



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SRC URGED TO REVEAL ANONYMOUS DONORS TO ACKERMAN'S BUY-OUT

PHILADELPHIA – August 22, 2011 – The Committee of Seventy today urged the School Reform Commission to make public the anonymous private donors who are reportedly financing around \$400,000 of outgoing School District Superintendent Arlene Ackerman's \$905,000 contract buy-out.

"The public has the same right to know the details of Ackerman's departure as it had to know the costs of bringing and keeping her here," said Zack Stalberg, Seventy's President and CEO. "The SRC – and maybe Governor Corbett and Mayor Nutter – may think they're doing the taxpayers a favor by finding a secret donor to finance part of the severance deal. But secrecy has huge potential downsides."

According to Stalberg, downsides include preventing the public from knowing whether or how the favor might be returned – either by the School District or by another part of government, each of which spend billions of public money every year. "There is no compelling reason for the lack of transparency. If the donors are insisting upon it, find other donors," Stalberg said.

Stalberg added that greater transparency is especially important given concerns about conflicts of interest already infecting SRC Chairman Robert Archie, Jr. The outcome of a city investigation of Archie's participation in a March 2011 private meeting concerning a contract to run Martin Luther King High School, after recusing himself from that decision because of a conflict of interest, has not been released. Former Deputy Superintendent/Deputy Chief Executive for the School District, and now Acting Superintendent Leroy Nunery, also attended the private meeting. Mayor Nutter ordered his Chief Integrity Officer, Joan Markman, to conduct the investigation back in April.

“The public’s confidence in the School District is very fragile at the moment,” Stalberg said. “This is a time for everyone with a hand in running the schools, most immediately the SRC and Mayor Nutter, to be as open as possible. Just because the Ackerman era is over doesn’t mean that serious issues won’t linger about how it ended.”

The Committee of Seventy’s **IN THE KNOW: WHO’S IN CHARGE OF THE PHILLY SCHOOLS** is attached and is also available at: http://www.seventy.org/Downloads/Whos_in_Charge_of_the_Philly_Schools_8.22.11.pdf.

The Committee of Seventy is a non-partisan organization fighting for clean and effective government, fair elections and informed citizens in Philadelphia and throughout the region. For more information about Seventy, and other **IN THE KNOW** installments, see www.seventy.org.

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