

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, February 17, 2016
10:15 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

BILL 160009 - An ordinance authorizing the
Managing Director to contract with the Support
Center for Child Advocates for the provision
of professional services to the City for
representing children in certain legal
matters...

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1
2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
3 morning, everybody. Thank you very much
4 for coming here. This hearing is now
5 called to order. This is a public
6 hearing of the City Council Committee on
7 Children and Youth and the purpose of
8 this public hearing is to hear testimony
9 on Bill No. 160009.

10 I recognize the presence of a
11 quorum of Committee members. Members of
12 the Committee in attendance are our Vice
13 Chair of the Children and Youth
14 Committee, Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds
15 Brown, and Committee members Councilwoman
16 Cherelle Parker and Councilwoman
17 Quinones-Sanchez. Also joining us in the
18 room today is the sponsor of the bill,
19 Councilman Bill Greenlee. Thank you very
20 much.

21 Before we get started, I just
22 wanted to make a few opening remarks.
23 Today is actually the inaugural hearing
24 of the Committee on Children and Youth.
25 This is a brand new committee created and

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2 formed by City Council, and I am Helen
3 Gym and I'm proud to be the Chair of this
4 Committee, along with my fellow
5 colleagues who are here.

6 We felt very passionately about
7 the creation of a Children and Youth
8 Committee that would look at very
9 specific issues, of which I think this
10 bill is a great example, about the broad
11 needs of young people in our city and
12 that sometimes we do need to create
13 special venues so that we're paying
14 particularly close attention to them
15 beyond traditional committees that often
16 dealt with children and youth, including
17 Education, but in this particular
18 committee, we are going to be looking at
19 and embracing the whole of children's
20 experiences in our city, and that will
21 include issues that touch on a variety of
22 areas, everything from food security and
23 access, homelessness, child care, teen
24 health, and care for young people. We're
25 going to look very closely at child

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2 advocacy, juvenile justice, and we
3 welcome all of those who are in this room
4 who care about this issue deeply, and we
5 will be doing our best to make sure that
6 that's upheld.

7 As we begin, I would like to
8 allow my Vice Chair, the Vice Chair of
9 the Committee, Councilwoman Reynolds
10 Brown, if you have any opening remarks.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
12 morning. Good morning, everyone. What a
13 pleasure it is to be at the inaugural
14 session of the Committee on Children and
15 Youth. And while City Council I believe
16 has done a splendid job in attacking both
17 challenges and opportunities facing young
18 people in our city, to know that we have
19 a committee that focuses like a laser
20 beam on opportunities and challenges
21 facing young people will, I believe,
22 enable us to be even more effective,
23 useful, and helpful in alleviating many
24 of the challenges that they face. And
25 while we were able to get a lot of work

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done on behalf of children and youth
under the Health and Human Services
Committee chaired formerly by our former
colleague Councilwoman Marian Tasco,
including a Youth Commission which came
through that Committee and my lead bill
and other matters, this, as I repeat,
will allow us to focus like a laser beam.
Because we know the facts. When I came
to City Council, there were 4,000
children in foster care. There are now
5,000 children in foster care. Every
single night there are 1,500 children not
sleeping in their own beds. So it's an
enormous opportunity to make a better
difference for our children.
Congratulations to the Chairwoman.

Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

Bill No. 160009, and I would
like to now ask the Clerk to read the
title of the bill.

THE CLERK: An ordinance
authorizing the Managing Director to

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2 contract with the Support Center for
3 Child Advocates for the provision of
4 professional services to the City for
5 representing children in certain legal
6 matters, all under certain terms and
7 conditions.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
9 very much.

10 I'd also like to recognize
11 Councilman Bill Greenlee, who is joining
12 us today and is the sponsor of the bill,
13 to make some opening remarks as well.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
15 you, Madam Chair. And you're doing a
16 great job up there, by the way.

17 She was a little nervous, just
18 to let you know, beforehand.

19 In short, the Support Center
20 for Child Advocates do an excellent job.
21 They have represented children, and the
22 Administration is going to talk about
23 their background a little bit, so I won't
24 repeat it, but they've done a great job
25 in representing children that needed that

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help that could not be represented by the
Defender Association.

