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STATEMENT BY JEANNE ALLEN
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Expressing concern for reports of the dismantling of Philadelphia reforms, Center for Education Reform president Jeanne Allen had the following statement:

Last year, the Philadelphia School District hired seven education management groups (five companies and two universities) to revitalize Philadelphia's poorest performing schools. Now, newly employed Schools Chief Paul Vallas wants to reduce the per-pupil compensation to the management companies by as much as half. As leverage, he is threatening to terminate their contracts, which he can do until May 30 without cause or the School Reform Commission's approval, unless the companies agree to accept less. Last month one of the management companies, Chancellor Beacon, was fired without warning, resulting in the reassignment of their schools to other companies.

The initial contracts' compensation structure was designed to assist the companies in providing much needed management for the city's lowest performing schools and to allow them to implement coherent programs and approaches. The companies have had just under one year to turn around the schools and early reports show promise. What these companies and their reform approaches offer are high expectations, a rigorous curriculum focused on closing the achievement gap, and teacher retraining aligned to the needs of the students. Finally, parents and students at these schools undergoing reform need a sense of calm and continuity.

Despite the political pressure, Edison Schools, Foundations, and Victory Schools continue to negotiate while state officials express concerns that without the agreed to funding, these companies will be forced to withdraw their programs. This kind of arbitrary decision-making cannot be helping the schools.

Vallas' approach should set off alarm bells for anyone who believes that top down decrees and "one-size-fits all" are not successful educational strategies.

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The Center for Education Reform is a national, independent, non-profit advocacy organization providing support and guidance to individuals, community and civic groups, policymakers and others who are working to bring fundamental reforms to their schools. For further information, please call (202) 822-9000 or visit our website at <http://edreform.com>.