

1 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

2

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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City Hall, Room 400
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, June 2, 2025
10:00 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE-RICHARDSON
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY J. YOUNG, JR.
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

CAROLINE STACK, CLERK

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN JONES: I note
3 that the hour has arrived. This is
4 the Committee on Public Safety to
5 review Bill Nos. 241057 and 250373.

6 Will the clerk please read
7 the title of the bills?

8 THE CLERK: Bill No.
9 241057, amending Chapter 9-600 of
10 the Philadelphia Code entitled
11 Service and Other Businesses to add
12 a new Section 9-640 entitled
13 Mandatory Posting of Warning of
14 Unlawful Transfer of Firearm to
15 require licensed firearms dealers to
16 post signs warning that purchasing
17 firearms for another is criminally
18 punishable, all under certain terms
19 and conditions.

20 And Bill No. 250373,
21 amending Chapter 9-3500 of Title IX
22 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
23 Fair Criminal Record Screening
24 Standards to amend definitions, add

1 clarifications, and enhance
2 remedies, all under certain terms
3 and conditions.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
5 so very much. Will you please call
6 the roll.

7 THE CLERK: Chairman Jones.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: Present.

9 THE CLERK: Vice Chair
10 Lozada.

11 VICE CHAIR LOZADA:
12 Present.

13 THE CLERK: Councilmember
14 Thomas.

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
16 Present.

17 THE CLERK: Councilmember
18 Gauthier.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
20 Present.

21 THE CLERK: Councilmember
22 Brooks. Councilmember Harrity.

23 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
24 Present.

1 THE CLERK: Councilmember

2 Young. Also joining us is --

3 CHAIRMAN JONES: Also

4 joining us is the author of Bill No.

5 250373, Member Rue Landau and

6 President Johnson, for the record.

7 So let's get started.

8 Council President, would you like to

9 say a few words? Come on up.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

11 I'm okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN JONES: You're

13 okay?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: All right.

17 So I will start with Bill No.

18 241057, which I'm the author of that

19 bill. And it's in conjunction with

20 the administration in reference to

21 straw purchases.

22 It's truly appropriate that

23 President Johnson is here for this

24 bill because it kind of started on a

1 trip we took to Oaks, PA, where we
2 were at a gun show. And at that gun
3 show we took notice of things.

4 The first thing that we
5 observed along with former President
6 Darrell Clarke was that that is the
7 most guns I've ever seen in one
8 location, including the forensics
9 lab that we've all toured. I've
10 never seen that many tables, that
11 many people. It was -- it was
12 reminiscent of a, you know, a sale
13 at Macy's or something like that,
14 and people were shopping.

15 What we second tier notice
16 was that there were couples of
17 people. And in the relationship of
18 the purchase, one person was
19 pointing out the type, the
20 ballistics, the type of gun. But
21 when it came time for the actual
22 purchase, the other person actually
23 filled out the paperwork, which
24 struck us as odd, which struck us as

1 peculiar.

2 The one person knew all
3 about the type of gun, what it could
4 do, what its magazine capacity was.

5 The other person seemed to be
6 relatively clueless, but yet they
7 were the one purchasing the gun.
8 What we later found out was all too
9 often that straw purchases are the
10 reason that people that have no
11 record tend to go with people who
12 have an -- have a record to make
13 purchases for them.

14 Some of them are benign and
15 well-meaning, or this is my husband,
16 he's trying to protect the house,
17 but others are more commercial and
18 of a sinister motivation.

19 And what we'll hear from is
20 how often -- one of the questions I
21 want to get an answer to is, how
22 often do these guns wind up at crime
23 scenes? How often do they get
24 transferred through the parking lots

1 of Oaks, PA to people who didn't
2 even come up with the people that
3 bought them? And we find that to be
4 a problem.

5 And the administration felt
6 that we needed signage to be able to
7 say to people, when you go up here
8 and you start looking at guns for
9 someone else, it is a crime, and you
10 will be punished for it. If we can
11 make a dent in this transfer of
12 firearms in the city of
13 Philadelphia, we will save lives,
14 literally.

15 So with that, Ms. Stack,
16 will you please -- oh, are there any
17 other members of this committee
18 who'd like to comment? Seeing none.
19 Ms. Stack, will you please bring the
20 witness to testify?

21 THE CLERK: Francis Healy,
22 Deputy Commissioner of the
23 Philadelphia Police Department.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: Welcome,

1 Deputy Commissioner. How are you
2 today? Please state your name and
3 begin your testimony.

4 MR. HEALY: Good morning.

5 My name is --

6 CHAIRMAN JONES: Your mic
7 is -- hold up.

8 MR. HEALY: Ready?

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: Yes.

10 MR. HEALY: Okay. Sorry.

11 Again, my name is Francis Healy.

12 I'm Deputy Commissioner of

13 Philadelphia Police Department.

14 I'm here on behalf of

15 Commissioner Bethel. And thank you

16 for the opportunity to provide

17 testimony today regarding Bill No.

18 241057, sponsored by Councilmember

19 Jones, Councilmember Driscoll, and

20 Councilmember Squilla, which

21 proposes amendments to

22 Philadelphia's Charter -- or, I'm

23 sorry, City Code Chapter 9-600.

24 I'm here today to voice the

1 Philadelphia Police Department's
2 full support for this bill, which
3 seeks to amend Chapter 9-600 to
4 require licensed firearm dealers to
5 post mandatory warning signs about
6 the illegality and consequences of
7 straw purchasing.

8 Straw purchasing is the act
9 of buying a firearm for someone who
10 is prohibited by law from doing so.
11 It's a serious offense that directly
12 undermines public safety in our
13 city. It is a federal and state
14 crime, and more importantly, a
15 significant -- a significant pathway
16 through which firearms end up in the
17 hands of individuals who use them to
18 commit acts of violence.

19 Any measure that we can
20 interrupt this pipeline, such as a
21 clear warning at the point of sale,
22 is a common-sense step towards
23 reducing gun violence in our
24 communities. We commend

1 Councilmember Jones for introducing
2 this important legislation. Clear
3 visible signage warning the criminal
4 penalties associated with straw
5 purchase will act as a deterrent and
6 an educational tool.

7 Many individuals,
8 particularly those acting under
9 pressure or misinformation, may not
10 fully understand the gravity of such
11 an action. A prominent warning
12 stating that straw purchasing are
13 punishable by up to 10 years in
14 prison and a total of \$250,000 fine,
15 provides necessary notice and may
16 stop a crime before it starts.

17 The bill is also practical
18 and enforceable. It places minimal
19 burden on licensed firearm dealers
20 while empowering them with clear,
21 consistent tool to communicate legal
22 risks to the customers.
23 Furthermore, the department is
24 prepared to support implementation

1 by producing and distributing the
2 required signage at no cost to the
3 dealers.

4 We are confident this bill
5 will contribute to reducing gun
6 violence in our city and send a
7 clear message that straw purchasing
8 is not a victimless crime, it's a
9 direct threat to the safety of all
10 Philadelphians. The Philadelphia
11 Police Department stands ready to
12 assist in the implementation of the
13 -- and strongly urges this passage.
14 Happy to answer any question at this
15 time.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
17 for your testimony. I want to
18 recognize the attendance of Member
19 Young as well. Help me to
20 understand how big a problem this
21 is. It's my understanding they're
22 over -- what was the -- I think it
23 was 300,000 cases of straw persons
24 nationally. What kind of problem

1 does this propose locally?

2 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Well,
3 I don't have -- I can -- I can come
4 back with better statistics. I
5 don't really have direct statistics
6 for today's testimony, but the
7 driving impetus behind this bill is
8 the fact that many times this is
9 domestic related very often. You'll
10 have a wife or a significant other
11 come in purchasing firearms on
12 behalf of somebody who's prohibited.
13 And you can clearly see it at the
14 gun shop. However, when a
15 paperwork's filled out, as you
16 mentioned earlier, it's the innocent
17 victim.

18 So when that gun is
19 ultimately found and somebody's
20 going to be arrested, it's that
21 person who's got arrested for straw
22 purchasing. And I don't think
23 sometimes these individuals even
24 have a clue that they're engaging in

1 a criminal act. So the issue is
2 putting that signage up there. We
3 actually recommend putting it in
4 both English and Spanish. It's not
5 -- it's not a burden. It's not a --
6 it does not impede the ownership or
7 a right to any firearm whatsoever.

8 This is a notice to
9 potential purchasers of a potential
10 penalty. So there -- this doesn't
11 cross any preemption boundaries
12 under the state. And I think it's
13 good effort for the -- like I said,
14 these people are being victimized.

15 No. 1, they're being
16 victimized by their partners, that
17 then they're ultimately being
18 arrested for these crimes. And like
19 I mentioned, they're serious
20 penalties associated with this. So
21 a simple sign, and we are willing,
22 the number of gun shops in the city
23 is not that significant. We're
24 willing to post those sign or

1 develop or print up them signs
2 ourselves on behalf of the gun
3 owners -- I'm sorry, gun shop.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: How many
5 licensed gun dealer shops are there
6 in the city of Philadelphia's
7 footprint?

8 COMMISSIONER HEALY: I
9 believe it's under 10.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: It's under
11 10. So this isn't a burden at all?

12 COMMISSIONER HEALY: No,
13 it's not a burden for us at all.

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay.
15 Anybody else? Member Lozada?

16 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
17 Deputy Commissioner, is there any
18 data that shows where in the city of
19 Philadelphia these straw purchases
20 are happening when compared to other
21 parts? Is there any data that shows
22 us where it's happening more often
23 than not?

24 COMMISSIONER HEALY:

1 There's data that -- I don't have it
2 with me. There is data as to which
3 shops are -- people go to more often
4 than others. As for this type of
5 offense, I don't have direct data on
6 that. I can talk with Gun Violence
7 Task Force, who's through the DA's
8 office and the state. I don't have
9 direct data, but it's just general.
10 What we see is -- and I don't mean
11 to be -- it's often young women are
12 victimized in this.

13 They walk in, they don't
14 know exactly what you mentioned.
15 They know nothing about firearms.
16 They know nothing about guns.
17 They're just there to purchase a gun
18 on behalf of somebody else not
19 knowing what they're doing is a
20 crime. So a simple sign, hopefully
21 they see that and they can at least
22 -- you know, they -- if they -- if
23 they turn around and say, what's
24 going on here, that's enough for a

1 gun dealer to say, we're not
2 selling. So it -- it's twofold.
3 It's for the victim itself, but also
4 for the gun dealer to see the
5 reaction of somebody, quite frankly.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: And
7 then --

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: Oh, go
9 ahead.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I'm
11 sorry. And then my last question
12 is, as the bill is written, the
13 signage is only required to be in
14 languages of Spanish and English.
15 But as we know, Philadelphia is a
16 diverse city, are we looking at
17 expanding the signage and the way
18 that we inform other communities
19 beyond just Spanish and English?

20 COMMISSIONER HEALY: We
21 would be open to any language and we
22 could use our resources to put it
23 into any language you think that
24 would be necessary. We did Spanish

1 and English, quite frankly, it's the
2 primary language as most people are
3 using in the city, but we're happy
4 to expand that scope easily.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you.
8 Member Harrity.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

10 Yeah. Just real quick, if we can
11 also -- I know you probably don't
12 have it with you, but also if you
13 can give us any numbers you have on
14 what neighborhoods these straw
15 purchase firearms are being used in.
16 I mean, I know they're used in all
17 neighborhoods, but is there -- is
18 there -- from the crime data, is
19 there any numbers that show, like,
20 hotspots?

21 COMMISSIONER HEALY: I'm
22 not aware of that per se, but I --
23 I'll -- whatever data I can find
24 from the gun violence task force,

1 I'll be happy to share. I'll send
2 that.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

4 Yeah. And that was what I was
5 getting at. I mean, if we had
6 numbers like that and we knew that
7 this area would have, that means
8 that somebody in that area is the
9 straw purchaser. So, you know.

10 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Yeah.

11 From our -- from our experience,
12 most --

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: Or
14 at least a pass-through.

15 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Most
16 of the gun shop in Philadelphia are
17 acting above board. The issue is
18 this gives them the opportunity to
19 actually, when you see somebody's
20 reaction to that sign, that will
21 give them pause. Okay. And then
22 they can, you know, they can decline
23 the purchase or the sale. But the
24 issue is not only, like, notice to

1 the potential victim, but also that
2 kind of behavior.

3 You'll see, if you told me
4 this was okay to do this, you know,
5 that's one person. Then all of a
6 sudden they're in an argument in a
7 gun shop, that's a clear indication
8 right there that the gun shop will
9 most likely withdraw that sale. So
10 --

11 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
12 Yeah. I get it. I'm just trying to
13 figure out where these kids are
14 getting these guns from.

15 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Well,
16 this is one way. There's multiple
17 ways. Okay. The issue is a lot of
18 times people -- probably one of the
19 biggest ways guns get into the wrong
20 hands, people leave them in cars and
21 they're stolen constantly.

22 That's a big issue in the
23 city. A lot of the clubs and
24 nightclubs have metal detectors in

1 them. So what they'll do is they'll
2 leave their gun in the car so they
3 can go inside the club. Of course,
4 there's people watching them when
5 they do that. So that's another
6 issue we're trying to address.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: Any other
10 questions? No? So one of the
11 things -- you got to watch what you
12 learn in a barbershop, sitting
13 around, and there were people that
14 were literally taking orders in
15 barbershops to say, what you looking
16 for? I can go get it. How do we
17 delineate between the one-off couple
18 misguided purchase versus somebody
19 who does this as a criminal
20 enterprise? And are there examples
21 of that?

22 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Well,
23 the Gun Violence Task Force does
24 that very job. The issue is they're

1 involved in the investigation of all
2 the illegal gun. And so if there's
3 a notification like that of a
4 trafficking network or organization,
5 yes, they work on those
6 organizations and take them apart
7 with their -- from the state level.
8 But they also work with our task
9 force members as well.

10 So we actively work on
11 those organizations. That's an --
12 that would be an organization. I
13 mean -- and there's quite a few I
14 gather, but the drug -- or the drug
15 -- the Gun Violence Task force is
16 the one that would be the lead on
17 that enforcement. And I'll work --
18 I'll reach out and get all the data
19 I can regarding the --

20 CHAIRMAN JONES: Could you
21 -- and we'll -- I'll share it with
22 the committee, particularly the
23 geography of where this might be
24 occurring, because there might be an

1 overlapping map that says, all
2 right, where there is drugs, there
3 is illegal purchases of firearms.

4 And then if we can kind of
5 take that data to make good
6 information, we can work with you
7 guys on deployment.

8 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Okay.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: All right.

10 COMMISSIONER HEALY: I'll
11 get whatever data and maps I can for
12 you, probably by the end of the day.

13 CHAIRMAN JONES: Member
14 Young.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
16 you. And good morning. I do have
17 one question. Since we're trying
18 to, you know, regulate the unlawful
19 transfer of firearms a little bit,
20 you know, by making it clear what
21 the rules are, how proactive is the
22 police department in marketing to
23 the residents of the city, that if
24 you are of a certain age and you

1 don't have a certain record, you
2 can't apply to get a gun license?

3 Because there are a lot of
4 people in this city who are eligible
5 to have a gun license for -- who
6 carry guns but who do not have that
7 license for one reason or another.
8 So how active are we in marketing
9 the idea that you can go and be a
10 legal firearm owner in the city of
11 Philadelphia?

12 COMMISSIONER HEALY: Yeah.
13 Based on recent litigation, I'll say
14 two to three years ago, we've
15 revamped our entire system. It's
16 electronic system. It goes through
17 our main website, the Philadelphia
18 police website. And you can walk
19 you right through to the application
20 process and it then takes you to a
21 third party vendor that actually you
22 can fill out the application and
23 submit the application. So we
24 streamline the process. It takes

1 much less than 45 days. The law is
2 45 days.

3 It's a matter of, I think,
4 like weeks or days now. So we've
5 really expedited the process. So if
6 you legally want a gun permit,
7 there's no impediment for you to get
8 one. And we actually help
9 facilitate it through our website.

10 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,
13 Member Young. Are there any other
14 questions? Seeing none. No.
15 Seeing none. Thank you for your
16 testimony. Ms. Stack, who is the
17 next panel?

18 THE CLERK: There are no
19 further panels for Bill No. 241057.

20 CHAIRMAN JONES: Are there
21 any others that wish to testify on
22 Bill No. 241057? Any public
23 comment?

24 THE CLERK: No one for

1 public comment, Mr. Chair.

2 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay.

3 Thank you very much.

4 We will now move to 250373.

5 And I'd like to recognize

6 Ms. Landau, our member who is the

7 author of this legislation.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

9 Thank you so much, Chair

10 Jones. Thank you for having me,

11 Public Safety Committee. I am not a

12 member of the committee, which is

13 why I am sitting back here, but I'm

14 so happy to be here today as they

15 consider this piece of legislation.

16 I'm here to speak about

17 Bill 250373, which updates the Fair

18 Chance Hiring Law. Philadelphia's

19 always been a city that believes in

20 second chances.

21 In 2011, we made history by

22 becoming the first city in the

23 nation to pass a citywide Fair

24 Chance Hiring Law, covering all

1 employers. Back then, I had the
2 privilege to work with Chair Curtis
3 Jones, and helped to implement the
4 policy as I was the director of the
5 Philadelphia Commission on Human
6 Relations.

7 As a key player in banning
8 the box, I've seen firsthand what
9 Fair Chance really means to so many
10 Philadelphians. It means a shot at
11 dignity, stability, and the ability
12 to provide for yourself and for your
13 family. This is something that
14 Chair Jones in particular has been
15 also championing and working for his
16 entire career here. But as any
17 advocate will tell you, policy only
18 works when it keeps up with the
19 times.

20 Today, I'm proud to
21 continue that work by having it --
22 hearing an update to the Fair Chance
23 Hiring Law to make sure this law
24 does exactly what it's meant to do.

1 Give people a shot at employment
2 without being punished for their
3 past. These updates are grounded in
4 hard data and lived experiences.
5 That's because people deserve to be
6 seen as more than a criminal record.
7 They be -- they deserve to be seen
8 as full humans with stories of
9 resilience, rehabilitation, and the
10 drive to move forward.

11 Over 300,000
12 Philadelphians, that's one in five
13 adults, are living with a criminal
14 record. These are our neighbors,
15 our coworkers, our family members,
16 and they are disproportionately
17 black and brown, LGBTQ+, disabled,
18 and working class.

19 Systems of inequity have
20 followed them from the courtroom to
21 the job interview, and it's up to us
22 to break that cycle. This bill will
23 clarify what is required of
24 employers under the Fair Chance

1 Hiring Law.

2 With an individualized
3 assessment, this bill ensures that
4 employers are only rejecting
5 applicants based on their criminal
6 records if they can show that their
7 specific record poses a specific
8 risk given the duties of the
9 specific job. The bill also
10 clarifies that the law applies to
11 all sources of criminal history.

