watch my kid and stuff and do
8 all that at the same time.

9 MR. KRESNAK: It would have been dangerous for
10 you and the baby?

11 MS. MCGEE: Uh-huh (affirmative). Because, see,
12 when I -- see, what happened was when I was about to have
13 my baby natural birth and I almost went into a seizure, so
14 we had to do emergency C section and that's what happened.

15 MR. KRESNAK: Then it took you a long time to
16 get back into school?

17 MS. MCGEE: Right.

18 MR. KRESNAK: And why was that?

19 MS. MCGEE: Because of my seizures. See, I have
20 been having seizures all my life since I was five years
21 old, myself anyway.

22 MR. KRESNAK: Okay. It was primarily health
23 issues?

24 MS. MCGEE: Right.

25 MR. KRESNAK: Okay.

1 MS. KROLICKI: Did anybody in the school ever
2 offer to give you homebound instruction or help?

3 MS. MCGEE: At one point in time I did what they
4 call a home school and study and I had did that for a while
5 for -- I had did that for a year. So that's why when I did
6 get to come back to school I was a senior.

7 PANEL MEMBER: Okay.

8 MS. KROLICKI: So you did get some credit for
9 that?

10 MS. MCGEE: Right.

11 PANEL MEMBER: Okay.

12 MS. KROLICKI: Just what brought you back?

13 MS. MCGEE: Because I feel that -- I set goals
14 for myself and I feel that I can accomplish my goals. Just
15 because I have a health problem or I may make a mistake,
16 that don't mean that I can't accomplish my goals. And if I
17 feel that if I set a goal that I want to accomplish, I'm
18 gonna at least try to accomplish my goal. At the least
19 try. That's it.

20 PANEL MEMBER: Very well. Thank you.

21 PANEL MEMBER: Okay. Thank you very much.

22 PANEL MEMBER: Okay. Thanks.

23 MS. MCGEE: And I got a little sister, so -- and
24 now she got a little baby, so I want to be -- I want to be
25 example for my little sister and brother. And if I got

1 kids I want to be a good role model for my kids, a good
2 example. Because it's too hard out here and they need good
3 example.

4 PANEL MEMBER: Very good.

5 MR. PRATT: Great. Thank you Starletta.

6 MS. MCGEE: You're welcome.

7 MR. PRATT: All right. Anybody else want to
8 talk?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

10 (Several people speaking at once - inaudible)

11 MR. PRATT: Well, that's one way of encouraging.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) Kiera

13 Houston.

14 MR. PRATT: Hey, Kiera.

15 MS. HOUSTON: Hey.

16 MR. PRATT: Kiera Houston: right?

17 MS. HOUSTON: Yeah.

18 MR. PRATT: Okay.

19 MS. HOUSTON: I've didn't drop out of school; I
20 got kicked out. I got into a fight with a boy and the
21 teacher got knocked out. And we got arrested, we went to
22 jail. I was charged with -- I was charged with four
23 different things. And the school -- I went to my hearing
24 and this man he said that he goes out -- that I didn't even
25 to do it, so he said that I could come back. But I never
26 got a chance to go back. This is for 180 days when I was

1 (inaudible) at the school, so I was at home. Didn't do no
2 school learning, no nothing. And then my -- and then my
3 (inaudible) -- my next (inaudible) I also got into another
4 fight and then I got kicked out too, so I've been here and
5 (inaudible) my credits are here.

6 MR. PRATT: Okay.

7 MR. KRESNAK: What school were you in that you
8 got kicked out from?

9 MS. HOUSTON: The first one or second one?

10 MR. KRESNAK: Both?

11 MS. HOUSTON: Western (inaudible) Academy. They
12 were supposed to give me home school but they didn't. And
13 Old Redford Academy Preparatory High School and they were
14 supposed to let me come back this year but my hearing isn't
15 until October the 14th.

16 MR. KRESNAK: So you may have to change school
17 again?

18 MS. HOUSTON: I'm not going back this year. I
19 just got to go to the hearing, so my 180 days would be up.

20 MR. KRESNAK: Why were you fighting so much?

21 MS. HOUSTON: I don't know. Somebody say
22 something to me, I just react.

23 MR. KRESNAK: Is there any kind of -- something
24 they call "peer mediation" in your school?

25 MS. HOUSTON: They told me -- Old Redford they

1 told me I could come back but I had to do anger management,
2 so that's what I'm doing now. But I'm not going back
3 there, but I'm still going to anger management.

