



CITY OF BELFAST

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Eric Sanders
Mayor

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Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Member of the Education of the Cultural Affairs Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to briefly speak in support of the Hutchinson Center in Belfast today.

I am Eric Sanders and I have served as the Mayor of Belfast now for 5 years. Prior to that, I served on the City Council, in total, for 15 years.

When I first ran for the City Council in 2009, I said at the time publicly that I felt the Hutchinson Center to be the most valuable and important asset that Belfast has and would be in the future of the City.

I still feel this way. Strongly and without blinking. I simply believe that having an operation that offers education and workforce training in one's small City to be of utmost significance.

As a current Manager at Bank of America and MBNA, I can only tell you the truth. I was there with MBNA when we built it, and at Bank of America when we gave it. Both Companies and their employees were and still are fervently proud and grateful to have the chance to build, and then give the Hutchinson Center to the University system. This support was so people could have a chance at higher education.

I will not go into any detail about how I feel today personally about the University's decision to close and perhaps sell to the highest bidder, as it would not be positive tone for me, and this should be about positive change, and opportunity. Although severely tested by me over the years, I need to remember that I am Mayor of the City at this moment, and not just a citizen. In turn, you are spared my flamethrower speech, but do know I had one.

I can only say that when given a gift, if one no longer wants, the gift should be returned. That is the way I was raised by my parents. It should not be sold to someone else. It should be given back.

The Future of the Hutchinson Center Steering Committee has worked diligently, and persuasively for over six months planning on how to re-make the Hutchinson relevant in 2024.

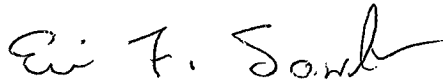
and beyond. They should be given this opportunity. They are committed, have an excellent plan, and have already shown in other endeavors within the community their brilliance.

The City stands squarely behind this group and is prepared to invest financially in a significant manner if they are given this opportunity.

There is no finer group out there. I know this, you should know this, and the University knows this. On behalf of the City of Belfast and the City Council, I came today to share with you this message.

Now is a time for action, and for positive change to keep the Hutchinson Center in the right hands, for the future of us all.

Thank you very much.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Sanders".

Mayor Eric Sanders