U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS MAKES EDUCATION HIGH PRIORITY DURING SUMMER LEADERSHIP MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA

Infrastructure, Metro Economies and Nation Building Among Top Agenda Items

Philadelphia, PA – On July 19, Mayors Michael A. Nutter of Philadelphia, Kevin Johnson of Sacramento and Bill Finch of Bridgeport, Connecticut participated in a panel discussion on the state of our public education system and its impact on disadvantaged communities during the Summer Leadership meeting of The U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM). The panel was held in conjunction with a screening of the film "Won't Back Down," inspired by the impact of key education reforms, including parent trigger policies, taking shape across the country.

The mayors were joined by education advocates Michelle Rhee, founder and CEO of StudentsFirst, Ben Austin, Executive Director of Parent Revolution, Dr. Lori Shorr, Executive Advisor to the Philadelphia Public School District, and Mark Johnson, the film's producer.

According to recent findings from the U.S. Dept. of Education, strong public schools have played a role in transforming neighborhoods and spurring local economies, while disadvantaged communities have continuously been plagued with poor-performing schools.

“I believe education is the most important issue of our generation,” said USCM President Mayor Michael Nutter. "It has the power to provide a vehicle out of poverty as well as bring children a step closer to grasping a piece of the American Dream. This year – as shown through our adopted resolutions – the leadership of the Conference has placed a high priority on ensuring every child is in a high quality seat in a top performing school."

USCM members took the lead on education reform last month by adopting resolutions in support of meaningful reform policies, including the creation of differentiated teacher and principal evaluations based on student outcomes, collaborative partnerships between district and charter schools, attracting and retaining top talent to the teaching profession and empowering parents to transform failing schools.

-more-
Mayor Kevin Johnson, second vice president of USCM and a long-time advocate for education reform, echoed Mayor Nutter’s sentiments.

“We are too great of a nation not to guarantee that every child, no matter their ZIP code, has an effective teacher in the classroom and quality school options available,” Johnson said. "To ensure this, leaders on both sides of the aisle must work to put in place policies that stand up to the status quo, and put our children first."

Bridgeport Mayor Finch, whose own state this year passed transformative education reforms, including measures to help turn around the state’s worst-performing schools, said every child can achieve at a high level.

“The parents of Connecticut made their voices heard and forced the legislature to focus on the interests of children instead of those of the special interests,” Finch said. "Though 'Won't Back Down' is just a film, the resolve of the parents shown is a direct portrayal of the tenacity of the parents in my own city who demand change."

‘Won’t Back Down’ was inspired by the impact of key education reforms, including parent trigger. In the film, a single mother, portrayed by actor Maggie Gyllenhaal, organizes parents to take control of their failing school in the face of aggressive efforts by those fighting to preserve the status quo. The story attempts to personify the often powerless feelings many parents across the country have when trying to provide their children with quality education options and their desire for change. The film is scheduled for release on September 28.

###

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,295 such cities in the country today, and each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. Like us on Facebook at facebook.com/usmayors, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/usmayors.