4 MR. KRESNAK: Do you have any insight then from
5 taking anger management?

6 MS. HOUSTON: Not really.

7 MR. KRESNAK: So you don't yet understand why
8 you get angry?

9 MS. HOUSTON: (shook head negative, o verbal
10 response)

11 MS. KROLICKI: So you're in what grade now?

12 MS. HOUSTON: Eleventh.

13 MS. KROLICKI: You're in eleventh. So are your
14 plans then to finish your diploma a year from next year?

15 MS. HOUSTON: Uh-huh (affirmative).

16 MR. KRESNAK: The teacher got knocked out; what
17 that you or was it someone else?

18 MS. HOUSTON: No. Actually, I don't know. The
19 teacher -- I just know that she was trying to break up the
20 fight and she got -- I don't really remember what happened
21 because I was fighting. She got knocked out and she didn't
22 move. The ambulance came and got her and the -- we got
23 arrested and went to (inaudible).

24 MR. KRESNAK: So you were in juvenile court?

25 MS. HOUSTON: I didn't go to court, but I got
26 arrested and I was in jail for about maybe eight hours,

1 then my mama came and got me.

2 MR. KRESNAK: Is that teacher back; do you know?

3 MS. HOUSTON: She's back working at the school.

4 I went up there and talked to her and she know I didn't
5 mean to hurt her, so me and her don't have no grudge.

6 MR. KRESNAK: You apologized then?

7 MS. HOUSTON: Uh-huh (affirmative). I
8 apologized to everybody in my court hearing.

9 MR. KRESNAK: Okay. Thank you.

10 MS. HOUSTON: You're welcome.

11 MR. PRATT: Thanks. All right. Anybody else?

12 MR. SINGLETON: Can I come up there,
13 (inaudible)?

14 MR. PRATT: Yeah. Sure, come on up. David;
15 right?

16 MR. SINGLETON: Yeah.

17 MR. PRATT: Okay.

18 MR. SINGLETON: I got some questions.

19 MR. PRATT: Yeah.

20 MR. SINGLETON: Basically, what do you all
21 think -- like what do you think and what are your views on
22 like why students drop out?

23 MR. PRATT: Well, we've heard a lot of things;
24 it depends on where we've been.

25 MR. SINGLETON: Do you think it's got something
26 to do with the environment?

1 MR. PRATT: Of the school?

2 MR. SINGLETON: Yeah.

3 MR. PRATT: Yeah. That's one of the things

4 we've

5 heard is students want to have good relationships with the
6 adults who are around them, both inside school and outside
7 school. And they -- and some help relating what's going on
8 in class with what they want to do. Those are some of the
9 things we've heard over and over again.

10 MR. SINGLETON: You think it's got something to
11 do with the music choice, as far as like what you hear on
12 the radio -- what you hear on the radio and what you see on
13 music videos? Think it has like a bad influence on like
14 what to do and what not to do and this is how I need to
15 live or what I need to (inaudible)?

16 MR. PRATT: That's not something we've heard a
17 lot of, but that's one of the things that, you know, we
18 kind of thought we might hear talking with you today. And
19 throughout some of these hearings is more of what the
20 influences outside of school are.

21 MR. SINGLETON: I'm thinking it could also be
22 the upbringing of what type of person the child has been
23 around, that too. Because like I went to private school so
24 I was (inaudible) all the way to high school. I think it's
25 got something to do with that too, because I was around a
26 lot of bad influence. But I think if you had a decision to

1 make something out of nothing and actually dream about
2 something -- okay? I mean, live in this neighborhood and
3 (inaudible) if I can get -- if I can still live in that
4 neighborhood and not decide to quit just because our whole
5 neighborhood (inaudible) to quit.

6 MS. KROLICKI: But do you think you need a role
7 model for that?

8 MR. SINGLETON: I don't have a role model.

9 MS. KROLICKI: But I mean anybody, not a person;
10 do you think a role model for a student?

11 MR. SINGLETON: I think it's better to have a
12 role model as far as male or female. Whether the person is
13 male or female, they need to find a role model of their
14 (inaudible) that's actually successful. I think if they do
15 that they can get themselves out of that situation and not
16 just be going around complaining, talking about, "I dropped
17 out of school because my friends got high." Well, if they
18 got -- if they got high you shouldn't -- you had -- you
19 still had a choice to chose if you want to get high or not.
20 Or drink some liquor and get caught in a car (inaudible).
21 That's like hopping into a vehicle and saying, "I think I'm
22 gonna drive down the 75 freeway with my friends and we're
23 gonna go to a club." You don't even know if the car is
24 stolen or not, but if you make the decision to get in the
25 car it's really on you.