12 Whether that -- whether
13 that information is found by the
14 employer themselves, using public
15 records, by a third-party service,
16 or on a PennDOT driver's license.
17 It will also change how employers
18 can consider misdemeanor convictions
19 older than a few years past. This
20 aligns the law with the latest
21 research on recidivism risk.

22 This update also aligns the
23 Fair Chance Hiring Law with long
24 standing state law prohibiting any

1 consideration of summary offenses.
2 This bill will also improve notice
3 requirements for job applicants that
4 an employer is considering rejecting
5 because of their criminal history,
6 provides more options for people to
7 assert their rights by allowing
8 people injured by violations of the
9 Fair Chance Hiring Law to go
10 directly to court -- to go to court,
11 and protect those who exercise their
12 fair chance hiring rights from
13 retaliation.

14 As expected, there were
15 some concerns from key leaders and
16 advocates about some of these
17 provisions, and I have had many
18 meetings, calls, and conversations
19 in order to mitigate these
20 difficulties, including with members
21 of the administration, which is an
22 employer who champions hiring people
23 with records and also complies with
24 the Fair Chance Hiring Law.

1 As a result of these
2 discussions, I've been able to
3 strengthen the law with a few key
4 changes to the initial version of
5 the bill. These changes include,
6 amending the look back period from
7 misdemeanors from three to four
8 years, amending the notice
9 requirement to only apply to
10 employers who employ over 10 -- over
11 10 employees, clarifying the written
12 requirement to make employers answer
13 four questions instead of a free
14 form narrative, and authorizing the
15 administration to come up with an
16 optional template that employers can
17 use.

18 We heard loud and clear
19 that offering an immediate private
20 right of action under the bill
21 wouldn't work for the city or for
22 employers, so that amendment to the
23 bill being heard today will not
24 include that provision. We are

1 removing it.

2 And lastly, when passed,
3 the bill will go into effect 90 days
4 following adoption to allow
5 employers and the administration to
6 develop processes and prepare for
7 compliance. By passing this update
8 to the Fair Chance Hiring Law, we
9 have the opportunity to recommit to
10 the principles this city has stood
11 for since we passed the first Ban
12 the Box in 2011.

13 We are happy to -- and look
14 forward to our continued
15 conversations with all of the
16 stakeholders after this committee
17 hearing and are always available for
18 those conversations. Fair Chance
19 Hiring doesn't mean hiring just
20 anyone. It means giving everyone a
21 chance to be considered based on who
22 they are now, not just who they
23 were.

24 To the advocates, legal

1 experts, people with records, and
2 community leaders who've helped
3 shape this legislation, thank you.
4 And thank you to the individuals
5 who've shared their stories with us,
6 and who we will hear from today.
7 Your voices drive this work. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: I would
10 like to put on the record my sincere
11 thanks to you from those original
12 bills in 11 and your tenacity to
13 represent people who are negatively
14 affected by discrimination in ways
15 before they even get their story
16 told. When we evolved from Donna
17 Reed Miller's original interest as
18 Chair of Public Safety back then, we
19 went and kind of put teeth to this
20 bill.

21 And I remember you in my
22 office. Let me tell you about her.
23 She was a advocate then representing
24 the Philadelphia Human Relations

1 Commission. But there was a
2 critical part, my colleagues, of
3 trying to get something passed and
4 trying to kind of amend or, you
5 know, you -- we try to get along --
6 go along to get along, right. And
7 there was a critical factor that
8 would've affected so many
9 individuals. Me, I was ready to
10 take the deal.

11 Like I can get nine -- I
12 told you, I said, I can get nine
13 votes right now for this if we take
14 this part out. True to your
15 convictions, she turned around on
16 me, shut the door and said, we will
17 not concede that. That is a
18 critical part. And look how many
19 people it affects. And I took a
20 deep breath, we walked down and we
21 passed that bill that has helped so
22 many. So I'm thankful that you've
23 continued along this path, moving
24 this legislation to help more

1 people. And so thank you for that.

2 With that --

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

4 Chair.

5 CHAIRMAN JONES: Member

6 Harrity, Chair recognizes.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

8 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Councilmember
9 Landau, again, as my colleague said,
10 thank you for your leadership on
11 this issue. I was glad to hear in
12 your statement that, you know, in
13 the city we're good with these
14 hiring practices.

15 You know, it's no secret
16 that I'm a second chance guy. You
17 know what I mean? I got -- I got
18 more than one chance. And I don't
19 believe that our mistakes should be
20 life sentences especially something
21 like misdemeanors, for sure.

22 And I've heard myself of
23 horror stories of how people get
24 around these rules which is actually

1 really crazy. Something like if
2 they do it after the hiring or
3 something -- I've had people who are
4 actually hired, friends of mine, and
5 a couple days later when -- right
6 before they were about to start,
7 they got a call saying, Hey, sorry,
8 but something came up. We didn't
9 know about this, yada, yada, yada,
10 whatever the excuses they use is.
11 So I'm glad that we're strengthening
12 these rules.

13 And I'm glad that the city
14 is sticking to their guns with
15 hiring because the bottom line is
16 we're short one every five jobs in
17 the city of Philadelphia, and we
18 need help and people deserve second
19 chances. So thank you for this
20 legislation.

21 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,
22 Member Harrity. Member -- anyone
23 else want to make a comment? Seeing
24 none. Ms. Stack, can you bring

1 forth the first panel to testify on
2 this bill?

3 THE CLERK: Camille
4 Duchaussee, Chief Administrative
5 Officer for the City of
6 Philadelphia.

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: Welcome.
8 Have a seat. State your name, for
9 the record, and please begin your
10 testimony.

11 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Good
12 morning, Chairman Jones and members
13 of the Public Safety Committee. My
14 name is Camille Duchaussee and I am
15 the Chief Administrative Officer for
16 the City of Philadelphia. I am
17 testifying in regard to Bill No.
18 250373, introduced by Councilmember
19 Rue Landau.

20 I'm here today on behalf of
21 the administration to express our
22 strenuous support for the creation
23 of more robust protections for
24 justice system impacted individuals,

1 whether seeking employment or
2 advancement by reducing or removing
3 unnecessary and discriminatory
4 barriers.

5 In particular, the
6 incorporation of language that will
7 strengthen safeguards against
8 retaliation for individuals who
9 exercise their rights under this
10 bill is a significant addition. So
11 thank you.

12 Thank you, Councilmember
13 Landau, for meeting with the
14 administration to discuss our
15 concerns around the private right of
16 action and notice of rights
17 provisions among others. While we
18 appreciate the adjustments that have
19 already been made and support this
20 legislation, we respectfully
21 recommend and ask that the bill --
22 that Bill No. 250373 be held at this
23 time.

24 This will allow the

1 administration to continue working
2 in partnership with Councilmember
3 Landau and other stakeholders to
4 address other elements of the bill
5 that may have unintended
6 consequences.

7 As currently drafted, some
8 elements include language and/or
9 create challenges that may
10 inadvertently harm the very
11 individuals we seek to protect or
12 place undue burdens on both public
13 and private employers in a way that
14 could impact hiring practices
15 negatively.

16 By holding the bill, we are
17 confident we can -- we are confident
18 we can work together to create
19 refined language that mitigates
20 these concerns and ensures that the
21 final version of the legislation
22 effectively balances protections for
23 job seekers with the practical needs
24 of employers.

1 Again, we are in support of
2 this bill and remain committed to
3 the fair chance hiring principles
4 and to ensuring that our policies
5 reduce rather than reinforce the
6 structural barriers faced by justice
7 impacted individuals. We look
8 forward to continued dialogue and
9 collaboration with city council,
10 Councilmember Landau, and community
11 stakeholders to realize the shared
12 vision of a more equitable
13 Philadelphia.

14 Thank you, and I'm happy to
15 answer any of the committee's
16 questions.

17 CHAIRMAN JONES: Before I
18 recognize the author of this
19 legislation, couple of things I'd
20 like to get on the record. So I've
21 been around since 11 and there has
22 never been a iteration of this bill
23 that I haven't heard this exact same
24 comment from.

1 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Sure.

2 CHAIRMAN JONES: Like I
3 understand the fear of what intended
4 and unintended consequences these
5 things might have. But from the
6 doom and gloom of 2011, where people
7 came in east chamber -- chambers and
8 said that businesses would have to
9 close because of their inability to
10 hire people, that they couldn't
11 protect themselves by way of
12 insurances, liabilities. And none
13 of these things happen.

14 In fact, what I'd like for
15 you to do, and you don't have to
16 have it right now, but I would like
17 you to provide it to the Chair so
18 that members of the committee -- how
19 many members of the Philadelphia
20 workforce have we given this
21 opportunity to and they've been,
22 like, successful. Like we -- one of
23 the things that I will say about
24 most administrations, they said, for

1 example, we will -- we will dive in
2 head first and see what it means to
3 bring people on without this burden
4 of predetermination based on
5 convictions.

6 And I know departments that
7 have benefited from this in light of
8 some of the shortages we've had in
9 the workforce, that this has kind of
10 helped that out. I know in the
11 streets department it reads like
12 who's who. Like guys I used to get
13 my lunch money taken from are now
14 solid citizens. And, you know,
15 instead of being the defendant,
16 please rise, they're the tax payer
17 will pay.

18 And so I understand the
19 administration's reluctance
20 sometimes for these kinds of
21 incremental changes in what it will
22 mean. But no disrespect, I hear
23 this -- I've heard this since 2011.
24 So with that, I will recognize

1 Member Landau,

2 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

3 Thank you so much. I -- you know,
4 to me what has been amazing is to
5 watch this societal sea change that
6 has happened since the bill first
7 came in 2011. We did hear all of
8 these fears that came up and
9 employers were convinced they would
10 be forced to hire people with
11 records from just a week ago, and
12 they would lose all their employees
13 and all these awful things would
14 happen. And none of it happened.

15 And, in fact, what did
16 happen was that kind of more of the
17 hearts and minds and society caught
18 up with what we needed to do. We
19 needed to give people a second
20 chance. And employers realized back
21 then with the -- with the box, we
22 actually had a physical box that
23 asked people if they had criminal
24 records on both paper applications

1 and online in 2011, by getting rid
2 of the box, banning the box, asking
3 about criminal records, they opened
4 up their pool of incredibly loyal
5 and talented employees. And we have
6 just moved on since then.

7 So the city of
8 Philadelphia, as I said, has been an
9 incredible champion of hiring people
10 with records. You give more people
11 opportunities than anyone. But I
12 would suggest that the changes that
13 we're making really come with the
14 times and how they're changing.
15 We've had more studies now.

16 We've had folks who studies
17 have come out to show that, I'm sure
18 you'll hear about, is that people
19 who have committed misdemeanors who
20 then have gone years without
21 committing another crime at all, are
22 as likely to commit any crime
23 including a misdemeanor than us.

24 I think this is the moment

1 where we continue to change the law
2 to match where we are in society and
3 just give the -- a greater pool of
4 applicants again to employers and
5 more important -- most importantly,
6 give folks with records, especially
7 small records, a second chance.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: Member
9 Harrity.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
11 Thank you. Thank you. How will
12 these changes impact our own hiring
13 practices within the city? And what
14 are the potential penalties and --
15 for noncompliance? Because, you
16 know, we as a city, we hire
17 ex-offenders.

18 MS. DUCHAUSSEE:
19 Absolutely. Yes.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: So
21 why would we be against
22 strengthening the rules for hiring
23 ex-offenders? Listen, I'm sorry. I
24 worked on these issues with Senator

1 Street when I was his chief of
2 staff, and I'd heard so many horror
3 stories over the year. Senior
4 citizens who were not allowed to go
5 to a federal or state run facility
6 nursing home because they had a
7 felony record because in 1969 they
8 bought a dime bag of weed, which
9 back then was a felony, and now they
10 cannot get into a nursing home.

11 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Right.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
13 Listen, again, mistakes are not
14 supposed to be life sentences. Bad
15 people we need to hold accountable,
16 but they -- we --

17 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: So --

18 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: We
19 need people.

20 MS. DUCHAUSSEE:

21 Absolutely.

22 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
23 Jobs. You know what I mean? That
24 we hear it all day every day from

1 the employers to the city. You
2 know, why are we making it harder?

3 MS. DUCHAUSSEE:

4 Councilmember Harrity, I promise
5 you, we are not at odds. We
6 absolutely agree with the premise,
7 and we are not against strengthening
8 protections for those who are
9 seeking opportunities regardless of
10 whether they've had a misstep.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

12 Then why hold it?

13 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Because
14 what we are seeking is that we just
15 give some time to exploring the
16 unintended consequence. The
17 unintended consequence of creating a
18 process that disincentivizes our
19 private employers from engaging and
20 recruiting and seeking out
21 opportunities to welcome and employ
22 returning citizens.

23 So we -- we're just asking
24 for an opportunity to better explore

1 how to strengthen. We want to do
2 the same thing. We want to
3 strengthen protections and the
4 opportunity. We can't -- we cannot
5 meet our public safety goals, we
6 cannot --

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

8 Councilwoman Landau, how long have
9 you and your staff been working on
10 this bill?

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: For
12 months. For months and we've --

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: How
14 many meetings do you average you had
15 with the administration about this?

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

17 Yeah. I think it's just a
18 disagreement as to whether or not
19 this will deter employers from
20 recruitment.

21 And we're willing -- we're
22 continuing to have additional
23 conversations. I go back with -- to
24 what Chair Jones says, I think some

1 of this is a fear factor and not a
2 reality that some of the tweaks in
3 this bill would deter employers from
4 going to job fairs where they are
5 recruiting people with records,
6 returning citizens to get a job.

7 I personally think more
8 conversations will clear this up,
9 but I do not see this as a barrier.

10 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: And that's
11 what we're asking for. We're asking
12 for the time to continue what has
13 been a very productive and
14 collaborative conversation. Because
15 at the end of the day, we can
16 achieve our public safety goals and
17 we cannot achieve our economic --
18 access to economic opportunity goals
19 if we don't create more stringent
20 protections for all of our residents
21 and all Philadelphians who want a
22 work opportunity.

23 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
24 Well, I get it. You'll have some

1 more time once it comes out of the
2 committee to be able to maybe go
3 back and negotiate. Councilwoman
4 Landau, I know she's a compromising
5 person. She's compromised already
6 with the bill from what I
7 understand. So, you know, I believe
8 that you'll have a little bit of
9 time, but change has to come.

10 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: We agree.
11 And absolutely. I want to again
12 reaffirm that we are in support of
13 this bill. We are an employer, the
14 city of Philadelphia itself is an
15 employer that very much has operated
16 consistent with the bill.

17 The bill does not change --
18 the existence of the bill doesn't
19 change -- of the legislation doesn't
20 change. And so we still are going
21 to expect that our employers,
22 whether they're private or specified
23 as they are in the current
24 ordinance, continue to work with all

1 of our residents to give an
2 opportunity. I don't mean a second
3 chance, a chance, right?

4 And so at the end of the
5 day, we ask that the bill be held.
6 I don't think holding the bill has a
7 detrimental impact on our -- the
8 community that we are attempting to
9 protect. But at the same time, I
10 think it gives us a little bit more
11 time to have a conversation and
12 drill down on some of the more
13 nuanced aspects of this amendment
14 that I think -- and again, yes,
15 there's a -- there's an element of
16 we don't know what the impact will
17 be, but let's have that conversation
18 about what data suggests and what
19 our experience -- our empirical
20 experiences and activities have been
21 relative to hiring of our citizens
22 who have been impacted by the
23 justice system.

24 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

1 Yeah, I get it. I'm from the
2 neighborhood. Let me explain to you
3 how this stuff works in the
4 neighborhood. You get out of jail,
5 right? First month is fantastic.
6 Your wife, your significant other,
7 your family, they're happy to see
8 you. You're there, they don't care.
9 They just may want to see you.

10 But what happens is, the
11 second month comes and the wife
12 comes home from work and you're
13 still sitting on the couch. And
14 then it starts, when are you going
15 to go out and get a job and start
16 bringing into this house?

17 But he can't get a job,
18 he's tried to get a job, because he
19 has a criminal record. So what
20 happens? The cycle continues. So
21 he feels the urge to go out to
22 support his family, him or her. And
23 what do they end up doing? The same
24 thing that sent them to prison in

1 the first place. And the cycle
2 continues. Jobs. That's how you
3 stop the cycle.

4 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Agreed.

5 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,
8 Member Harrity. Are you okay with
9 that? Are there any other questions
10 for --

11 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Yes.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

13 No.

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: No?

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I do.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: Member
17 Young.

18 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
19 you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, just
20 reading through the legislation and
21 the amendment, I know the
22 administration's concern or one
23 concern was the private right of
24 action.

1 And so can you just
2 elaborate a little bit more on what
3 the -- or have the administration
4 been and talked with the employers
5 to talk about how or if this new
6 private right of action that is in
7 the amended version would affect
8 their industries or affect commerce
9 or affect business?

10 Because I'm -- I'm looking
11 at it. I look through all of our --
12 I look at things a little
13 differently in our code, and I see
14 compensatory damages, liquidated
15 damages, reasonable attorney fees.
16 Like to the average person, this
17 doesn't mean anything. But to
18 someone who's an attorney or a
19 business person, they mean
20 absolutely a lot.

21 And so can you just talk
22 about what the administration's
23 concerns are about those particular
24 provisions?

1 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: If I am
2 correct and I will defer to
3 Councilmember Landau, that based on
4 the conversations and the
5 articulation of some of those
6 concerns, that that private right of
7 action provision has been altered or
8 removed from the legislation.

9 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
10 That's correct. It's -- the
11 amendments to the private right of
12 action have been removed. It -- so
13 the procedure will remain as it is
14 now that a case is filed with the
15 Commission on Human Relations. And
16 if it -- at some point, if it cannot
17 -- if it -- if there's no resolution
18 in a certain period of time, the
19 complainant can get a right to sue
20 notice to go to court.

21 But we've changed -- we
22 removed any of the new changes to
23 private right of action. So the
24 procedures remains as it has been

1 since 2011.

2 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Similar to
3 other protected class concerns.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Yes.

5 MS. DUCHAUSSEE: Complaints
6 that are raised.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: It's
8 the same as it is for any case filed
9 with the PCHR based on any protected
10 category. So a discrimination case
11 or a Fair Chance Hiring.

12 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
13 you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,
15 Member Young. I'm seeing no other
16 questions. Thank you for your
17 testimony. Can we bring up the next
18 panel to testify on this bill?

19 THE CLERK: Jamie Gullen
20 from Community Legal Services, and
21 Keisha Hudson, Chief Defender from
22 the Defender's Association.

23 CHAIRMAN JONES: Welcome.
24 Please take your seats. State your

1 name for the record and please begin
2 your testimony.

3 MS. GULLEN: Good morning.

4 Thank you-all so much. My name is
5 Jamie Gullen. I'm the Managing
6 Attorney of the Employment Unit and
7 Youth Justice Project at Community
8 Legal Services. CLS is thrilled to
9 be here today to support Bill No.
10 250373. And we thank Councilmember
11 Landau for introducing this bill to
12 strengthen Philadelphia's Fair
13 Hiring Law. CLS's Employment Unit
14 has been working for decades to
15 ameliorate the barriers to
16 employment our clients face because
17 of their records.