Without going into the gory
details, but the members who were here
last session probably know what I'm
talking about. They kind of got caught
up in an issue that had to do with how
conflict counsel was going to be handled
in the City of Philadelphia. Former
Councilman O'Brien took that issue on,
and as a result of, I guess, let's say,
difference of opinion with the former
Administration, there was legislation put
in that any contract that had to do with
conflict counsel would have to come
through City Council. Before the Support
Center for Child Advocates were just
renewed every year through the
Administration. So in a sense, they got
caught up in this kind of, no pun
intended, conflict, and it was never the
intention of former Councilman O'Brien,
myself or anybody to have them in any way
shortchanged.

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So I certainly support this bill. I hope the Committee sees fit to move it forward, because, again, the Support Center for Child Advocates do an excellent job in what they do and they deserve to continue doing it through the City of Philadelphia.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you very much, Councilman Greenlee, and thanks so much for being a strong advocate on this issue.

The Clerk will now call the first witness to testify on the bill.

THE CLERK: I'm sorry. The Committee calls Julie Wertheimer, Assistant Managing Director for Criminal Justice.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good morning.

MS. WERTHEIMER: Good morning.

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Please state

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2 your name for the record and you may
3 proceed with your testimony afterwards.

4 MS. WERTHEIMER: Julie
5 Wertheimer, Assistant Managing Director
6 for Criminal Justice for the City of
7 Philadelphia.

8 Good morning, Chairwoman Gym
9 and members of the Committee on Children
10 and Youth and Councilman Greenlee. My
11 name is Julie Wertheimer and I am the
12 Assistant Managing Director for Criminal
13 Justice for the City of Philadelphia. I
14 am joined by Jessica Shapiro, the Acting
15 Commissioner for the Department of Human
16 Services, and Marguerite Gualtieri,
17 Managing Attorney for the Support Center
18 for Child Advocates.

19 We are here to testify in
20 support of Bill No. 160009, introduced by
21 Councilman Greenlee, which authorizes the
22 Managing Director to contract with
23 Support Center for Child Advocates for
24 the provision of professional services to
25 the City representing children in certain

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legal matters, under certain terms and conditions. Since its founding in 1977, Child Advocates has trained more than 8,000 attorneys who contribute pro bono services to protect children.

This legislation authorizes the contract to provide counsel for children who cannot be represented in legal matters by the Defender Association of Philadelphia or another provider due to a conflict. This is a core function of the justice system and a service the City is obligated to provide. In addition to representation, Child Advocates provides social workers to address the child's need while under the agency's representation.

We respectfully request that the Council rules be suspended to allow for the first reading of this bill at the next Council session.

We thank you for your consideration. My colleagues and I will be happy to answer any questions at this

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2 time.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
4 very much.

5 I would like to invite my
6 fellow Committee members, are there any
7 questions or comments from members of the
8 Committee for Ms. Wertheimer?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Well, seeing
11 as there are no questions, we want to
12 thank you very much for coming in and for
13 your time on this issue.

14 Are there any additional
15 witnesses who are here to testify on this
16 bill or would like to make public
17 comment?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Great. If
20 no one else wishes to testify, we are
21 going to conclude the public hearing on
22 this.

23 This concludes the public
24 hearing on Bill No. 160009, and we will
25 now go into a public meeting to consider

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the action that will be taken on the
bill.

MS. WERTHEIMER: Thank you.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: We are now
officially in a public meeting for
motions for Bill No. 160009, and the
Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blondell
Reynolds Brown for a motion on the
amendment to Bill No. 160009.

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Madam
Chairwoman, I move that Bill No. 160009
be reported out of Committee with a
favorable recommendation and further move
that the rules of Council be suspended so
as to permit first reading at our next
scheduled session.

(Duly seconded.)

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It has been
moved and properly seconded that the
amendment to Bill No. 16 --
clarification; seconded that Bill No.
160009 be approved.

All those in favor of the

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2 motion will signify by saying aye.

3 (Aye.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Those

5 opposed?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So the ayes

8 have it and the motion carries. Bill No.

9 160009 has been approved.

10 So thank you very much.

11 (Committee on Children and

12 Youth concluded at 10:25 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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