1 MS. KROLICKI: Would you be willing to be a role
2 model to a 15-year-old young man who was --

3 MR. SINGLETON: Technically I have a 15-year-old
4 little cousin.

5 MS. KROLICKI: Okay.

6 MR. SINGLETON: Yeah, that's why I tell him to
7 read to himself. I read a lot of books. That's why I say
8 that the work that they give here is not really a challenge
9 because I'm usually doing it like five or ten minutes, then
10 I just sit there (inaudible).

11 MR. KRESNAK: Do you think a lot of your peers
12 are kind of avoiding personal responsibility for their
13 choices?

14 MR. SINGLETON: Yes, I do.

15 MR. KRESNAK: What can we do about that?

16 MR. SINGLETON: Try to influence them to make
17 better decisions and not give up regardless of -- like
18 (inaudible) say, I know a lot of people talk about peer
19 pressure and everything else, but if you're being weak
20 minded enough to give into peer pressure and that's you in
21 general.

22 MR. KRESNAK: Okay. Thank you.

23 MR. SINGLETON: You're welcome.

24 MR. PRATT: Thanks, David. All right. Anybody
25 else?

1 MS. KROLICKI: Yeah. You could add to what you
2 said earlier if you choose to, or want to say something
3 (inaudible).

4 MR. PRATT: Up to you guys.

5 (Several people speaking at once - inaudible)

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When we come to this
7 school -- when we come to this school they treat us -- I
8 feel that they treat us as everybody's here for a reason.
9 Everybody (inaudible). So teachers and security, everybody
10 see us like we (inaudible) killed somebody or something and
11 we just kids. Some kids make a mistake maybe in
12 (inaudible), so they shouldn't treat us like that. They
13 should treat us just like a regular kid (inaudible) we
14 gonna kill somebody.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible)

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) to a point.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (

18 PANEL MEMBER: Christian?

19 MR. LOGGINS: To me I think (inaudible) real
20 stuff (inaudible). Because I'm not gonna say no to
21 (inaudible), but walk up to a teacher about two days ago.
22 She helping with the work. He said he didn't know how to
23 do it. And she was like, "Well, we could (inaudible) that
24 you didn't already do." I don't know. So to me -- because
25 I think people think that kids over here, like 26th and all

1 that (inaudible).

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

3 MR. LOGGINS: Right. They just don't
4 (inaudible). It's not (inaudible) school (inaudible)
5 opinion.

6 MR. PRATT: E'shawn?

7 MR. HARRIS: Do you know what they doing? Half
8 of these kids (inaudible). And they don't (inaudible)
9 nowhere (inaudible). I mean, like (inaudible) so they can
10 get they (inaudible). So if they're (inaudible) not the
11 teachers. Because the teachers here (inaudible), but they
12 may be more at a level, but it's not -- it's their problem
13 but they can just come to whatever, the principal
14 (inaudible). But (inaudible) nowhere. (Inaudible) will be
15 here for 300 years, so (inaudible). It's their life. If
16 they would (inaudible) in their life it's their fault.
17 There would be leaders -- you know what I'm saying? -- and
18 (inaudible) probably and they'll do it. (Inaudible) high
19 school. (Inaudible).

20 MR. PRATT: Starletta?

21 MS. MCGEE: Well, I think that they all do --
22 they all saying what a good point and make good points,
23 strong points about what they saying, but on the other hand
24 what is trying to get (inaudible) everybody still want to
25 be treated like they're somebody and with respect

1 regardless of what they do. Because Parsons is not gonna
2 treat you like you (inaudible) done to treat you if you
3 don't treat them like they want you to treat them; in other
4 words, if you want you have to give respect. And so he --
5 if they don't -- it is (inaudible) be here and I think --
6 I'm saying don't say no names -- that do come here and
7 don't do no work and copy off of other people paper
8 (inaudible), but you can't take it out on every -- well,
9 sometimes. You can't take it out on everybody else either;
10 the teachers can't take it out on everybody else. You just
11 make everybody else have to pay for what that person did,
12 you know? So that's a point that can go both ways.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) students in
14 the school, the people in my classroom don't do no work at
15 all. They talk, talk, talk about gangs fight. The
16 teachers (inaudible) and (inaudible). Anyway,
17 (inaudible) -- that's all right. But (inaudible) I was
18 (inaudible) they don't do no work at all. (Inaudible)
19 today; we just got to be there. I'm the only person done
20 and everybody copies my paper. Only one done.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Why you let --

22 (Several people talking at once - inaudible)

23 MR. PRATT: Guys? One at a time, guys.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- (inaudible) also.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you shouldn't let them

1 get yours.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) not a day --

3 I

4 know (inaudible) that they would be --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

6 MR. PRATT: Guys, one at a time.

7 (Several people speaking at once - inaudible)

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What the point is, she's
9 saying is you might -- you might copy off of my paper and
10 graduate but still be dumb.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Let them (inaudible).