18 Every year we work with
19 nearly 2,000 low income
20 Philadelphians who come to CLS's
21 Employment Unit because they cannot
22 find jobs or advance in their
23 careers because of their records.
24 That makes up about two thirds of

1 all the low-income clients who seek
2 CLSS Employment Unit every year.

3 So this is really not a
4 niche issue. This is an issue
5 that's central to our workforce in
6 the city and is fundamental to the
7 safety, wellbeing, and economic
8 security of communities across our
9 city.

10 Whenever possible at CLS,
11 we help our clients clear up their
12 records, and we've advocated for
13 years at the state level for
14 enhanced access to record sealing
15 through the Clean Slate Law, which
16 has been very successful. But
17 unfortunately, people really can't
18 wait seven to 10 years to have
19 access to the ability to get a job,
20 which is the current waiting periods
21 under Clean Slate. So despite the
22 success of Clean Slate, we know that
23 people need to be able to access
24 jobs now. So today we ask Council

1 to take an important step forward in
2 creating a fair, safer, and more
3 just city where all people can
4 access meaningful employment. And I
5 want to just note the urgency of
6 this moment with Congress on the
7 precipice of passing legislation
8 that will include new onerous work
9 requirements for our residents to
10 access the basic things they need to
11 survive, like healthcare and food
12 assistance.

13 It is really critical in
14 this moment that we ensure every
15 Philadelphian who is able to work
16 can get a job. And unfortunately,
17 that's just not the current reality
18 in our city. Every single day at
19 CLS, we talk to clients who have
20 been denied job after job,
21 essentially shut out of the labor
22 market altogether, often despite
23 having extensive qualifications or
24 work history.

1 We also conducted in-depth
2 interviews with dozens of CLS
3 clients about their experiences to
4 inform recommendations to changes to
5 the law. And I'd like to take a
6 moment to thank all of our clients
7 who share their stories and
8 experiences with us, and in
9 particular, our clients who are here
10 today to share their experiences
11 with you. Access to good jobs
12 enhances both public safety and
13 economic prosperity.

14 Employment is one of the
15 most important factors in keeping
16 people from returning to prison, yet
17 post-incarceration, the unemployment
18 rate for folks is about 60 percent
19 worse than during the Great
20 Depression. And Research has --

21 CHAIRMAN JONES: For the
22 record.

23 MS. GULLEN: Yes. Even
24 several years after returning home

1 from incarceration, studies showed
2 that the unemployment rate for
3 formerly incarcerated individuals is
4 around 60 percent. And research has
5 also shown that people with records
6 are 50 percent less likely to
7 receive a job callback than those
8 without records. And that penalty
9 was three times as severe for black
10 applicants with records than for
11 white applicants with records.

12 So this is really a
13 critical issue. And we believe with
14 a few relatively minor changes to
15 our Fair Hiring Law, we can ensure
16 that people with records are able to
17 work, provide for themselves and
18 their families. So just to take one
19 of the provisions, shortening the
20 lookback period for misdemeanors.
21 This will help people move beyond
22 minor incidents far sooner.

23 And as Councilmember Landau
24 alluded to earlier, this is really

1 supported by the research. Studies
2 have shown that for most types of
3 offenses, after three to four years,
4 a person is no more likely than
5 somebody without a record to commit
6 a new offense.

7 So put another way, any
8 probative value that would've been
9 attached to that criminal record in
10 the hiring process completely
11 evaporates after three to four
12 years. CLS works with many clients
13 who are held back by these types of
14 minor records.

15 And just to give you one
16 brief example, we recently worked
17 with a client who had been denied a
18 job by a national retail store for
19 an incident that happened in 2018,
20 when she was in a Wawa and a man
21 pushed her child to the ground and
22 she ended up in a conflict with him.

23 She was arrested and
24 convicted of misdemeanor disorderly

1 conduct, and she and her son for
2 years have struggled to get by. She
3 hasn't been able to find steady
4 work, and she and her child even
5 experienced homelessness as a
6 result. So these are the types of
7 minor incidents, understandable
8 incidents. As a parent myself, I
9 can't say I wouldn't have ended up
10 in the same situation. But these
11 types of minor incidents haunt
12 people for years and years and
13 years.

14 Another change in this bill
15 is that it will make it easier for
16 people with more recent records to
17 advocate for themselves with
18 employers by clarifying the type of
19 rehabilitation information that
20 employers need to consider and
21 ensuring that they actually review
22 and consider it.

23 This will allow people like
24 our clients to be able to show their

1 experiences, qualifications, and
2 other positive attributes that will
3 make them a great addition to the
4 workplace. The future of our city
5 rests on the ability of people with
6 records to find jobs, build careers,
7 and support their families. And
8 this bill is a critical step forward
9 in that effort, and it comes at a
10 really critical time for our
11 country.

12 Thank you to Councilmember
13 Landau, to the Public Safety
14 Committee, to Chairperson Jones for
15 your commitment to fair hiring and
16 for allowing CLS the opportunity to
17 present this testimony today. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you.
20 We will hold questions until the
21 Chief Defender submits her
22 testimony.

23 MS. HUDSON: Good morning,
24 Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Lozada,

1 and members of the Public Safety
2 Committee. I'm Keisha Hudson, the
3 Chief Defender of the Defender
4 Association of Philadelphia. And I
5 want to thank Councilmember Landau
6 for introducing this bill to further
7 strengthen the hiring practices for
8 people with prior contact within the
9 criminal legal system.

10 And I want to thank, again,
11 this committee for your continued
12 efforts to ensure Philadelphians who
13 have been entangled with the system
14 have an opportunity to put their
15 past behind them and be evaluated on
16 their merits when applying for work.

17 We strongly support
18 Councilmember Landau's efforts to
19 make the ordinance even stronger by
20 clarifying that type of individual
21 assessment employers must do before
22 rejecting a prospective applicant
23 and providing job seekers with
24 sufficient notice and time to

1 provide evidence of their
2 rehabilitation when they learn
3 potential employees or employers are
4 considering rejecting their
5 application because of their
6 criminal histories.

7 Removing barriers for
8 justice system-involved job seekers
9 is not only good for individuals but
10 it's really a long-term investment
11 in public safety. We estimate that
12 25 percent of people currently
13 incarcerated in the Philadelphia
14 jails have at least one previous
15 jail admission in the past 12
16 months.

17 Let me say that again.
18 Roughly a quarter of the people who
19 are on State Road have had one other
20 previous jail admission in the
21 previous 12 months. This issue of
22 repeating jail admissions is not
23 unique to Philadelphia.

24 A recent report from the

1 Prison Policy Initiative reveals
2 that an estimated 5.6 million people
3 arrested and jailed nationally in
4 2023. More than one in five were
5 booked in jail more than once during
6 the same year. People with multiple
7 jail bookings are unemployed. They
8 are unemployed, they do not have
9 often a high school diploma.

10 This is what we see with
11 our clients here in Philadelphia.
12 They're experiencing homeless and
13 they're living in extreme poverty.
14 Because the issues people -- because
15 the issues people returning to the
16 community face are systematic and
17 systemic, the figures are strikingly
18 similar in communities throughout
19 the nation.

20 Therefore, it is imperative
21 that we as a city continue to do
22 that -- all that we can to reduce
23 barriers for people facing
24 employment. As many of you are

1 aware, our office received it --
2 received a grant and we first -- we
3 launched our first reentry program
4 called the Bridge Home.

5 This focuses on -- focuses
6 on creating comprehensive release
7 plans to support petitions for
8 release on county parole, and
9 providing individualized case
10 management for people eligible for
11 supervised release planning, release
12 from the city jail.

13 This process involves
14 various steps. It includes
15 pre-release planning, release
16 preparation, and post-release
17 support to ensure successful
18 transition home. It is a very
19 individualized process. And to
20 date, we do have one reentry
21 specialist that we hired with that
22 grant. She's able to represent at
23 this time. Her caseload is 19
24 people, and we -- she started in

1 January and she's successfully
2 worked pre-release and post-release
3 and with nine individuals.

4 One person, 19 people. And
5 since January, she's gotten nine
6 people home with very, very clear
7 comprehensive pre and post-release
8 plans for successful reentry.

9 To better meet the needs of
10 our clients and the courts, we are
11 hoping to start this with our youth.
12 Last year we represented 2,900 youth
13 independency and delinquency. We
14 currently do not have the capacity
15 to work with our youth who are
16 coming out of detention and
17 placement.

18 And we would ask Council
19 and have asked Council this budget
20 season for an additional 500,000 to
21 bring similar reentry program for
22 our children. Though all our
23 clients are unique individuals, many
24 face significant systemic barriers

1 to reentry, including limited
2 employment opportunities in the
3 days, months, and sometimes years
4 following their release.

5 Legislation, like the
6 proposed modifications to the Fair
7 Chance Hiring Initiative removes
8 some of these barriers and provides
9 a pathway for direct service
10 providers like our reentry
11 specialist to support our clients in
12 advocating for themselves while
13 seeking employment.

14 I want to thank you all for
15 inviting the Defender Association to
16 testify. We represented last year
17 almost 33,000 adults and almost
18 3,000 children. We hear the stories
19 every single day of what a barrier
20 it is. And it's a multi-
21 generational barrier for successful
22 transition into steady employment
23 and into employment that has fair
24 wages, employment that is

1 sustainable, where they can
2 hopefully build some sort of
3 generational stability.

4 And we know and hear the
5 stories of how hard it is for our
6 clients to transition into
7 successful steady employment. So
8 thank you for having us here to
9 testify.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: Chief
11 Defender, one thing about you, you
12 are consistent if nothing else. You
13 weave in why your department is
14 important and necessary and why you
15 need more money. And I want
16 everybody up here to remember that,
17 that, you know, from different
18 aspects of the paradigm of criminal
19 justice, the defenders are integral
20 part. And if we're going to make a
21 difference, we not -- we need to
22 recognize their importance. So,
23 okay. Any questions? Let's go with
24 Jamie -- Member Gauthier.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

2 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted
3 to commend the bill sponsor and both
4 of you for working on this
5 legislation. I was really startled
6 to hear the stats that were noted
7 earlier around unemployment levels
8 among people who have touched and
9 gone through the criminal legal
10 system.

11 And when people are free
12 from incarceration or free from
13 whatever entanglement that they've
14 had with their criminal legal
15 system, they should be free. They
16 should be free to find housing, they
17 should be free to find employment.
18 And if we do not put more measures
19 in place for that to happen, we're
20 dooming people to a continual cycle
21 because they will not be able to
22 earn money for themselves and their
23 families in legitimate ways.

24 And so I think this is

1 really important legislation that
2 we're considering and just wanted to
3 thank all of you.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: Defender,
5 how many people that you wind up
6 representing are unemployed for
7 whatever reason?

8 MS. HUDSON: So
9 unemployment it's one of the many
10 metrics that we track when someone
11 first comes into our office and we
12 are representing them. We actually
13 ask very detailed what we call bio
14 social information about them. And
15 I would say the overwhelming
16 majority, and I can get you the
17 specific data point, are unemployed.

18 The majority of those who
19 are unemployed do not have a GED.
20 And the majority of those who even
21 have a GED and a high school diploma
22 are not reading on level. They're
23 not reading and excelling where one
24 would typically want them to be if

1 they had a GED or a high school
2 diploma. I can get you the specific
3 data point. We do track it.

4 We track unemployment, we
5 track housing, of course we track
6 educational gaps that our -- that
7 our clients experience when they
8 come into our office. And so that's
9 data I can get to you. It -- you
10 qualify for public defender because
11 you cannot hire a lawyer.

12 By its very nature, we are
13 pointed to people who are poor. And
14 we know that one of the ways and the
15 streams that people get into the
16 system is unemployment.

17 It is also, I have to
18 emphasize housing. A housing first
19 model for people establishes
20 stability. When you're interviewing
21 and employers asking you really
22 pertinent questions, that address is
23 one of the first things they're
24 going to ask you as long -- as well

1 as other identifying information.

2 Then you can get that employment.

3 And so I -- we always want

4 to also emphasize the need to think

5 about the fact that a lot of our

6 client population is on unhoused.

7 And without a stable residence, it

8 then becomes even more of a barrier

9 to get employment and maintain

10 consistent employment.

11 CHAIRMAN JONES: So it's

12 real clear that if you don't have a

13 job, if you don't have a stable

14 residence, your probability of

15 re-offending is high.

16 MS. HUDSON: Yeah.

17 CHAIRMAN JONES: And it's

18 just plain as the -- plain as the

19 stat show. Are there any questions?

20 Member Harrity?

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: You

22 know, I -- it's no secret everybody

23 knows I try to live by life

24 experience. And a lot of people

1 know that me and Senator Street have
2 known each other since high school.
3 But we didn't actually really start
4 hanging out till he was in college.

5 And the way we met when he
6 was in college was because I had a
7 brother who got railroaded for a
8 first offense. He was given for a
9 fight between two kids. They were
10 18. He was given two and a half
11 years without eligibility for
12 parole. Anybody that knows that and
13 our lawyers here know that the only
14 way that he can get out at that
15 point is if the judge reconsidered
16 sentenced. So just to put it in
17 perspective, my brother did nine
18 years for that two year and a half
19 year bit because he couldn't stop
20 smoking marijuana. He never
21 committed another crime, never.

22 And nine times I filed for
23 reconsideration from the judge. And
24 the judge knew he didn't commit

1 another crime. So nine times that
2 judge reconsidered sentence. But
3 after the ninth time of him
4 violating, the judge was a little
5 upset. And he actually said in the
6 courtroom that it really upset him
7 to have to send him back to jail
8 because he had never again committed
9 another crime except for smoking
10 marijuana.

11 So he went upstate. You
12 know, when he was in the county, it
13 was always short term. So they
14 don't have as many programs. So when
15 he went upstate, he was able to get
16 his GED. And then when he got out
17 he was lucky, he was -- we were able
18 to get him into Laborers' Union. I
19 could tell you because he got sent
20 upstate for smoking marijuana. He
21 no longer smokes marijuana. It was
22 a hard lesson to learn.

23 And he was in that thing
24 from 18 for smoking marijuana, like

1 -- so that's why I am very
2 passionate about this and I always
3 have been, because I've seen it
4 firsthand. Why was he smoking
5 marijuana? Because when he got out
6 of jail, he couldn't get a damn job,
7 and he got caught in the cycle
8 hanging out with his friends and
9 playing around.

10 He tried -- every time he
11 got out of jail, he tried to get a
12 job, but the only people that wanted
13 to hire him weren't really paying.
14 So that's why I'm in support of this
15 bill. I -- you know, could you
16 elaborate on how the changes in this
17 bill might reduce homelessness,
18 improve family stability as in the
19 case of your client, Ms. Jefferson?

20 MS. GULLEN: Absolutely.
21 Thank you so much for that question.
22 I think one of the most important
23 things that Councilmember Jones'
24 question also is making me think

1 about is that even when folks are
2 able to access a job, usually it's
3 under the table or part-time or not
4 stable, people move between jobs
5 more frequently.

6 We really need to set
7 people up, not just to have any job,
8 but to have good quality living wage
9 jobs that they can support their
10 children and families on and to have
11 career pathways that they can
12 pursue. And so I think that's a big
13 goal of what we're trying to achieve
14 with this bill and other efforts is
15 to say, you know, people need to be
16 seen for the skills, qualifications,
17 educational attainment,
18 rehabilitation efforts that they've
19 undertaken.

20 We need to look at all of
21 those really carefully and see the
22 strides that people are aiming for
23 in the futures that are possible for
24 them rather than just looking at

1 what's on a piece of paper that
2 doesn't really tell their story, and
3 it certainly doesn't tell us what
4 they would be capable of if they
5 were given a chance.

6 So I think really thinking
7 about good quality jobs, future
8 career pathways, that's what's going
9 to allow people to provide for their
10 families, to have stable housing.
11 And as Chief Defender Hudson said,
12 to have the ability to have a
13 better, you know, generational
14 outcome for their children as well.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
16 Absolutely. Shout out to PTTI. I
17 went to the graduation last month of
18 the kids in the Youth Study Center.
19 And when I talked to them, I told
20 them, right now, coming out of the
21 Youth Study Center, they got an
22 actual leg up on all the kids that
23 graduated because they're walking
24 out of there with their OSHA

1 certificate.

2 And anybody that's in the
3 union knows that you can't walk on a
4 job without 10 hours of OSHA
5 training. And they were able to get
6 that and complete that and now
7 they're -- after they're getting
8 out, they're continuing their
9 education at PTI. That's what it's
10 about, rehabilitation, helping them
11 to come up. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
13 for sharing, Member Harrity, your
14 life experiences. Are there any
15 other questions?

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
17 Chair, can I make, just -- can I
18 make just one quick statement.
19 First, I wanted to thank both of you
20 so much for all of the work that you
21 do. You really do hear all the
22 stories on the front line and know
23 the barriers that people are facing
24 now.

1 It's always so hard for me
2 also to hear how you talk about the
3 very clear systemic barriers we have
4 to people with records, to poor
5 people, to people of color in the
6 city. It's so obvious what we have
7 to do to fix it.

8 And it's up to us to make
9 sure that we are fixing these clear
10 issues to help people get their
11 GEDs, to help them get their
12 employment, to help them get housing
13 and all of these things so that they
14 don't end up being the folks who are
15 in the revolving door of our prison
16 system.

17 And to Jamie Gullen, thank
18 you for connecting the dots for us
19 about the bill that is pending in
20 Congress. I think that is essential
21 for us to hear. That we're about to
22 have work requirements for basic
23 human needs and supplements that
24 people have that will cause an extra

1 extreme barrier on people if they
2 can't get a job. So we have to fix
3 this in Philadelphia, and we're
4 doing this right alongside you guys.
5 So thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN JONES: For the
7 record, Member Brooks is here.
8 Thank you for attending. Member
9 Young.

10 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
11 you. So one thing was mentioned is
12 that, you know, employers only have
13 a piece of paper to go by when
14 making these decisions. And the
15 Chief Defender had a statistic that
16 said, you know, 25 percent of the
17 folks that are currently
18 incarcerated in the Philadelphia
19 jails have a previous jail admission
20 in the last 12 months, right?

21 So if I'm an employer and
22 all I have to go by is this piece of
23 paper and I see a record that
24 someone is coming in and out of that

1 system, what other factors do you
2 think they should use to determine
3 the credibility of that potential
4 employee when they have to --
5 particularly, I'm thinking about
6 some of the smaller businesses in my
7 district that like -- the bars or
8 restaurants that may have 10, 15
9 employees that would fit underneath
10 this legislation.

11 Like, what other things
12 should they look at when trying to
13 take a risk on an employee, to help,
14 you know, better, to help further
15 move along their business? Because
16 as a business owner, that's a real
17 risk that you take, that someone can
18 be in and out of jail once a month,
19 twice, you know, three, four times a
20 year.

