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Tuesday, August 16th, 2011

Dear Chancellor Walcott,

On Wednesday, the Mayor's Panel for Educational Policy will consider approving a \$60 million dollar contract with Verizon to provide internet and phone service to schools. While our schools are in desperate need of resources, and while investment in education should remain a priority for our City, I have serious concerns over the pending contract with Verizon.

In a report prepared by Special Commissioner of Investigation Robert J. Condon for the New York City School District released April 28th, 2011, it was stated that "the investigation also established that Verizon, in order to be awarded a multi-million dollar contract, agreed to a demand that Verizon use subcontractor Custom Computer Specialists ("CCS") at a higher cost to the DOE than Verizon would have charged for the same services."

The SCI Report further suggests that "The DOE refrain from contracting or subcontracting with Ross Lanham or any company associated with him and that he be barred from working for the DOE and on DOE premises," and that if "that, if the DOE continues to use the contractors or subcontractors cited in this report, adequate safeguards must be put in place to prevent a recurrence of this type of scheme."

It is for these reasons I believe the vote to approve another city contract with Verizon should be delayed until certain questions can be answered in a formal manner. In my capacity as the Chair of the Technology Committee on the City Council, I plan to hold an oversight hearing concerning this matter in order to begin that process.

I am therefore asking that any decision made on the pending contract between Verizon and the Department of Education be delayed until the City Council is allowed the chance to conduct a hearing over a process that has in some instances turned out to be a bad deal for the taxpayers. It is my hope that you will take into consideration the findings of the New York Schools Investigation Report and the sentiment of the public that suggests we proceed with caution when contracting millions of dollars in tax-payer funds.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Fernando Cabrera
Council Member