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's like he's a kind of
13 dummy for letting (inaudible) copy off his paper
14 (inaudible).

15 (Several people speaking at once - inaudible)

16 MR. PRATT: All right. All right. All right.
17 All right. David. David, yeah.

18 MR. SINGLETON: I think it's hard for students
19 that go here to graduate in the normal (inaudible) teachers
20 say (inaudible) from certain things they do (inaudible),
21 like that's why you go to a alternative school, like say
22 Crossroad or here. It's to have a education the same --
23 alternative education (inaudible) for the student now
24 that's having a hard time (inaudible). That's another
25 reason why (inaudible) like that or they try to help in
26 class and they don't know what they're doing. (Inaudible).

1 And I think there's a student (inaudible) another student
2 that's way smarter (inaudible). And that's why teachers
3 (inaudible) copy so (inaudible) you're gonna get beat up
4 (inaudible). (Inaudible) does not mean you have to
5 (inaudible) individual way. (Inaudible) sit there and
6 (inaudible) like that (inaudible). That's all I got to
7 say.

8 PANEL MEMBER: Uh-huh (affirmative).

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible). Some
10 teachers actually think the other school is better, but I
11 said that -- like if a kid just stands up and either walk
12 around, he got (inaudible) so whatever. Other (inaudible),
13 you know, a (inaudible) thing. I mean, (inaudible)
14 somebody (inaudible) they got a kid that he like and he
15 don't like. That person -- they both want to compete the
16 same (inaudible) and just feels that one pressure to get
17 off and the other pressure to stay on. So they like
18 favoritism towards the students.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, (inaudible). First
20 of all, you don't (inaudible). If you don't do the
21 work, --

22 MR. PRATT: Guys, come on. Let's

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

24 MR. PRATT: Guys. Okay.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) but I'm going

1 my work. (Inaudible).

2 MR. PRATT: All right.

3 (Several people talking at once - inaudible)

4 MR. PRATT: We want to --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

6 MR. PRATT: Sure.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just one thing, but I
8 would like to be here for a reason. And that's another
9 thing for us (inaudible) this school (inaudible) is that
10 (inaudible), because it's -- we do have (inaudible) in the
11 classroom, but they said (inaudible) do our work, because
12 they (inaudible) because they just like (inaudible) come
13 back and get they education (inaudible) and they in here
14 trying to -- you know what I'm saying? -- act like they
15 (inaudible) teachers and we got done with our work.

16 MR. PRATT: Okay.

17 PANEL MEMBER: Did you understand?

18 MR. PRATT: Yeah.

19 PANEL MEMBER: It sounded good.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) and I
21 (inaudible). This is why I (inaudible). So me personally,
22 I don't trust nobody because I (inaudible) anybody comes in
23 class, they make a joke because (inaudible) work done; it's
24 about who got the (inaudible) clothes, (inaudible). It
25 makes no sense. That's why people drop out. Where in Kent

1 it was about organize and value, like the teacher helped
2 (inaudible). If you come to school and you don't plan on
3 doing any work, (inaudible) teachers not gonna -- they're
4 not gonna (inaudible) you, they're just gonna (inaudible)
5 you up. They come to school, like I stay quiet, I do my
6 work. I came to school late and I'm (inaudible), because
7 teacher that gave me (inaudible) come to school (inaudible)
8 show up in clothes (inaudible). It doesn't make any sense
9 and that's why people drop out, because you have people
10 that (inaudible) it's a lot of (inaudible) in the classroom
11 (inaudible). How can you stay focused on what you're
12 trying to accomplish when people are cracking jokes or
13 talking about you?

14 MR. PRATT: What was your name? I'm sorry.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

16 MR. PRATT: Geneva? Okay. Thanks. All right.
17 Anybody else have anything to share? Otherwise, I want to
18 thank you guys for taking some time this afternoon. We've
19 been here about an hour, so -- this is great. We
20 appreciate this. We're going to take all this information
21 back and going to share it with, you know, the politicians
22 in Lansing and we're going to share it with people who are
23 working around here to help make sure students graduate
24 from school. So what you've said is going to really help
25 them decide how to better help other students out there.

1 So we appreciate you guys taking the hour and being with us
2 and sharing your ideas. So there's just a little bit of
3 cookies left, so you guys should grab a handful, take them
4 home with you, split them up. And thank you guys for
5 coming; we appreciate it.

6 (Hearing concluded)

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