21 That's a risk that you take
22 on, you know, in running your
23 business and trying to provide for
24 your family, for your community. So

1 what are some other things that they
2 should look at if, you know, you
3 believe that a pattern of
4 incarceration is something that they
5 should not be looking at?

6 MS. HUDSON: Thank you for
7 that question, Councilmember Young.
8 And I'll just mention again, as we
9 are in a city where we are actively
10 trying to decarcerate our population
11 because of the Remick litigation,
12 because of the conditions there, and
13 the 25 million judgment against the
14 city, we have to really pay
15 attention to who is in our jails and
16 why they're there. And those
17 clients are very low level
18 misdemeanor, they're pretrial, they
19 haven't even been convicted yet.

20 But I think what's
21 important to note is that we can all
22 identify someone who may not have
23 the same kind of education and
24 skills as us -- for things that we

1 take for granted.

2 Working with a client or
3 re-entry specialist working with
4 someone to highlight things that
5 they did in high school, to
6 highlight prior training, to get
7 character reference letters, to get,
8 you know, the church mentor or their
9 prior football coach to write a
10 letter to them, to have someone
11 mentor them, to teach them how to
12 write a resume.

13 These are things that,
14 again, we were taught and our
15 clients do not possess those types
16 of skills where they can go out and
17 make -- and present their best
18 selves. Working with clients pre --
19 you know, pre-release is also
20 important because that month that
21 they're home is a really vulnerable
22 time for them to be back into the
23 system again.

24 And so trying to get them

1 connected to employment before they
2 even leave the jails is critical
3 because then you have -- they have
4 something that they can use as a
5 platform to be able to hopefully not
6 recidivise. But once they're
7 released, you know -- and the beauty
8 of the public defenders is we know
9 when our clients are leaving the
10 jails. Nobody else knows. We know
11 when our clients are leaving the
12 jails. But to be able to know when
13 they're going to be leaving and be
14 able to have them set up for success
15 before they get out and they're in
16 the streets and they're homeless
17 and/or unemployed, they're going to
18 come back to us.

19 I think employers will see
20 the best version of our clients when
21 we work with our clients to help
22 them present the best versions of
23 themselves. And those versions are
24 there. How do they know to access

1 it? They need an advocate. Both
2 our youth and adult clients need
3 advocates. These are not the -- you
4 know, they're needing the help and
5 the counsel, and that's why we're
6 hoping to be able to expand the work
7 we do in that area.

8 MS. GULLEN: Could I just
9 add one note to that?

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: State the
11 name again?

12 MS. GULLEN: Sorry. Jamie
13 Gullen from Community Legal
14 Services. I just wanted to note
15 that there have been more studies
16 recently as well that look at the
17 hiring and sort of longevity of
18 workers after they've been employed
19 under these types of policies.

20 There was one study,
21 particularly out of Johns Hopkins,
22 when they did more of this
23 individualized assessment of
24 potential workers and then hired

1 them on to work at the hospital.

2 They actually saw lower turnover
3 rates than for their employees
4 without criminal record, so I think
5 that speaks, too.

6 Well, there certainly are a
7 lot of barriers and challenges our
8 clients face, having that job is
9 such a linchpin for their stability,
10 and often I think when folks are
11 given that chance, they really want
12 to make the most of it and, you
13 know, can be very loyal to good
14 employers who have given them that
15 opportunity.

16 So while I certainly hear
17 the concern, I think research is
18 showing us that when we give people
19 that chance, they're actually going
20 to have less turnover than other
21 folks do.

22 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
23 you, Mr. Chair.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,

1 Member. Are there any other
2 questions? Seeing none. I want to
3 thank you for your testimony, and we
4 appreciate it and heard some of
5 that. I know you are attorneys, but
6 I've got to believe that if I were
7 representing someone and they said
8 take the deal, I would ask, read
9 that colloquy to them one more time,
10 and over -- I think it's 200 things
11 that they can no longer do as a
12 convicted felon; is that right?

13 MS. HUDSON: There's a list
14 -- the list of collateral
15 consequences are very long. I mean,
16 we spend a lot of time with our
17 clients explaining that. Our
18 pretrial detention population is a
19 high statistic of clients who plead
20 guilty because they want to come
21 home.

22 So it -- regardless of
23 whether they're innocent or guilty,
24 our clients who are incarcerated

1 just want to get out. So our plea
2 rates are really high, right? It's
3 95 percent of people plea who are in
4 pretrial detention. That statistic
5 changes if people are addressing
6 their case when they're home out on
7 bail.

8 But that frequent, you
9 know, pretrial detention population,
10 they're going to plead guilty.
11 Those consequences will be there,
12 but we explain those consequences to
13 them, and like Community Legal
14 Services, we have a grant, and for
15 the past several years through the
16 Promise Grant with United Way, we do
17 robust expungement clinics, help
18 them, advise them on how to get
19 pardons.

20 But the -- our system was
21 built to drive a plea process, and
22 once that plea process is underway,
23 the collateral consequences start to
24 pile up.

1 CHAIRMAN JONES: So we --
2 they -- we just need to make sure
3 they are aware of what they are
4 actually giving up for a very, very,
5 very long time. All right. Hearing
6 no more questions for this panel.
7 Thank you for your testimony.
8 Ms. Stack, who's the next panel to
9 testify?

10 Ms. Stack: Bianca van
11 Heydoorn, Executive Director of the
12 Youth Sentencing and Reentry
13 Project, Ashley Misceovich, Manager
14 for the Chamber of Commerce of the
15 Greater Philadelphia, and LaTrista
16 Webb, the Executive Director for the
17 Elevation Project.

18 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
19 for your patience. Please state
20 your name for the record and begin
21 your testimony.

22 MS. HEYDOORN: Good
23 morning. Thank you for the
24 opportunity to testify to the

1 Committee on Public Safety. I'm
2 here in support of the Fair Chance
3 Hiring Law Amendments, Bill No. 2503
4 --

5 THE CLERK: Your name.

6 MS. HEYDOORN: Oh, I got
7 you. My name is -- my name is
8 Bianca Van Heydoorn, I'm the
9 executive director at the Youth
10 Sentencing and Reentry Project. I
11 am here in support of Fair Chance
12 Hiring Amendment, Bill 250373. YSRP
13 uses direct service and policy
14 advocacy to transform the
15 experiences of children prosecuted
16 in the adult criminal legal system,
17 including supporting them throughout
18 their case and as they return home
19 from incarceration.

20 We work both with youth who
21 are currently being prosecuted as if
22 they were adults and former
23 so-called juvenile lifers who have
24 been resentenced and are now

1 returning home after decades of
2 incarceration.

3 At YSRP, we have the honor
4 to witness every day why no one
5 should be defined by a criminal
6 record. We see our colleagues and
7 our friends who were once told that
8 they were irredeemable and
9 disposable serving as leaders and
10 mentors in their community, helping
11 to ensure that young people in the
12 system today have a better
13 experience than they did.

14 We see people who are
15 recently released from
16 incarceration, finding ways to
17 rebuild their lives for themselves,
18 for their families and communities,
19 despite the odds being stacked
20 against them. And they all aspire
21 for meaningful employment.

22 The Fair Chance Hiring Law
23 plays an important role in ensuring
24 that people trying to rebuild their

1 lives after criminal legal system
2 involvement have meaningful
3 opportunities to do so. I want to
4 highlight a few of the ways that it
5 particularly impacts young people
6 and the other main groups of folks
7 we work with, so-called juvenile
8 lifers. The juvenile lifers are
9 people who were initially sentenced
10 to life without the possibility of
11 parole when they were children.

12 Philadelphia holds the
13 dubious distinction of being the
14 city and the country, and therefore
15 in the world with the most children
16 sentenced to this draconian
17 punishment.

18 After the Supreme Court
19 ruled in the Miller and Montgomery
20 cases that these sentences were
21 unconstitutional, most of these
22 folks have been resentenced to
23 parole eligible sentences and have
24 come home in -- on parole. But

1 because their original sentence was
2 life, they are on lifetime parole
3 with no possibility of getting off
4 parole under the current law.

5 The bill before us makes an
6 important clarification and a Fair
7 Chance Hiring Law to ensure that the
8 lookback period ends at
9 incarceration rather than at the end
10 of parole, which for our community
11 would only come when they die.
12 Given the struggles we see with
13 juvenile lifers going through every
14 day to get and keep employment, this
15 is an important expansion of the
16 protections of the law.

17 Second, the bill clarifies
18 that juvenile records may not be
19 used in hiring decisions. These
20 records are already supposed to be
21 sealed, but they do pop up and
22 disrupt employment opportunities for
23 young people. So this is also a
24 helpful clarification. I want to

1 thank City Councilmember Rue Landau
2 for bringing this bill and my
3 colleagues on this panel for so
4 eloquently supporting it, and the
5 colleagues that went before me.

6 As a leader of an
7 organization supporting folks
8 returning home from incarceration,
9 and as in my own role as a fair
10 chance employer, I urge your support
11 for this bill in order to make
12 Philadelphia a more welcoming place
13 for returning citizens and to
14 contribute to the economic thriving
15 of this city as it was described,
16 where over 300,000 people carry the
17 distinction and the stain of a
18 criminal record. Thank you for
19 allowing us to testify today.

20 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
21 for your testimony. Please state
22 your name and begin your testimony.

23 MS. MISCEVICH: Ashley
24 Miscevich, Manager of Local

1 Government Advocacy at the Chamber
2 of Commerce for Greater
3 Philadelphia, testifying on Bill
4 250373, and we appreciate the
5 opportunity to be here today. I
6 first want to begin by thanking
7 Council Woman Lozada -- sorry, Rue
8 Landau.

9 You've been a wonderful
10 partner of the chamber in these
11 conversations and we appreciate
12 being able to sit down and express
13 our concerns and have really
14 productive, you know, progress. So
15 thank you. And we do want to affirm
16 our commitment to working with all
17 members of Council collaboratively
18 on legislation.

19 The Chamber deeply cares
20 about Fair Chance Hiring because we
21 know the impact it has, not just for
22 individuals, but for our region's
23 economy. Over the past year, we
24 launched Fair Chance Hiring

1 Implementation Series in partnership
2 with Philadelphia Works and others,
3 engaging seven major employers who
4 together represent over 40,000 jobs.
5 We hosted the Fair Chance Hiring,
6 Building a Pathway to Employment,
7 which is a fair chance program
8 attended by over 100 businesses.

9 And just last month
10 celebrated the graduation of our
11 first employer cohort, who are
12 actively building pathways for
13 justice impact individuals. Reentry
14 matters because we know the data.
15 Nearly 400,000, it's 400, not
16 300,000 Philadelphians have had
17 contact with the justice system.

18 And according to the
19 Society for Human Resource
20 Management, 85 percent of HR
21 professionals report that
22 individuals with prior convictions
23 perform as well or better than their
24 peers. That's why we believe it's

1 critical that policy supports, not
2 discourages these hiring practices.

3 We really appreciate the
4 thoughtful amendments that have been
5 proposed and believe this moves the
6 bill to much closer where it needs
7 to be.

8 However, we do still have a
9 few concerns that remain. The
10 requirement that employers provide a
11 written narrative every time they
12 conduct an individualized assessment
13 and -- is a significant departure
14 from the current practice. This
15 introduces a real legal and
16 administrative burden, especially
17 for small and mid-sized businesses
18 that may not have in-house legal or
19 sufficient HR staff.

20 Even for employers who are
21 deeply committed to fair chance and
22 inclusive hiring practices, the
23 added risk of litigation, the
24 complexity of getting the language

1 right and the time required to
2 produce individualized narratives
3 for each candidate could deter
4 participation.

5 Importantly, no major peer
6 city requires this. Cities like New
7 York, LA, and San Francisco all
8 require individualized assessments,
9 but they do not -- they do so in a
10 way that standardize communication
11 and reduce legal exposure. We're
12 also urging to retain the current
13 seven-year lookback period for
14 misdemeanors and to allow -- to
15 continue allowing employers to
16 consider relevant summary offenses
17 related to driving records.

18 This is about ensuring
19 employers have the flexibility to
20 assess job related risks, a blanket
21 reduction in the misdemeanor
22 lookback window from seven to four
23 years, prevent employers from
24 evaluating recent offenses that

1 could be material to performance or
2 public safety.

3 Likewise, summary offenses
4 might sound minor in legal terms,
5 but they often include things like
6 reckless driving or license
7 violations, issues that are
8 critically important when hiring for
9 roles that involve operating
10 vehicles.

11 In many industries,
12 delivery, transportation, mobile
13 healthcare, this type of information
14 is necessary to make responsible
15 informed hiring decisions.

16 We are not asking to
17 reintroduce broad exclusions simply
18 to retain the ability to evaluate
19 risks on a case-by-case basis, just
20 as the current law and the Equal
21 Opportunity -- or Equal Employment
22 Opportunity Commission guidance
23 allows. As drafted, this bill would
24 presume an employer acted in

1 retaliation if any adverse action
2 occurs within 90 days.

3 And to overcome that
4 presumption, the employer would need
5 to meet an unusually high legal
6 burden far above what is standard in
7 civil law. This means an employer
8 who rejects an applicant, issues
9 discipline or even chooses to not
10 move someone forward in an
11 interview, could be presumed to have
12 acted unlawfully unless they can
13 prove otherwise to a near certain
14 degree.

15 For businesses, this
16 creates real fear, fear of making a
17 mistake, fear of being sued, and
18 ultimately fear of engaging with
19 justice to impact individuals.

20 Most peer cities prohibit
21 retaliation and we do support that
22 provision. But they apply a fair
23 fact-based approach, a preponderance
24 of the evidence standard, just like

1 in federal civil rights law. We
2 strongly encourage adopting that
3 standard here. We want all -- we
4 want to protect all workers from
5 retaliation, but we need to do so in
6 a way that doesn't unintentionally
7 push employers away from the very
8 practices that we are trying to
9 promote.

10 We support the goals of
11 this legislation and we are excited
12 to be a partner in this and this
13 work, and we support the city's
14 commitment to Fair Chance Hiring.
15 But we want this to be clear,
16 consistent, and feasible for all
17 employers that we rely on to create
18 second chances.

19 We're committed to working
20 closely with the bill sponsor and
21 look forward to those conversations
22 to strengthen this legislation and
23 enhance its impact, reduce the
24 unintended barriers, and ensure it

1 encourages more employers to
2 confidently adopt fair chance hiring
3 practices. We appreciate the
4 opportunity to provide our testimony
5 today and I'm happy to answer any
6 questions. Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
8 both for your testimony. If I heard
9 you correctly, one of your concerns
10 is particularly as it relates to
11 jobs that require maybe vehicle
12 licenses --

13 MS. MISCEVICH: Correct.

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: -- and
15 others.

16 MS. MISCEVICH: Correct.

17 CHAIRMAN JONES: Yet the
18 prior record, DUI, suspension of a
19 license that could come up are your
20 concerns; is that correct?

21 MS. MISCEVICH: That's what
22 we've been hearing from our
23 employers, particularly those that
24 have jobs -- you know, jobs specific

1 to driving where that is the role of
2 the employee, correct.

3 CHAIRMAN JONES: So what
4 I'd like to do is ask the author to
5 kind of address how that -- and I
6 think I know the answer because this
7 came up before, but I'm going to
8 allow you to elaborate.

9 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: You
10 want me, sorry, to speak to DUIs
11 coming up in PennDOT reports? I
12 think the problem with the PennDOT
13 reports is it's pulling in even more
14 criminal record -- the criminal
15 history so that employers then can
16 see more than they should be able to
17 see in other forms.

18 So it was just -- as we
19 talk about making sure that the law
20 is current with the times, people
21 can now run in, you know, a Google
22 search on someone's name that
23 sometimes could bring some
24 information up. And that was what

1 the restriction of the -- of the
2 PennDOT was doing.

3 CHAIRMAN JONES: To my
4 recollection, going back to prior
5 iterations of this legislation, it
6 was the first blush of the interview
7 that the Ban the Box was guarded
8 against that you summarily didn't
9 throw that application away sight
10 unseen.

11 And that an explanation
12 could be -- or further research
13 could go into some of the
14 particulars of cases, thus
15 protecting them from just, you know,
16 being told you need not apply.

17 MS. MISCEVICH: Absolutely.

18 CHAIRMAN JONES: So I -- if
19 that is --

20 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: That
21 is exactly the -- right. I mean,
22 there's an individualized assessment
23 that happens with every single one
24 of these, right? We look at the

1 basics, even with the first initial
2 part of the law that we passed back
3 in 2011. You look at the nature of
4 the crime, when it occurred, and the
5 specifics of the job that the person
6 is speaking, what is the connection
7 there? What is the nexus?

8 And there's -- the law even
9 explains what people should look at
10 in order to figure out what this
11 balance is. So I think it is very
12 important to do an individualized
13 assessment to get people an
14 opportunity to explain their issues.
15 But I do -- I want to make sure that
16 we're clear on two other things that
17 just came up in the testimony.

18 One, an employer does not
19 -- there's been an amendment to the
20 original bill that was introduced.
21 Employer does not need to write a
22 narrative response at this point.
23 We're going to have a form with just
24 four check boxes. So that's already

1 been resolved.

2 And something I want to
3 make very, very clear, that state
4 law that has been in place for about
5 50 years does not allow an employer
6 to utilize summary offenses if there
7 is no connection to the job that you
8 are seeking. That's been state law
9 for so many years, we just never
10 memorialized it in city -- in the
11 city law.

12 CHAIRMAN JONES: Got it.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: And
14 that's what we're doing here.

15 MS. MISCEVICH: Yeah.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: Does that
17 address at least some of it?

18 MS. MISCEVICH: It does,
19 yes. And I think when relative to
20 the driving record, we'd like to be
21 able to use that as part of the
22 assessment because, again, in an
23 industry where, you know, you have
24 drivers like an Uber, and I'm just

1 using it as example, but I mean,
2 that is the core function of their
3 business, right? Or you look at
4 other employers that they have
5 drivers for, you know, their
6 operations is that there are, you
7 know -- that is a key function and
8 they would need to be able to look
9 at their record in order to do that.

10 So I think being able to
11 have access and to use the driving
12 record as part of that assessment is
13 what we're asking for. And because,
14 you know, those infractions are
15 typically seen as a summary offense,
16 the driving record I think would be
17 a key tool for those particular
18 positions where it could be a
19 concern for the employer, yes.

20 CHAIRMAN JONES:

21 Understood. Any questions?

22 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

23 Chair, can I -- I just want to --
24 can I just tell a quick story of my

1 time as a legal aid lawyer? It'll
2 be fast, I promise.

3 CHAIRMAN JONES: Please do.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I
5 represented low income tenants. And
6 I remember a client that I had who
7 had some moving violations on their
8 driver's records, got a job driving
9 a truck -- a small delivery truck
10 for a company, and the truck had a
11 broken taillight that he didn't know
12 about. He gets pulled over, they
13 run his license to -- back then --
14 to find out that he has more -- many
15 moving violations, and he gets
16 incarcerated and held based on these
17 moving violations, and he can't
18 afford bail to get out.

19 So while he was awaiting
20 trial, his landlord didn't receive
21 the rent, files a complaint against
22 him -- against him, there's a
23 judgment entered against my client
24 because he can't show up to court

1 because he doesn't know about it.

2 And when I step into the
3 case, it's to open the judgment and
4 to try to get him a payment plan
5 once he gets out. But I will say
6 that it is essential that we are
7 really taking this idea of any kind
8 of driving record and moving
9 violation seriously. We cannot look
10 at any of these situations on --
11 with a wide brush stroke. Each case
12 is absolutely individualized. And
13 again, I think what happened then
14 would not happen now.

15 We've evolved in our
16 criminal justice system, but to know
17 that he almost lost his housing
18 because he couldn't afford the
19 moving violation tickets, then
20 couldn't afford the bail, this is
21 the cycle that we're really trying
22 to stop.

23 So, as I said in my
24 opening, we are still talking to the

1 Chamber of Commerce along with all
2 other employers and are completely
3 happy to do that. But we've had
4 many conversations and we'll
5 continue them. But I just want to
6 make it clear that not every
7 situation is the same. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: You. I
9 appreciate your willingness to
10 continue the dialogue.

11 MS. MISCEVICH: Could I
12 just make one statement? And I want
13 to thank you for that because we
14 have employers, as I said, you know,
15 the Chamber is really actively
16 engaged in this space. And we want
17 to bring the employers to the table
18 that are pursuing those hiring
19 practices that are recruiting, you
20 know, justice impact individuals so
21 that the issues that you've brought
22 as part of why you've amended this
23 legislation, we can help to address
24 them in a way that is fair and

1 balanced based on what is, you know,
2 practical within their HR teams and
3 what is fair.

4 So we thank you and we look
5 forward to continuing the discussion
6 around this. So thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: Is that
8 it, guys? Thank you for your
9 testimony. We appreciate your input
10 and thank you. The author of the
11 bill is willing to work through some
12 of the questions and concerns.

13 MS. WEBB: You forgot I was
14 sitting here, Councilman Jones?

15 CHAIRMAN JONES: Yes,
16 please.

17 MS. WEBB: Hi, I'm LaTrista
18 Webb from The Elevation Project. We
19 are a reentry program in the
20 illustrious 4th District of the city
21 of Philadelphia. And so I think
22 it's all kind of been said, so I
23 won't be long. But to answer your
24 question, there are over 800

1 collateral consequences in
2 Pennsylvania. They go anywhere from
3 housing, licensing, insurance.
4 People who are incarcerated are
5 affected well above employment.
6 Councilmember Harrity, you said
7 you're from the neighborhood.

8 I believe I hang out in the
9 streets. And so I believe that the
10 people in the streets would say that
11 Reentry and Criminal Justice Reform
12 is a big part of public safety.
13 It's often left out of
14 conversations, and you're so right,
15 if we don't talk about the things
16 that the people need when they come
17 out of prison, they will commit the
18 crimes again and they will be back
19 in the system again.

20 And then we'll be talking
21 about overpopulated prisons and
22 maybe opening new jails and prisons.
23 So it is important that we include
24 criminal justice reform in public

1 safety conversations.

2 Councilman Jones, I said
3 this to you privately last week, and
4 I want to say it publicly, I want to
5 thank Jamie from Community Legal
6 Services and I want to thank the
7 Chief Defender for all their work
8 that they have done around
9 expungements, and -- lord pardons, I
10 forgot what it was called that fast.

11 You guys helped to make it
12 popular so much that elected
13 officials started fighting over who
14 could have the bigger one. They
15 worked you guys to the bones. I
16 fight for my own money, but when you
17 guys finish giving me some money, I
18 believe that those two groups,
19 community legal services and the
20 Defenders Association of
21 Philadelphia should be considered in
22 your budget for all the work that
23 they've done just around
24 expungements and pardons.

1 When we're talking about
2 Fair Chance Hiring, they've been
3 boots on the ground for years, as
4 Jamie has said, but really for the
5 last couple years, making sure that
6 as we all were having these parties
7 and events that all of you have
8 attended across the city of
9 Philadelphia, but that people were
10 getting their records cleared so
11 that they could get jobs. But when
12 we talk about Councilmember Landau's
13 bill, I think it's important that we
14 consider all of those collateral
15 consequences.

16 A lot of them come from the
17 state and so we can't fix them in
18 this room, but we can fix hiring.
19 And so I'm going to stop with that
20 because I believe there are people
21 with lived experience in the room
22 and nobody's stories are better to
23 be told than theirs.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: For the

1 people out there watching, when is
2 your next event and where?

3 MS. WEBB: There is no
4 record clearing, so if you're
5 watching, do not come to get your
6 record cleared. I still love you,
7 Jamie. So the next event is June
8 21st. It is on Parkside, 4950
9 Parkside Avenue. It is a salute to
10 black men in a society where right
11 now we're not supposed to claim too
12 much of our culture and who we are.
13 We have named this event, Dear Black
14 Men, We Love You, and so it is a
15 salute to black men.

16 We will have a concert by
17 Jadakiss Health Resources for the
18 community. It's all around reentry
19 and helping formerly incarcerated
20 men. We hope to have some employers
21 there. If HR for the city is
22 watching, we'd like to have that
23 city bus pull up. We'd like to have
24 the fire department come out, but it

1 is a salute to black men from one to
2 five. Jadakiss will be performing,
3 and yes, that's our next big event.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: So
5 particularly for my At Large
6 members, all are welcome. But my At
7 Large members, every time I go to
8 one of their events, there's not
9 enough resources to cover all of the
10 people to need them. They have to
11 turn them away. People want to get
12 a second chance. People want to get
13 expungements, and you had more
14 applicants than you had attorneys.
15 And we need to kind of -- that's on
16 my list so that you know. All
17 right?

18 MS. WEBB: And I think that
19 goes to show why this law is
20 important. People want to get their
21 records cleared. You didn't tell
22 the story this time, but you always
23 talk about that cousin who it was
24 like years ago when she got the

1 record, right?

2 CHAIRMAN JONES: She
3 doesn't want me -- she doesn't want
4 me to tell it anymore.

5 MS. WEBB: She don't want
6 you telling it no more?

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: She was
8 definitely --

9 MS. WEBB: And so it's like
10 over 25 years, right, and then
11 people still can't get employment.
12 And so that's the part we miss. I
13 think when we had these
14 conversations, people are thinking
15 about the people who are out there
16 committing crime right now, but
17 we're not talking fair chance hiring
18 for people who possibly will be
19 incarcerated and possibly need to be
20 incarcerated, right?

21 So criminal justice reform
22 doesn't mean that we empty out the
23 jails and we let everybody free. It
24 means that there are a group of

1 people who 25, 30, 15, 10 years ago
2 did something and now they're still
3 suffering for it. I look at all of
4 you, but I don't know the worst
5 thing that you've ever done.

6 But none of you up there
7 are completely innocent. We're
8 talking about people where the worst
9 thing that they've done when they go
10 on a job interview, somebody's able
11 to say, Oops, you did this, and you
12 want to work here? Like, that's not
13 what it's supposed to be about. And
14 so that's what's important.

15 I don't wear the worst
16 thing I've ever did on my forehead.
17 If I did, I probably wouldn't have
18 gotten the city hall today. And so
19 that's the kind of things we're
20 talking about, 20, 30 years ago,
21 people who committed crimes a long
22 time ago, that candy bar you took
23 out to Walmart 20 years ago when you
24 were in college because you just

1 wanted a candy bar, that grape you
2 ate while you were in the
3 supermarket 15 years ago, and it
4 still haunts you to this day.

5 CHAIRMAN JONES: So my
6 cousin who was --

7 MS. WEBB: I knew he was
8 close.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: -- one of
10 those cousins that are kind of stuck
11 up, always used to be at the family
12 reunion, you know, putting on their
13 airs. I'm out at your event and
14 she's got a hamburger and popping.
15 She's walking around getting in line
16 and I'm like, why are you here?

17 Came to find out that when
18 she was in college, she got into
19 some trouble, blah, blah, blah, yak.
20 And I -- she -- you would walk by
21 her and never think ever that she
22 needed help. And so we have
23 neighbors and family members that go
24 through this and wear that scarlet

1 letter on their foreheads for the
2 rest of their lives. So thank you
3 for what you do.

4 MS. HUDSON: If I -- if I
5 may, Councilmember Jones, I just
6 want to add two points to what my
7 sister just said. The data around
8 when someone -- what risks someone
9 may pose is shorter than we think,
10 right? And with respect, yes, 10,
11 20 years ago, no one should be --
12 have an albatross of a criminal
13 record for that long.

14 But the point at which
15 someone poses no more risk than
16 anyone else in the -- in the
17 community is even shorter. And why
18 we are in support of the lookback
19 period being shorter because we also
20 recognize that the risk to community
21 safety and to an individual's
22 ability to support their families
23 also means access to employment
24 sooner or after incarceration.

1 So that that very
2 vulnerable period that people have
3 when they first come home can be met
4 with the opportunity for meaningful
5 employment. And we can interrupt a
6 cycle sooner. So it's -- I just
7 want to echo that it's the both and.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: Life
9 affects us all and our family
10 members and we have to do our best
11 to elevate, elevate all of us. So,
12 any questions? Member Gauthier?

13 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
14 Thank you so much for your
15 testimony. My question is: Do you
16 have estimated number of the number
17 of young people that are affected by
18 their criminal records and how this
19 bill will be able to provide access?
20 Like, do you have, like, an
21 estimated number? Because I'm
22 certain it is pretty high and I just
23 wanted it to be on a record.

24 MS. HUDSON: Sure. I'm

1 reluctant to give specific numbers,
2 but I will harken to the testimony
3 that the Chief Defender gave where
4 they -- they work with over 2,500
5 young people, nearly 3000 young
6 people a year. We personally work
7 with several hundred young people a
8 year. And I would argue that if you
9 are young and brown and broke in
10 Philadelphia, this has the
11 opportunity to touch you.

12 And I also say that we
13 should be thinking about the future
14 job seekers of Philadelphia and the
15 economic stability that we want for
16 the city. Even if there are roughly
17 2,500 to 3000 young people who are
18 living currently with a record, if
19 we keep going the way we're going,
20 not only are they not going to be
21 protected in terms of employment,
22 but those coming behind them will
23 not be protected as well.

24 And so we have an

1 opportunity to contribute to public
2 safety right now, and also do the
3 handholding that we need to do with
4 employers so that they actually
5 understand what risk looks like.
6 You know, employers are not equipped
7 in understanding penal code, in
8 understanding summary offenses, and
9 so looking at a record and making a
10 hiring decision without having the
11 skills that they need to understand
12 that record is some of what we need
13 to protect against.

14 And then also equip
15 employers with what -- with a better
16 understanding of what
17 rehabilitation, I put in quotes,
18 looks like, so that they can
19 understand how to make a hiring
20 decision with evidence of
21 rehabilitation and evidence that one
22 job seeker with a criminal record is
23 not necessarily more of a risk than
24 a job seeker without.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

2 Thank you so much for your
3 testimony. And I want to also thank
4 you guys for the work that you do.
5 I've been following, and I -- you
6 know, we talk about out of school
7 time program, we talk about
8 recidivism, we talk about access to
9 opportunities, and I do feel like
10 this legislation, you know, would
11 give access to opportunity for young
12 people in my neighborhood because I
13 know what it's like when they, like,
14 they still call me Ms. Nikki,
15 "Ms. Nikki, can you get me a job?
16 But my -- I got something on my
17 record." You know, it's a hindrance
18 and, like, how can we provide more
19 access for people to start their
20 lives over?

21 So thank you guys for the
22 work that you do ongoing and thank
23 you for providing testimony.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,

1 Member Brooks. Any other questions
2 for this panel? Seeing none, thank
3 you for your testimony and it helps.
4 It helps enlighten us. Ms. Stack,
5 next panel to testify, please.

6 THE CLERK: Jigar Mehta
7 from the Asian American Chamber of
8 Commerce, Mr. Slaughter and Kali
9 Lamb.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: Please
11 come up to the -- to the desk, have
12 a seat, state your name for the
13 record and please begin your
14 testimony. Thank you so much for
15 your patience as well.

16 MS. LAMB: Hi, my name is
17 Kali Lamb. I am a research
18 associate with the Clean Slate
19 Initiative. We work nationwide to
20 pass automated record clearing laws,
21 state to state, for people who've
22 completed their sentences. Before
23 that, I had the privilege of being a
24 paralegal with Community Legal

1 Services and the employment unit. I
2 was there for two years and I daily
3 worked with, like, a caseload of
4 about 50 people that are
5 experiencing these barriers to
6 employment. But before I get into
7 why this bill is so important, I
8 want to talk about why employment is
9 so important. I had a lifelong
10 substance use disorder. I became
11 addicted to substances when I was a
12 teenager. It was close to 20 years
13 of active use.

14 It was slight but
15 progressive my whole life. In 2019,
16 and the same week right before
17 Christmas, I lost my job and my
18 apartment. I became unhoused on the
19 streets of Kensington, and I lived
20 in a stairwell around the corner
21 from here. There was a group of
22 about 10 of us. I started getting
23 arrested for retail theft and drug
24 related offenses, and it was a

1 cycle. I would get in jail, I'd be
2 sober, I want to do well, and I'm
3 released right back to being
4 unhoused. I don't have family up
5 here. I didn't have a lot of
6 support. I say that because I want
7 you to understand how hard it was to
8 turn everything around. My most
9 recent conviction is 2022. So under
10 current laws, I probably cannot get
11 a retail job in Philadelphia.

12 Today I own a house. I
13 bought my first house last year. I
14 bought a car last month. Thank you.
15 I have three dogs that I care for
16 that have health insurance that I am
17 able to -- I can't express to you
18 how much that means because my
19 identity until my mid-thirties was
20 first a drug addict and then
21 something else, or a criminal and
22 then something else.

23 And today I'm able to
24 succeed. And the entire catalyst

1 for that was CLS and getting a job
2 that made me proud of myself because
3 I have never been proud of myself.
4 I made terrible decisions my entire
5 life.

6 So the first step to self-
7 assurance and being able to
8 contribute to my community was
9 having a job that loved me before I
10 could love me, that valued my lived
11 experience, that taught me to be
12 proud of the journey I've been on
13 and taught me my value and that I'm
14 more than just my bad days, right?

15 So that's why employment is
16 important because it can be the
17 catalyst to so much. It's not just
18 a job, it's how we feel about
19 ourselves. It's how we stop
20 re-offending, right? Next to
21 housing, that's top tier.

22 So why this bill is
23 important? Every single amendment
24 in this bill is directly related to

1 the experience of a client or
2 clients of CLS. Every word. The
3 first amendment in this bill is a
4 simple change of wording. I want
5 you to know there's a client that
6 was in litigation for about a year
7 over that word because he was denied
8 employment. So that's why these
9 amendments are important.

10 My roommate today is
11 someone that I lived in that
12 stairwell with right at Broad &
13 Chestnut. He's been sober for three
14 and a half years now. He was
15 chronically unhoused. Both of his
16 parents died from substance use
17 disorder.

18 And the reason that we have
19 this provision in here about
20 employers including a questionnaire
21 about your rehabilitation, that
22 started with this roommate of mine.
23 He applied for a job and he has
24 charges. They go as deep as

1 burglary, right? They're not that
2 simple, but they're all related to
3 his addiction.

4 And he was sent a
5 pre-adverse action letter explaining
6 that they were likely going to not
7 hire him, a copy of his record, and
8 they included a criminal conviction
9 questionnaire. It asked the
10 circumstance that led to the
11 conviction. What have you done
12 since then? And why can we trust
13 you? It outlined the steps that
14 should be taken to show you as a
15 whole person and more than just a
16 criminal record.

17 And he filled that out and
18 he has now been in that same
19 position for going on two years. He
20 gets to work, and I'm saying this as
21 if this is under oath, this is 45
22 minutes to an hour early every
23 single day. He is a phenomenal
24 employee. And had he not had the

1 ability to explain who he was and
2 what he has done and the amount of
3 work he has put into changing who he
4 is, he wouldn't have that job.

5 This bill doesn't really
6 change the substance, right? All it
7 does is clarify how we move within
8 the law as both employers and as
9 people with lived experience trying
10 to navigate it. Because if there's
11 one cohesive element between all of
12 my clients, and honestly employers
13 as well if I'm really honest about
14 it, they don't understand these
15 laws. They don't understand how
16 they work. I heard some testimony
17 earlier about how it might be an
18 issue for employers. It's tedious,
19 right, to have to write out why
20 you're not hiring someone based on
21 their record. But that's the law.

22 As it's written today, you
23 must give an individualized
24 assessment. So I don't understand

1 the extra step to write that down
2 for the person that you are saying,
3 I'm not going to hire you because I
4 think you pose a risk to me as a
5 business. I don't understand how it
6 doesn't -- how it makes sense that
7 we don't explain that now. So that
8 the person can then respond and say,
9 hey, but look what else I've done
10 since then.

11 I also heard some comment
12 about New York City. And I wanted
13 to clarify, New York City has
14 excellent employment laws and
15 protections, and it's very similar
16 to the provisions that Councilmember
17 Landau introduced. There's actually
18 a form for employers in New York
19 City to fill out check boxes and
20 simple statements that they have
21 done an individualized assessment
22 and they return that to the
23 applicant. So it's actually very,
24 very similar.

1 And if New York City can do
2 that, I think Philadelphia can as
3 well. I know I've been going on for
4 a little bit, but I think what's
5 really -- the fact that I really
6 want to push, this changes lives and
7 it's so many adults in Philadelphia
8 that are impacted by this, by
9 criminal records. I heard
10 Councilman Jones say before that --
11 we were talking about like the
12 colloquy, right, when you're
13 pleading guilty, all of that.
14 I've said numerous times in
15 the colloquy there's not a single
16 time that you are told you can be
17 denied employment when you plead
18 guilty to this misdemeanor. I never
19 knew that. I never knew pleading
20 out to felonies, that this was going
21 to be an impediment for years. And
22 also, as someone who now does
23 research on collateral consequences,
24 I can confirm that there are over

1 48,000 collateral consequences of
2 arrest and conviction.

3 So again, I appreciate
4 people that are not directly
5 impacted prioritizing this piece of
6 legislation, these amendments, and
7 staying up to date with the needs of
8 our communities. And this is a bill
9 that brings the voices of the people
10 it directly impacts to the table.
11 And I don't think we see that
12 enough. And I'm really impressed
13 and proud of it. Thank you. And
14 I'm happy to answer any questions,
15 if you have any.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
17 for your testimony. Can you state
18 your name for the record and begin
19 your testimony.

20 MR. SESAMES: Hello,
21 everyone. My name is Muhmee. I'm
22 here today --

23 CHAIRMAN JONES: Do you
24 have a last name, sir?

1 MR. CESAMS: Cesams.

2 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay.

3 MR. CESAMS: I'm here today

4 to support Bill No. 25037 -- 373.

5 I'm an exoneree who's been

6 exonerated almost a year ago.

7 During my time of incarceration, I

8 made a conscious decision to

9 completely change my life and

10 reinvent myself for the better.

11 What most people don't know is that

12 many individuals leaving prison want

13 to transition into being a

14 productive citizen. And they're

15 toiling while in there to make

16 themselves of more value.

17 While in prison, I educated

18 myself and strove hard to prepare

19 for my second chance of freedom. Of

20 course, we all know that through

21 time come maturity, wisdom, and

22 self-restraint. So I was ready to

23 make my contribution towards our

24 productive society. I was eager to

1 punch the clock and pay my taxes in
2 full. However, upon my release,
3 things didn't go according to plan.
4 In fact, I wasn't prepared for what
5 stood in my path of being a part of
6 the working class.

7 Rejection. Every which way
8 I turned for employment, I was met
9 with rejection. After being
10 rejected so many times, it begins to
11 bother you. It starts to mess with
12 your head and weigh heavy on your
13 thoughts. I decided to take a step
14 back to see what was the cause of
15 all this rejection. It was because
16 of my record or your jacket, what
17 they say. I remember applying for
18 -- to be an advocate for a juvenile
19 facility in the hope of giving them
20 a little faith and some golden
21 direction.

22 Once again, I was turned
23 away. When I respond with a
24 question of my own, "May I ask why,"

1 they told me it was due to my prior
2 conviction. I told them that I was
3 resolved of all charges and even
4 presented proof. It didn't matter
5 because it was still on my record.
6 Therefore, I was not permitted to
7 work with troubled youth.

8 I applied -- I even applied
9 to be a custodian for a
10 transportation company to clean out
11 their vehicles after they've been
12 used, parked and done for that day.
13 Again, I was met with rejection due
14 to my record.

15 Even if you meet every
16 requirement, possess specific skills
17 or credentials or give an
18 outstanding interview, surprisingly,
19 you'll be met or greeted with
20 disappointment due to rejection.

21 Eventually, self-defeat
22 begins to set in. If those who came
23 home from incarceration don't have a
24 strong support system or a great

1 sense of resilience, unfortunately,
2 they end up becoming a part of their
3 recidivism rate instead of the
4 working class. It took me months
5 before I was able to get a fair
6 shake and show that I was so much
7 more than what a document displayed
8 of me from old.

9 My shot at a chance of
10 equal opportunity came from those
11 who I've met along the way and
12 striving to attain greatness.
13 People like Jerome Loach from
14 Eastern State, who's a senior
15 coordinator for the LEAD Fellowship
16 Reentry Program, Christy DiStefano,
17 who's a part of HR at Peersta, my
18 PO, Ms. Sledge.

19 Cindy, who is a coordinator
20 at STAR Reentry Program, and many
21 more. They saw who I truly was and
22 refused to let a piece of paper
23 deter them from helping me reach my
24 full potential. Due to them

1 believing in me, I am now a CPS,
2 Certified Peer Support specialist,
3 helping others battle against mental
4 illness by aiding them in their
5 struggle to get well. Because they
6 supported me, I am now a CCIP
7 advocate for PAN, Philadelphia Anti-
8 Drug/Anti-Violence Network, which
9 allowed me to help individuals
10 receive much-needed resources and
11 allowed me to interact with the
12 youth to try to deter them or turn
13 them away from the streets.

14 Therefore, I believe it is
15 imperative that you support this
16 bill to ensure that those who are
17 re-entering back into society have
18 an equal opportunity for gainful
19 employment. I believe that it is
20 unjust to put an individual through
21 difficulty or deny them access to
22 make an honest living due to poor
23 decisions from their past. Please
24 support this bill.

1 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
2 so much for sharing that. And thank
3 you for your resilience, because a
4 lesser person would've given up and
5 done something different. But thank
6 you for sticking in there and we
7 benefit from it as a city. Any
8 questions? Oh, we have one more to
9 testify.

10 MR. MEHTA: Hello. My name
11 is --

12 CHAIRMAN JONES: State your
13 name and begin your testimony.

14 MR. MEHTA: My name is
15 Jigar Mehta. I'm with the Asian
16 American Chamber. Thank you, Chair
17 Jones and City Council. When we
18 talked about 4,000 individuals that
19 have been incarcerated, what we're
20 really saying is 4,000 justice-
21 impacted families. They have
22 children.

23 And what happens when these
24 men go to prison, they get caught

1 into this complex system called
2 Philadelphia, where you now become a
3 family of three or four, and now you
4 -- now these children are being
5 raised by a single mom. When that
6 happens, and there's a severe
7 decline in income in that family,
8 the children suffer the most.

9 There is a 72 percent more
10 likelihood of that child that has a
11 justice-impacted father to have
12 PTSD. There's a 50 percent chance
13 they're going to have anxiety. That
14 starts a path dependence on that
15 child of deteriorating health. When
16 you have health that is
17 deteriorating, you get caught into a
18 negative feedback loop. That means
19 you start losing executive function.
20 When you lack executive function,
21 you cannot learn.

22 When you cannot learn, you
23 -- again, your health starts to
24 deteriorate. And now what happens,

1 you can't get a job, there is no
2 knowledge, there is no opportunity
3 for you.

4 The next step is, it's like
5 a virus. It affects not just you,
6 the individual. We know hurt people
7 hurt. So what happens is they go to
8 school, and now they hurt people in
9 school. And now people that have
10 similar situations start to gather.
11 So now the school deteriorates. The
12 neighborhoods deteriorate.

13 Then what happens, it
14 starts to grow. And this virus
15 spreads throughout the city,
16 throughout the state, and throughout
17 the country.

18 So there's intervention
19 that's required. And I'm grateful
20 for what is being put together. But
21 we need to find out solutions while
22 they're on the inside. We have to
23 get them before the three years. My
24 personal experience, the reason I'm

1 interested in this, is I grew up
2 with a single mom. I've been
3 through the PTSD, the -- all the bad
4 stuff. I ended up, God's grace,
5 went to an Ivy League school, went
6 to Penn, graduated.

7 I ended up working at the
8 World Trade Center. I got a job at
9 Deloitte. My address was One Union
10 Square South. Deutsche Bank was my
11 client. And one day, I get a phone
12 call, say, you got to come into the
13 office, get in the office. They did
14 a look back seven years.

15 In 2019, I was still a
16 knucklehead. I was doing dumb
17 stuff, hanging out. We used to do
18 the five-finger discount, run
19 through a mall, grab what we can.
20 Whoever we got the most expensive
21 stuff won. They got everything. We
22 were stupid. This one time, I
23 didn't do it. I did do it plenty of
24 other times. The one time I didn't

1 do it, the cops caught me. Because
2 I was just hanging out. My friends
3 left. They said, hey, who are you
4 with? You know we're not going to
5 say who you're with. We go to the
6 jail, and they put me in a box for
7 six hours. Then they say, you want
8 to go out? Fine, just sign this.

9 It's a non-moving
10 violation. It's just like a
11 speeding ticket. All you got to do
12 is go to the clerk, pay 112 bucks,
13 you're out of here. I didn't even
14 have 112 bucks, so I put on a
15 payment plan. That ticket, I get
16 called in. They say, you got until
17 Sunday. It was Friday. I had until
18 Sunday to move out of my apartment
19 that was being paid by Deutsche
20 Bank. And I was fearful I was going
21 to lose my job at Deloitte
22 Consulting, where I had to fight for
23 that. And all that because I was 19
24 and dumb?

1 So luckily for me, Deloitte
2 gave me a second chance. They just
3 laughed. They're like, listen,
4 don't worry about it, man. You're
5 going to Europe. You're going to
6 hang out. Deutsche Bank wants you
7 in Europe. So I got a chance to
8 live in Europe. I got a second
9 chance.

10 I'm sitting here because of
11 that second chance and because of
12 Deloitte. Right now, there are
13 plenty of people out there that are
14 more qualified than I ever will be.
15 That are never going to -- you meet
16 some of these children, they're
17 smarter than-- they got the street
18 cred. They got the street
19 knowledge. They're better than any
20 of us. They'll run circles around
21 us. We just need to give them
22 knowledge, opportunity, and love.
23 Those are the three things we need
24 to give them.

1 We're working right now
2 with a juvenile lifer who was
3 exonerated for 24 years. I mean,
4 went to prison for 24 years, Johnny
5 Berry. We have a team that we're
6 putting together right now to try to
7 figure out how to solve this. And
8 we've got Johnny Berry.

9 We've got Office of Reentry
10 Partnerships with the city of
11 Philadelphia. We've got Hal
12 Construction, Hal charities, we've
13 got Hal Construction to create
14 training programs for these men.
15 We've got the Liguori Academy in
16 Kensington to help provide a
17 training academy. We've got
18 Philadelphia Youth Basketball.
19 That's a part of this to help with
20 the training program.

21 We've got Regional Housing
22 Legal Services that work on
23 affordable housing to help Johnny
24 create a new nonprofit called Onward

1 to be a developer. Only we are
2 responsible for the dream. We've
3 got Cadre Design who's helping us
4 design affordable homes so we can
5 leverage the land from the land bank
6 so we can say we want 100 percent of
7 the employees that are formerly
8 incarcerated to help build these
9 homes to rebuild the 30,000 units
10 that the mayor wants. Hundred
11 percent. They can do it. They just
12 need the love. They need the
13 opportunity and the training to be
14 able to do it.

15 So I want to be frank. I
16 don't know what's in this. I had --
17 you know, I got it on Friday and I
18 saw you on the street and I said,
19 can we meet? I would love to -- you
20 know, I don't know the process. I
21 don't know how this could affect
22 developers. I will tell you, I met
23 with a lot of developers.

24 Now, I'm not going to say

1 they don't care, but they're like,
2 why would we take that chance to use
3 these men? And that's why we have
4 Hal, because they care. I mean, I'm
5 not saying they don't care. I'm
6 saying they would say, we'll take
7 that chance.

8 I would love to sit down
9 with them, with you, to just talk
10 about this to try to better
11 understand, you know, what exactly,
12 will this disincentivize as other
13 people have said? I don't know the
14 answer right now. So I would
15 appreciate that effort. Thank you
16 very much. Thank you.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: You
18 got it. Thank you so much. And --

19 CHAIRMAN JONES: Chair
20 recognizes Member Landau.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: You
22 got it. I look forward to the
23 meeting. And while I have the mic
24 for one second, I want to thank all

1 three of you for sharing your
2 incredible personal stories and
3 experiences. I know it's not hard
4 to say it publicly, but my gosh, it
5 sure helps others throughout the
6 city of Philadelphia, from those of
7 us who are helping to create policy,
8 but to other people who don't feel
9 alone. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,
11 Member Landau. What I want to say
12 to you is you are proof positive,
13 different origin stories from very
14 different directions intersecting at
15 the same problem.

16 And what you proved today
17 by your testimony is that broken
18 crayons can still color. Broken
19 crayons still have a purpose in this
20 life. And we're going to get -- I
21 remember I had a whole box of broken
22 crayons and made pretty pictures.
23 So thank you. Thank you so very
24 much. Any -- oh, Member --

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I
2 just wanted to thank all of you for
3 your testimony and for sharing such
4 personal stories. I think it's very
5 important to hear the real stories
6 in order to understand the potential
7 impact of the legislation and why
8 it's needed. I particularly wanted
9 to thank you -- I don't want to say
10 your name wrong, I'm sorry.

11 MR. MEHTA: Jigar like
12 Jay-Z, but I'm married to a woman --

13 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
14 Okay.

15 MR. MEHTA: -- as beautiful
16 as Beyonce, but --

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I
18 particularly wanted to thank you. I
19 don't know if you are coming to this
20 wearing your Chamber hat, but I
21 think it's important, and I was not
22 expecting this to be your testimony.
23 You know, sometimes --

24 MR. MEHTA: Neither was I.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: --

2 I think there's a -- there's a
3 misconception that business goals
4 don't align with what's best for
5 people. And I appreciate you, you
6 know, clearly having a business view
7 since you sit on the board of the
8 Chamber, you work for a big company,
9 but being able to, from your
10 personal experience, you know,
11 represent a -- to the business
12 community, why this is important.

13 MR. MEHTA: Yes.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: So
15 thank you so much.

16 MR. MEHTA: No, and thank
17 you for everything that all of you
18 -- by the way, my wife is a huge fan
19 of yours. I'm just going to let you
20 -- she's with Regional Housing and
21 Legal Services. Huge fan. But
22 thank you for your whole staff, so
23 --

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I

1 love Regional Housing Legal
2 Services, so I'm a fan of hers as
3 well. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: Yeah, we
5 were braced for something quite
6 different in your testimony, but
7 thank you for being refreshing.
8 Ms. -- Member Deck.

9 Ms. Stack, do we -- who's
10 our next group?

11 Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 MR. MEHTA: Thank you.

14 THE CLERK: Tess Hart from
15 Triple Bottom Brewing and Jessica
16 Paz from Wash Cycle Laundry.

17 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
18 guys for your patience. Please come
19 up to the desk. Have a seat. Thank
20 you. Please state your name for the
21 record and begin your testimony.

22 MS. PAZ: My name is
23 Jessica Paz. I work for Wash Cycle
24 Laundry. We are a commercial

1 laundry. It was funded here in
2 Philadelphia, and we are still
3 working here in Philadelphia. It
4 was funded in a laundromat. We're
5 still working in a laundromat, but
6 now we have 130 employees over two
7 different states. Thank you. So --
8 sorry. We wash over a million
9 pounds of laundry for hotels, small
10 business, and other big business
11 with big names, like in the airport.
12 Our employees earn between \$17 and
13 \$30 an hour, and they also have the
14 opportunity to grow and show more
15 responsibility in between those
16 different charges that are in those
17 rates. We have been an employer
18 that recruits heavily from high
19 barrier groups since we began.

20 And we have had a focus on
21 supporting people with criminal
22 records since 2011. And we have
23 also -- we have always done this in
24 partnerships with non-profit

1 organizations, like the Fair Chance
2 Hiring. Hiring, sorry.

3 Ten years ago, like, it
4 wasn't because we feel like we
5 needed to do it. It was more
6 something of like, something nice to
7 do. But after COVID, that changed,
8 because before COVID, like, normal
9 commercial laundry, we have an open
10 position, they will post an ad on
11 Indeed by Monday, and by Wednesday,
12 they already had a line outside of
13 people that wanted to work for them.

14 But that changed after
15 COVID, and has been able to employ
16 people, like, with changes -- with
17 challenges, sorry, that other
18 companies will not hire, gave us the
19 opportunity to have a fully staffed
20 company during this time. That was
21 really hard for a lot of other, as I
22 said, companies, laundromats, that
23 were -- that needed to, like, say
24 sorry to their customers, because

1 they were not able to deliver on
2 time, or, like, apologize, because
3 they were literally not able to
4 deliver anything to hotels, or as I
5 said, small businesses. That didn't
6 happen to us.

7 Thankfully, we were able to
8 fully staff our Landry Company. And
9 we were able also to provide that
10 secure service to our customers.

11 And even to this day, like,
12 the first thing that a lot of hotels
13 ask is, are you guys fully staffed?
14 And we are able to say, I'm proud to
15 say that we are. Thank you to
16 non-profit organizations that
17 provide to us different people that
18 are open to work and that they want
19 to grow and, like, have better
20 chances in life as well.

21 To be clear, like, COVID
22 almost took us to bankrupt. But
23 after that, like, we were able to
24 times three our customers, yes, and

1 start contracts with big name hotels
2 that are, like, worldwide name
3 hotels. So, like, having the staff
4 complete on the plan help us grow
5 and provide the service as well.

6 We have a lot of successful
7 stories. Like, we got a delivery
8 driver that all of our customers
9 love because of his personality,
10 like -- I'm going to say, like, a
11 month ago, he went on vacation for a
12 week. All of our customers were,
13 like, getting crazy. Like, hey,
14 like, where is the delivery driver?
15 You know, like, he's really good.
16 We want him back.

17 We also have other stories,
18 like, we got an employee that
19 started working for us, and he came
20 with experience from the jail on
21 Landry. So, as soon as he started
22 working for us, he was able to,
23 like, go to one of the best
24 employees that we have.

1 So and that also, like,
2 these employees have made great
3 contribution to us, but they have
4 also secured housing and stability
5 for themselves, you know, like, and
6 do things that maybe they never
7 thought that they were going to be
8 able to do, like going on vacation
9 to Orlando.

10 Of course, like, we take
11 precautions on how we hire for the
12 floor. It's a little bit more
13 flexible than what we hire, for
14 example, to do delivery driving,
15 especially to places where, like, we
16 go to government buildings or we go
17 to the Boston Logan Airport, where
18 our drivers need to get a badge to
19 be able to access secure areas.
20 But, like, it doesn't mean that,
21 like, we don't give them the
22 opportunity as well.

23 However, as a business, we
24 have realized that whether or not

1 somebody engaged in criminal
2 behavior, whether or not they are
3 arrested for that behavior, and
4 whether or not they are convicted
5 for that behavior are very different
6 questions.

7 Our founder, CEO, and my
8 boss graduated from Penn, so I'm
9 able to say this, but, like, imagine
10 if every Penn graduate, whoever
11 possessed illegal drugs, or had a
12 misdemeanor drug conviction on the
13 record, like, do you think that Wall
14 Street will stop hiring Penn
15 graduates? Why should any business
16 do the same thing? Sorry, why
17 should any business be any
18 different?

19 Believe it or not, most
20 businesses just want to follow
21 rules. We don't actually want to
22 spend any time debating whether
23 somebody's misdemeanor, disorderly
24 conduct conviction from six years

1 ago means that somebody could sue us
2 if we hire them. That's actually
3 the benefits of this legislation,
4 like the Fair Chance Hiring Law. It
5 provides a little bit more of bright
6 red lines on what is okay and what
7 is not okay. I urge to support this
8 important legislation. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
10 for your testimony. Please state
11 your name and begin your testimony.
12 And I will ask people who are going
13 to testify a brief -- if you are in
14 support and kind of somebody said it
15 before you, you can abbreviate it a
16 little bit so I can keep my quorum
17 so we can vote it out. Thank you.
18 Please proceed.

19 MS. HART: Hello. My name
20 is Tess Hart and I am co-founder and
21 CEO of Triple Bottom Brewing Company
22 here in Philadelphia in District 5,
23 and I am here today to lend my
24 support for the proposed amendments.

1 We are a small business that opened
2 in 2019, and since day one, we've
3 been a fair chance business, which
4 for us means that it's part of our
5 mission to create high-quality,
6 fair-paying jobs for people coming
7 home from incarceration.

8 We do this not just because
9 it's the right thing to do for
10 people who have already done their
11 time, as we've heard earlier, but
12 also because it is right for our
13 business and for our city. I think
14 it is fair to say that I am in this
15 work because I'm motivated by the
16 mission.

17 I believe that everyone in
18 every community should have the
19 opportunity to craft something
20 great, and I have met too many
21 people who have had doors closed in
22 their faces because of something
23 that happened to them or a mistake
24 they made a really long time ago.

1 These folks have completed
2 their sentences and yet are still
3 paying a price above and beyond what
4 the courts dictated because for some
5 reason we as business leaders have
6 decided that they should continue to
7 be punished by being excluded from
8 the opportunity to rebuild their
9 lives through a good day's work. I
10 think that's wrong. So yes, I am
11 motivated by doing what is right for
12 our community members who have been
13 justice-involved, but I'm also a
14 business owner and doing what is
15 right for individual people would be
16 nearly impossible to sustain if it
17 didn't also mean that I was doing
18 right for my business.

19 As you all know, the past
20 five years have not been an easy
21 time for small businesses. We
22 opened our doors six months before
23 the pandemic hit and we have had to
24 work so much harder than we ever

1 imagined to keep our business
2 afloat. But even though it was
3 hard, many of our small business
4 colleagues had an even more
5 difficult time because their staff
6 did not want to come back to work
7 when businesses reopened and our
8 staff did.

9 The period after the worst
10 of the pandemic was behind us was
11 known by many as the Great
12 Resignation. And throughout all of
13 my industry networks people
14 complained that they couldn't find
15 or retain the employees they needed
16 to just get back to their original
17 operations. We did not have that
18 experience at Triple Bottom. We
19 were having to turn potential
20 employees away.

21 We weren't hiring because
22 our team had chosen to weather the
23 pandemic with us and return to work.
24 Not only could we maintain our

1 original operations, but we actually
2 had enough staff to expand, adding
3 new sales channels that we were able
4 to promote our existing employees to
5 take over management of. Our team
6 wanted to stay because they wanted
7 to see our business grow and I
8 believe that the biggest reason that
9 happened was because a significant
10 portion of our team members are
11 returning citizens.

12 Then as today, they were
13 loyal, hardworking, and flexible
14 with the changing needs of our
15 business because we had given them a
16 chance when everyone else closed a
17 door. And then the rest of our team
18 who were not justice impacted chose
19 to stay because they wanted to be a
20 part of an organization that gave
21 chances to employees and helped them
22 grow and thrive.

23 Our business model has
24 changed since we opened our doors.

1 Seeing the need for more employment
2 opportunities for justice impacted
3 individuals, we established the
4 Future of Service Apprenticeship
5 Program last year which offers 16
6 weeks of paid leadership development
7 and on-the-job training to people
8 overcoming barriers to employment.
9 We actually have a showcase tonight
10 if anyone wants to come through.

11 And our second cohort will
12 graduate next week. We will hire
13 some permanently at Triple Bottom as
14 we did with the last cohort, but we
15 cannot hire all of them. So we need
16 more businesses to realize that
17 people who have been incarcerated
18 have so much to offer our
19 organizations, not just through the
20 high retention rates that I talked
21 about, but through their creativity,
22 hard work, and eagerness to learn.

23 I believe a job can change
24 a life. I've seen it dozens of

1 times with our employees who have
2 achieved stability and then started
3 setting new goals that they could
4 not have imagined before they had a
5 steady paycheck. And I also believe
6 that the idea that a job can change
7 a life is something that's pretty
8 universal, that we can all relate
9 to. I've had a job that changed my
10 life. It changed how I thought
11 about my potential and what I could
12 offer the world. Someone earlier
13 talked about feeling -- that feeling
14 of pride.

15 I think that many of us
16 here have had that feeling when we
17 know we're doing good work in our
18 job. It's such a hopeful feeling.
19 And I'd like us to imagine that
20 feeling of hope that could fill our
21 city if we stopped overlooking the
22 great talents of people who have
23 been incarcerated. As business
24 leaders, it makes no sense to ignore

1 talent wherever it might come from.

2 And as community leaders in
3 this room, the argument is so clear.
4 Having a job dramatically reduces a
5 person's likelihood of re-offending
6 or offending in the first place. If
7 we want safer communities, we have
8 to make jobs accessible to anyone
9 who's willing to work hard and learn
10 the skills they need to succeed in
11 them.

12 So I'm really glad to offer
13 my support to the proposed
14 amendments to this legislation
15 because it's the right thing to do
16 and because it will make our
17 neighborhoods safer and our
18 businesses stronger and more
19 resilient. And it is what
20 Philadelphia deserves. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
22 for your testimony. Thank you guys
23 for sharing your experiences. It
24 helps us to formulate a good public

1 policy position. Any questions?

2 Member Gauthier.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I

4 mean, I have a similar comment as

5 before. Thank you for representing

6 a business perspective that goes a

7 little deeper. I think that's very

8 important for this conversation.

9 You know, I'm hearing you all talk

10 about giving second chances to

11 people but not as charity because it

12 brings value to your business. And

13 I think that's important for a

14 larger business audience to take in.

15 Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you,

17 Member. Any other questions for

18 this panel? Seeing none, thank you

19 for your testimony. Ms. Stack, who

20 do we have next to testify?

21 THE CLERK: There are no

22 further panels for Bill No. 250373.

23 CHAIRMAN JONES: So are

24 there any people from the public

1 that are interested in testifying on
2 Bill No. 241057.

3 THE CLERK: We have public
4 comment.

5 CHAIRMAN JONES: We have
6 public comment. Okay. Can you call
7 up the first group of people to
8 testify?

9 THE CLERK: I have Tonie
10 Willis, Briheem Douglas, Adele
11 Williams, and Monte.

12 CHAIRMAN JONES: And if we
13 could limit and edit and bring it
14 down a little bit so that we can
15 keep our -- and move this out of
16 committee. Appreciate you for your
17 patience. Have a seat. Please
18 state your name for the record and
19 begin your testimony. I can't hear
20 you.

21 THE CLERK: We have two
22 more.

23 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay. Two
24 more?

1 THE CLERK: Yeah.

2 CHAIRMAN JONES: Tell them
3 to come on up. Please begin. State
4 your name.

5 MS. DOUGLAS: I'll start.
6 Hello. My name is Briheem Douglas.
7 So yeah, once again, my name is
8 Briheem Douglas. I'm an outreach
9 coordinator of the Unite Here
10 Philadelphia Hospitality Academy and
11 also the vice president of Unite
12 Here Local 274.

13 And I'm here to support
14 this bill on fair chance hiring.
15 We're for real. So I was here
16 before back in April. I feel like I
17 didn't get enough time to speak, but
18 this is super important. Thank you
19 again for allowing me to speak about
20 this.

21 And I just want to
22 reiterate a story about a man named
23 Chris, a true story. So let me tell
24 you about Chris. He went through

1 our training program. He graduated
2 from our academy back in October of
3 2022. He passed testing, received
4 his certifications, went to an
5 interview, and secured an offer
6 letter from one of our big time
7 employers here in the city.

8 After securing the offer
9 letter of employment, he had to
10 submit a background check, right?
11 He was a convicted felon, so
12 therefore the company didn't move
13 any further. But we didn't stop
14 there.

15 Spring of 2024, we tried
16 again with the same company, but a
17 different location. Chris went on
18 another interview. They loved him
19 and therefore offered him a job
20 again. But guess what? Yet he had
21 to submit another background check.
22 And at this point in time, you can
23 only imagine his nerves, right?

24 So once again, after

1 securing and accepting the offer,
2 the company declined. And going on
3 an interview and them liking them,
4 they declined again. So let's
5 consider this, right? Imagine
6 completing a program, pass testing,
7 graduate with stackable
8 certificates, and going on an
9 interview, you do so well that the
10 company say, yes, we want to hire
11 you.

12 But the very necessary
13 steps that you are taking to better
14 your conditions is still being held
15 back from your past troubled
16 conditions.

17 And I do want to take this
18 time to thank spaces like the Philly
19 Black Worker Project for all that
20 they do and will continue to do in
21 the future. Partnership is so
22 important. Chris needed work ASAP,
23 so we sent him to a temp agency, and
24 guess what happened? He got hired.

1 That isn't even the part that would
2 grind your gears. Imagine now going
3 to work for that company in one of
4 their buildings that didn't --
5 couldn't hire you as a member of a
6 union with benefits, but will let
7 you work as a temp worker there
8 which receives no benefits.

9 Let me just put this in
10 real context. Chris was hired as a
11 temp by the same company that denied
12 him employment as a direct hire.
13 That's what happened here.

14 We are proud once again to
15 support this resolution. We are
16 happy also to keep these
17 conversations going and moving
18 forward. Chris is not the only one
19 with this type of story. We often
20 see this in our hospitality
21 industry. There are a lot of layers
22 to pull back, and this is a start,
23 and I'm really happy about that.
24 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
2 for your testimony. Please state
3 your name.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, my
5 name's -- hi, my name's Adele
6 Williams. I'm a CPS. I'm studying
7 to be a CRS, CYS, and a certified
8 family recovery specialist so that I
9 can reach all areas of the realm.
10 I'm here today. You heard about how
11 we've been denied jobs because of
12 our records, but I'm here to tell
13 you that we don't stop there as Why
14 Not Prosper.

15 We go into the prisons and
16 we try to train them from the
17 prisons, help them get started with
18 the trainings from the prisons so
19 that when they come out of prisons,
20 not only do -- when they come out,
21 we help them get their IDs. We help
22 them get their birth certificates.
23 We give them some money because when
24 you come out of prison, you're

1 broke. You don't have no money.
2 You know, sometimes you don't even
3 have family members to help you get
4 these things, so we make sure that
5 you have the things.

6 We still come -- when you
7 come out, we try to keep connected
8 with you so that you can get these
9 trainings so that you don't have to
10 keep going back in this revolving
11 door. You know, because it is hard
12 when we go out here, like he said,
13 and we be denied from these jobs.
14 You know, like we do the necessary
15 things that we need to do, but you
16 still hold it against us.

17 We're not who we used to be
18 because if you looked at me for who
19 I used to be, I got 15 years clean,
20 you know, and I'm not that girl
21 anymore. You know, I'm a productive
22 member of society. That's who I am,
23 you know, and I paid my time and
24 it's time for people to give me a

1 second chance at life so I can make
2 a better future for my children, my
3 grandchildren, and anybody else
4 who's around can see that I'm
5 different today.

6 And I just want this law to
7 be passed so that you-all can give
8 us a second chance.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you.
10 Thank you for sharing. Thank you.

11 MS. WILLIS: Good morning
12 --

13 CHAIRMAN JONES: Good
14 morning.

15 MS. WILLIS: -- Council
16 members and colleagues. My name is
17 Tony Willis. My name is Tonie
18 Willis. I'm the founder and
19 executive director of Ardella's
20 house. I'm not -- thank you. I'm
21 not even going to read what I had
22 put together because it doesn't make
23 any sense to reinvent the wheel
24 because people before me basically

1 said what I was going to say. But I
2 am going to say this, like Michael
3 Jackson, a man in the mirror.

4 We have to stop labeling
5 people as convicted felons,
6 convicts, because I am a woman with
7 lived experience. I have been
8 impacted by the criminal justice
9 system. So if I was hiring someone
10 and someone said they're a convicted
11 felon or someone who's been impacted
12 by the system, a convicted felon or
13 a convict sound like they might have
14 shot up the whole place, but they
15 might have been out shoplifting.

16 So we have to be mindful of
17 the labels that we put on people.
18 And formerly incarcerated are
19 returning citizens, returning from
20 where? They're citizens. They're
21 coming back into the community. I
22 hate all those labels that we put on
23 people.

24 It's important. And I

1 don't think I have to convince
2 anyone that's sitting up there about
3 this bill, how important it is.
4 Those that know me know we do
5 housing for formerly incarcerated
6 women. We just brought our second
7 house, Councilman Jones, in your
8 district. I get calls sometimes
9 from women who are about to lose
10 their places because they found out
11 that they are women that have been
12 impacted and are about to lose their
13 job. But I always tell the women,
14 be honest and tell them in the
15 beginning. And they do tell them.
16 Sometimes I feel they just
17 do it because they're short staffed.
18 They need help and they hire them.
19 They keep them for maybe about three
20 months until the background comes
21 back. Then they wind up letting
22 them go. Then I have to call
23 Community Legal Services about
24 what's going on. But then they wind

1 up losing their place. And they
2 call me and ask me, do we have room
3 for them to move back into the
4 house? And it shouldn't be that
5 way.

6 I'm going to keep it short,
7 like I said, because we've been here
8 all day. But I know that everybody
9 that's sitting up there, I know just
10 about everybody up there, and I know
11 you-all know the right thing to do
12 when it comes to this bill. And I
13 thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: So,
15 Ardella's House is in my district,
16 but if you throw a rock across the
17 street, it's in your district. And
18 the young people that I've met there
19 have a beacon of hope because of
20 what you do that they are accepted
21 back into a community that welcomes
22 them and encourages them and pushes
23 them out to be more than a
24 stereotype.

1 And so I'm thankful that
2 you are in my district and you have
3 a second location. And you owe me
4 the first meal from the first time.
5 You told me we was going to eat
6 together. I'm still hungry, so let
7 you go.

8 MS. WILLIS: It's not too
9 late.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: It's not
11 too late. All right. Do we have
12 any other questions?

13 MR. MONTE: Hello?

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: Oh, one
15 more.

16 MR. MONTE: My name's Monte
17 --

18 CHAIRMAN JONES: And we
19 have two more, correct?

20 THE CLERK: Yeah.

21 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay.
22 They -- construct or make their way
23 up.

24 MR. MONTE: Hello, my

1 name's Monte. I keep hearing fair
2 chance and risk. What's a fair
3 chance? Is the fair chance me just
4 filling out the application and not
5 having to check the box, I'm a
6 convict? Or is the fair chance me
7 getting an interview and then being
8 denied? What's the fair chance?
9 You say risk. A fair chance is
10 taking risk.

11 When you take risk, you put
12 a person in a position to show you
13 what they can do. Since I've came
14 home, I've been faced with a whole
15 lot of discrimination, indirect
16 discrimination. They asked me about
17 my record before they even look at
18 my resume. My resume will show you
19 that I'm reliable. I'm motivated.
20 I'm determined. Sure, I fell on
21 hard times where I had to reach out
22 to certain people to help me. I
23 needed them. I need a job. I need
24 money. I have to survive.

1 I'm 33, and I can tell you
2 right now, I never had that fair
3 chance. I get a job, they give me
4 an offer, and they'll tell me to
5 come and work before the background
6 check comes back. And then a week
7 to two weeks later, after I already
8 done got three, four job offers from
9 somewhere else, they say, oh, we
10 can't take you.

11 We can't have you no more,
12 after I done show I can come to
13 work. I can get there on time. I
14 took four buses and a train to get
15 to work. I left out of my house at
16 1:00 in the morning, every morning,
17 to get to Hatfield, PA by 6:00
18 o'clock a.m., and I got there at 8
19 -- 5:53 every morning. I told my
20 bosses that there was no excuse for
21 a person who can live down the
22 street to say that they can't make
23 it to work.

24 These are people with clean

1 criminal records. I have a criminal
2 record. That fair chance was
3 supposed to allow me to show my --
4 to shine, basically, and I wasn't
5 given that opportunity.

6 You would rather have
7 someone without a record that's
8 going to give you a headache than to
9 have somebody with a record that's
10 going to put that effort, going to
11 put that foot forward to do right.
12 That's what I've been doing, and
13 I've been getting rejected. I'm
14 tired of getting rejected, because
15 each time I get rejected, the first
16 thought that comes to my mind, I got
17 to make some money.

18 How am I going to make some
19 money? So I'm going to call my
20 cousins, because my cousin's in the
21 street. Now, I face the risk of
22 getting a criminal record, which I
23 have, for selling drugs. I even
24 have burglaries on my record,

1 because I was sleeping in abandoned
2 homes. I have a burglary on my
3 record because I was found sleeping
4 in an abandoned home.

5 When you look at the
6 charge, it says, not for human
7 accommodation, or whatever it says.
8 So that shit tell you is an
9 abandoned home. No one lives there.
10 But I'm being --

11 I went to Impact. They
12 told me I couldn't work there
13 because I had a burglary, but I'm
14 taking out trash. I went to
15 McDonald's. They said I couldn't
16 work there because I sold drugs, but
17 I'm flipping burgers. It's hard for
18 us. And a lot of people up there,
19 they sit, and you-all are slumped,
20 and you-all think, because you-all
21 heard these written statements.

22 I'm not going to go off
23 this paper, because I don't need to,
24 because the same statements I've

1 been making, I've been making them
2 for years. I'm 33. It's hard.
3 It's even harder when you're not
4 given a chance. Keep talking about
5 fair chance. There's no fair chance
6 for a felon. What's the real fair
7 chance? What is it? I'm asking
8 that question because I really would
9 like you to tell me.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: Let me, if
11 I may, ask a counter question. What
12 is it that you do -- what is your
13 profession?

14 MR. MONTE: I'm a chef.

15 CHAIRMAN JONES: You're a
16 chef.

17 MR. MONTE: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay.
19 Hopefully you can cook good?
20 Because everybody --

21 MR. MONTE: My girlfriend
22 over there. She's my girlfriend
23 right there.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: Yeah, all

1 right, we're going to find out.

2 MR. MONTE: I'm good. And
3 the resume says that, though.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: So let me
5 just further say, and I say this not
6 in jest, say this from my heart,
7 that your struggle is a lot of
8 people's struggle. But what I also
9 tell them is that when you can't
10 find a job, we can create one, start
11 a business.

12 We have at 49th and
13 Parkside the Philadelphia Container
14 Village, where we have the ability
15 to bring people on that used to be
16 not hustler hustlers, but used to
17 hustle out of the back of their car
18 to be able to get their first start
19 in business.

20 And I say that to you
21 because nobody cares about who --
22 what your record was if you make a
23 good meal. And we have found that
24 to be true. So one of the things

1 that I also offer people is the
2 entrepreneurial option that we need
3 to think about.

4 If I was -- if some of my
5 best friends came home like that,
6 and one of the things that I would
7 have done, I would have went right
8 down to Home Depot. I would have
9 took my little ones. I would have
10 bought some spray paint and some
11 stencils. And I would have went out
12 to the blocks and started spray
13 painting people's addresses on their
14 curb.

15 And if I charge \$10 a house
16 with 50 houses on there, that ain't
17 a bad day. So what I'm saying is
18 the same drive that you have right
19 now, we just got to find fertile
20 soil for it because life ain't fair.
21 It ain't fair. And I tell my kids
22 and others, life is going to be
23 hard. It's hard when you get up and
24 got to go to school every day, go to

1 class in the snow and all that. But
2 it's going to be hard when you got
3 to go through a cell block. Choose
4 your heart. Life's going to be
5 hard. But some of it is worth
6 struggling through. And I'm saying
7 to you that with the drive you have,
8 don't give up. Don't give up.

9 MR. MONTE: Oh, I haven't
10 given up.

11 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay.

12 MR. MONTE: But what has
13 happened is that I get intimidated
14 because if I'm going go into a job
15 and I know I got a background, we're
16 wasting each other time, basically.

17 CHAIRMAN JONES: No, I get
18 that. But what I'd like you to
19 consider is for people who have
20 found that barrier to be
21 insurmountable, that one that kind
22 of opens its own door is running
23 your own business. If -- for me,
24 because I've started enough of them

1 in another life, that if you -- the
2 best entrepreneurs or people who had
3 some other life experiences, if you
4 know what I mean, and I'm saying
5 that you have to be able and willing
6 to transfer some of those skill sets
7 into running a legitimate business.

8 And one of the things that
9 I'm working with some of the guys at
10 Abu Edwards' Black Male Engagement
11 is I want to do a workshop to look
12 at that option. And somebody with
13 your skills, you know, you got a
14 future. Member Young.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: And I
16 just want to say that your story is
17 similar to the stories of my
18 friends, family. Like, we all from,
19 you know, certain communities --

20 MR. MONTE: Can I interrupt
21 you?

22 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Let
23 me --

24 MR. MONTE: I keep hearing

1 you-all keep talking about what
2 other people said. I said what I
3 said.

4 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: And
5 let me finish here with what I'm
6 saying.

7 MR. MONTE: You-all keep
8 saying what -- how other people's
9 lives is.

10 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:
11 Because we have to, right? Because
12 we --

13 MR. MONTE: We're not
14 talking about other people's lives.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: --
16 got to put things in perspective for
17 everybody.

18 MR. MONTE: Councilman,
19 we're not talking about other
20 people's lives right now. We're
21 talking about my life.

22 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I'm
23 talking about other people's lives
24 in the city.

1 MR. MONTE: We're talking
2 about my life, not your cousins.

3 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I'm
4 talking about everybody in the city
5 who goes through this. That's why
6 we're doing this legislation.

7 MR. MONTE: Listen, bro.
8 You've been up there in slump. I
9 don't even want to talk to you.
10 You've been up there in slump and
11 not even caring. What I'm saying,
12 I'm a citizen, I can speak like
13 this.

14 I'm a citizen. I don't
15 work for -- I don't work for any of
16 you. I am a citizen, and I'm
17 telling you how it is. All that
18 you-all are talking about, oh, this
19 person, this person go through that.
20 Oh, we all go through shit. Yeah.
21 But it affects us differently.

22 CHAIRMAN JONES: That's
23 fair.

24 MR. MONTE: You-all can't

1 use other people's situations for my
2 situation.

3 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

4 That's not what I'm trying to do.

5 MR. MONTE: See, no, you
6 are.

7 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: It's
8 not.

9 MR. MONTE: Because when
10 you start putting other people into
11 the equation, that's what you do.

12 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: No.
13 So when we are passing legislation
14 that's going to affect the entire
15 city of Philadelphia --

16 MR. MONTE: Yeah, and you
17 heard from them. And you heard from
18 the other people. Now you getting
19 real.

20 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I'm
21 hearing --

22 MR. MONTE: See, me, I'm a
23 straightforward type of person. I'm
24 going to say how it is. I'm not

1 going to read off this. I could
2 have read off this paper and got the
3 fuck out of here. But I'm an angry
4 black man who can't get a job. I
5 can't support my family because
6 you-all keep talking about a fair
7 chance and I don't get no fair
8 chance. You keep trying to throw
9 somebody else in there and I don't
10 like that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: You
12 don't have to like it.

13 MR. MONTE: Stop throwing
14 other people in there.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I'm
16 not throwing nobody in there.

17 MR. MONTE: Listen.
18 Listen.

19 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: You
20 don't have to like it.

21 MR. MONTE: I know I don't
22 have to.

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: You
24 don't have to like it.

1 MR. MONTE: And you don't
2 have to say anything.

3 CHAIRMAN JONES: Don't go
4 back and forth.

5 MR. MONTE: You see?
6 Because when I'm done talking,
7 you-all going to go back there,
8 you-all going to deliberate with
9 each other, and then you-all going
10 to do what you-all want to do
11 anyway. But I'm going to give you
12 the real. I'm from the inner city.
13 I'm from the streets. People come
14 home every day and say, man, I'm
15 going to get a job.

16 I'm going to get a job.
17 And you know what they go off? They
18 go off that paper. That paper that
19 say -- what's that? The list of
20 jobs that's felon friendly. But,
21 listen, that list, that list is a
22 dud. That list don't give us no
23 jobs. That list don't give us no
24 opportunities. Fair Chance don't

1 give us no opportunities. Because
2 if you can't take the risk, you're
3 not giving me a fair chance.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: So --

5 MR. MONTE: You say --
6 you-all say -- you-all say --

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: So, I'll
8 tell you what --

9 MR. MONTE: You say calm
10 down. You say calm down.

11 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So
12 that's what I was speaking on,
13 right? That's what I wanted to
14 speak on is the fact that how there
15 are employers out here who aren't
16 willing to take that risk. And so
17 what this legislation would do is
18 give them the opportunity to have
19 those clear rules on what -- on how
20 to take that risk on our citizens.

21 So this wasn't necessarily
22 something that was specific, right?
23 This legislation impacts everybody
24 in the entire city. And we need to

1 hear stories like yours and others
2 so we know what this bill really
3 does and how this bill really
4 impacts people in our community.
5 You are not the only one from the
6 streets, bro.

7 MR. MONTE: You said -- you
8 said --

9 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: You
10 are not the only one, right? So
11 when it comes to --

12 MR. MONTE: You-all said a
13 misdemeanor. You said a
14 misdemeanor. You said a
15 misdemeanor.

16 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I
17 didn't say anything about a
18 misdemeanor.

19 MR. MONTE: Ever since I've
20 been sitting here -- I can listen.
21 I hear. You-all never talked about
22 people with felons. You-all said
23 misdemeanor, bro. Misdemeanor and a
24 felony is different. See, I'm going

1 to get up and I'm going to leave.
2 Because all I came here is for
3 you-all to hear. You know what I'm
4 saying? They're going to read off
5 of papers and they're going to try
6 to keep it professional for you.
7 I'm not. Because I don't work for
8 none of you. You-all work for me at
9 the end of the day for real, for
10 real because I'm the citizen.

11 CHAIRMAN JONES: So --

12 MR. MONTE: You see what I
13 mean? See --

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: No. You
15 have the right to feel the way you
16 feel, bro.

17 MR. MONTE: I'm not. This
18 is how I feel at the end of the day.

19 CHAIRMAN JONES: You have a
20 right.

21 MR. MONTE: So I'm going to
22 talk as a man and as a citizen.

23 CHAIRMAN JONES: You have a
24 right.

1 MR. MONTE: What do you
2 mean?

3 (Crosstalk.)

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: You have a
5 right to feel how you feel. And you
6 have put it on the record. We have
7 heard it.

8 MR. MONTE: Yeah.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: We don't
10 --

11 MR. MONTE: And I know
12 that's all you-all going to do. So
13 I'm going to continue to talk how I
14 talk. They trying to calm me down.
15 They wanted me to read this. But
16 it's hard. It's hard. It's really
17 hard. And you-all keep talking.
18 You-all keep talking.

19 (Crosstalk.)

20 CHAIRMAN JONES: So would
21 you -- do you want us to pass this
22 legislation? That's what we're
23 asking.

24 MR. MONTE: Yes.

1 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So
2 yes. So that's what we're up here
3 doing and talking about.

4 MR. MONTE: Right.

5 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: But
6 what I'm saying is --

7 MR. MONTE: But --

8 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Let
9 me finish, sir. I let you talk.
10 Let me finish, right? So I'll let
11 you say, you know, you were talking
12 about, you know, you getting your
13 story off. And that is great for
14 you to tell us your story.

15 MR. MONTE: Right.

16 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: And
17 what we're saying is that your
18 story, I know you -- it's -- you're
19 up here. But we could bring a
20 hundred other people.

21 MR. MONTE: Then where are
22 they at?

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: But
24 -- listen. Listen. What I'm saying

1 is that there are hundreds of other
2 people in the city that's dealing
3 with the same thing that we talk to
4 on a regular basis, right? We're
5 not -- you're not the only one
6 that's just, you know, in these
7 situations in these neighborhoods.
8 My neighbors, my friends, my
9 cousins, everybody, we're going
10 through this, bro.

11 And what I'm trying to tell
12 you is we understand. That's all
13 I'm trying to tell you is that we
14 feel you, right? We really feel
15 what you're saying. And that's why
16 this legislation right here is
17 important for everybody in the city.
18 Because one thing you said is that
19 you had a job up in Hatfield,
20 Pennsylvania.

21 Unfortunately, this
22 legislation don't cover Hatfield,
23 Pennsylvania. It only covers
24 Philadelphia. And that was my

1 point. We have to make sure that we
2 hit the folks that really, really,
3 you know, are going through this and
4 make sure that it's just not just a
5 Philadelphia thing, that people in
6 our entire region, our state,
7 understand the importance of having
8 legislation like this. So it really
9 affects everybody.

10 CHAIRMAN JONES: So thank
11 you for your testimony. I'm going
12 to keep my quorum. And we're going
13 to move to the next speaker. Who's
14 next?

15 MR. ABDUL-HEIDI: Hello.
16 Mohammed Abdul-Heidi, founder of
17 Down North Pizza, and I am in
18 support of the bill that's trying to
19 be passed. I just want to kind of
20 reset the room to kind of help
21 furthermore guide the conversation.
22 Down North Pizza is in the heart of
23 Strawberry Mansion. It's been named
24 probably one of the best pizzerias

1 in Philadelphia.

2 And at Down North Pizza, we
3 exclusively hire formerly
4 incarcerated individuals and provide
5 them with the various resources for
6 survival post-incarceration. Very
7 intentional about going to
8 Strawberry Mansion, because as we
9 all know, when we talk about crime,
10 Strawberry Mansion is at the core of
11 it.

12 But since this is a public
13 hearing, I'm going to talk about
14 some numbers, because I know numbers
15 shapes policy. Zero is the number I
16 want to start at. We've been in
17 Strawberry Mansion since 2020, and
18 we've had zero public safety issues.
19 We've been in Strawberry Mansion
20 since 2020, and we've had zero
21 employees go back to prison. We've
22 been in Strawberry Mansion since
23 2020, and we've had zero employees
24 have parole violations.

1 And we also had employees
2 get off of parole early. Not saying
3 that I or the business had anything
4 to do with it, but we provided the
5 conduit to help them show who they
6 really are. We've also been awarded
7 New York Times' 50 Best Restaurants
8 in America, Bon Appetite's 10 Best
9 Restaurants in 2021. I've been
10 awarded a James Beard Leadership
11 Foundation Award in 2024, and all
12 attributed to the work behind
13 Reducing Recidivism in Strawberry
14 Mansion.

15 I also want to say that if
16 you want to improve the livelihood
17 in neighborhoods, we need to invest
18 in the people, not only the
19 neighborhood. And I've learned that
20 when you invest in the people,
21 that's where you get the largest
22 return. We were talking about risk
23 a lot today, and I did exactly that.

24 I took a risk on building

1 out a restaurant in what people
2 would say is the worst neighborhood
3 in Philadelphia, hiring what some
4 people would say are the worst
5 people to hire, and putting forth
6 one of the best products that come
7 out of Philadelphia.

8 And I only say this because
9 at Down North Pizza, we're on an
10 economic revolution. When you look
11 at crime, at the core of crime is
12 poverty. People need money. It's
13 just that simple. And what we
14 wanted to do to make sure we
15 provided a fair, equitable rate of
16 pay, and because I do own a
17 building, we have apartments
18 upstairs, so people would like to
19 rent the space, because they need
20 somewhere to stay, we have that
21 option. We also have programs that
22 will help them pay the rent.

23 Homelessness and
24 unemployment are at the core of

1 recidivism. So we look to target
2 those issues. And we just, you
3 know, why other employees are
4 struggling trying to hire people,
5 we're struggling trying to find
6 spaces for the various people who
7 are formerly incarcerated.
8 Recently, we just opened up a second
9 restaurant called Out West, and we
10 do the same thing.

11 We exclusively hire
12 formerly incarcerated individuals in
13 this cafe space, and we're
14 enlightening people on coffee and
15 also premium breakfast sandwiches.
16 This revolution that we're on is a
17 huge risk. And honestly, I don't
18 know everything about all the
19 policies and political things that
20 go into shaping laws, because for
21 me, I found the lane in just doing
22 the work, and that's what I want to
23 do. And I took the risk. Took my
24 own money, took my own buildings,

1 and wanted to put forth and show
2 people what could and would happen
3 if you put some of the worst people
4 together in a room to do some great
5 things. And that's it.

6 CHAIRMAN JONES: One of the
7 -- so they're located in the 5th
8 District across the street from the
9 4th District, but I see lines of
10 people from the suburbs out in front
11 of your store getting deep dish
12 pizza. So thank you for what you've
13 proven. We are trying to find him
14 another location across the street,
15 which is a city location which we
16 are dealing with challenges on
17 rehab. But thank you for what you
18 do.

19 MALE VOICE: Shoot your
20 shot. Say the name, in case I
21 missed it.

22 MR. ABDUL-HEIDI: Down
23 North Pizza, It's at 2804 West.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: Where's

1 your second location?

2 MR. ABDUL-HEIDI: 5127

3 Walnut Street.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: Uh-oh.

5 Uh-oh. Uh-oh. Okay. Please state
6 your name and begin your testimony.

7 MR. GROSE: Good afternoon,
8 Chairman Jones. Thank you. Good
9 afternoon, chairman Jones, Vice
10 Chair Lozada and members of the
11 Committee on Public Safety. My name
12 is Ed Grose. I'm the Executive
13 Director -- excuse me -- of the
14 Greater Philadelphia Hotel
15 Association, also known as GPHA.

16 GPHA represents
17 approximately 100 hotels throughout
18 the region and nearly all hotels in
19 Center City. Philadelphia hotels
20 employ over 10,500 people, over 80
21 percent of which are Philadelphia
22 residents. This year, our
23 membership will generate
24 approximately \$123 million in tax

1 revenue for the City of Philadelphia
2 and the Commonwealth of
3 Pennsylvania. GPHA sincerely
4 appreciates the opportunity to
5 testify on this matter.

6 GPHA members are long-time
7 champions of Fair Chance Hiring and
8 actively participate in events and
9 programs that promote inclusive
10 hiring. I'm sure Council can
11 appreciate laws that impact hotels,
12 how hostellers review applicants,
13 especially those who interact with
14 guests, their families, and have
15 access to hotel rooms must be done
16 in a careful and considerate way.
17 GPHA stands ready to work with
18 Councilman Landau, this committee,
19 and all the stakeholders and
20 businesses who champion Fair Chance
21 Hiring to deliver a win-win-win for
22 all of Philadelphia.

23 In closing, GPHA fully
24 supports City Council's commitment

1 on this issue, and we look forward
2 to working with Councilmember Landau
3 -- Landau, sorry -- on ways to
4 update, refine, and improve our
5 current fair criminal record
6 screening standards law. Thank you
7 very much.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you
9 both for your testimony. Are there
10 any others to testify on Bill No.
11 250373? Seeing none, this concludes
12 our public hearing on the -- on the
13 bills, and we will now open our
14 public meeting. And with that, can
15 you please -- Caroline, call the
16 roll --

17 THE CLERK: Chairman Jones.

18 CHAIRMAN JONES: Present.

19 THE CLERK: Vice Chair
20 Lozada.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
22 Present.

23 THE CLERK: Councilmember
24 Thomas. Councilmember Gauthier.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

2 Present.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember

4 Brooks.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

6 Present.

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember

8 Harrity.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

10 Present.

11 THE CLERK: And

12 Councilmember Young.

13 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

14 Present.

15 CHAIRMAN JONES: With that,
16 we have a quorum. And I now call on

17 --

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: Vice
19 Chair.

20 CHAIRMAN JONES: -- the
21 Vice Chair for a motion on the
22 amendment to Bill No. 241057.

23 Sorry.

24 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

1 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that
2 Bill No. 241057 be reported from
3 this committee with a favorable
4 recommendation and further move that
5 the rules of council be suspended to
6 permit first reading of this bill at
7 our next session of council.

8 COUNCILMEMBER: Second.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: It has
10 been moved and properly seconded.
11 All those in favor of supporting
12 this bill say aye.

13 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

14 CHAIRMAN JONES: All those
15 opposed? The ayes have it. This
16 bill 241057 has been reported from
17 this committee with a favorable
18 recommendation and a request for the
19 rules of council to be -- no, we
20 don't need to do that until next.
21 All right. Do we need to do that
22 now? No, that's the amendment. So
23 the amendment has been approved. I
24 now ask you to call upon for a

1 motion for two --

2 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: For
3 the amendment. For the amendment.

4 CHAIRMAN JONES: Yeah, we
5 already did that, but -- we have an
6 amendment for the second one?

7 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
8 Uh-huh.

9 CHAIRMAN JONES: Oh. So I
10 now call upon the Vice Chair for an
11 amendment to 250373.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
13 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I offer an
14 amendment to Bill No. 250373. A
15 copy of the amendment has been
16 circulated to all members of this
17 committee. I move that the
18 amendment to Bill No. 250373 be
19 approved.

20 COUNCILMEMBER: Second.

21 CHAIRMAN JONES: All those
22 in favor signify by saying aye.

23 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

24 CHAIRMAN JONES: All those

1 opposed? The ayes have it. We will
2 now go back to a Bill No. 241057 as
3 amended for a motion.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

5 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that
6 Bill No. --

7 CHAIRMAN JONES: 241.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

9 241057 as amended be reported from
10 this committee with a favorable
11 recommendation and further move that
12 the rules of Council be suspended to
13 permit first reading of this bill at
14 the next session of Council.

15 COUNCILMEMBER: Second.

16 CHAIRMAN JONES: It has
17 been moved and properly seconded.
18 All those in favor?

19 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

20 CHAIRMAN JONES: All those
21 opposed? The ayes have it that Bill
22 No. 241057 as amended be reported
23 from this committee with a favorable
24 recommendation and further move that

1 the rules of Council be suspended to
2 permit first reading of this bill at
3 our next session of Council.

4 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
5 Mr. Chairman, can I be recorded as
6 of aye on the bill that I missed?
7 I'm sorry.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: One
9 second. One second. Okay. We
10 don't do that on these kinds of
11 votes. You actually have to be --
12 when we're At Large, you can do
13 that. That's the rules. Chair
14 again, recognizes Member Lozada.

15 CHAIRMAN JONES: Okay. So
16 correction.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
18 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay.
19 There's a correction. Bill No.
20 241057 does not have an amendment.
21 Bill No. 250373 --

22 CHAIRMAN JONES: Does.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
24 move that Bill No. 250373 as amended

1 be reported from this committee with
2 a favorable recommendation and move
3 that the rules of counsel be
4 suspended to permit first reading of
5 this bill at the next session of
6 Council.

7 COUNCILMEMBER: Second.

8 CHAIRMAN JONES: It has
9 been moved and properly seconded
10 that this bill be moved from the
11 committee with a suspension of the
12 rules. All those in favor will
13 signify by saying aye.

14 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

15 CHAIRMAN JONES: All those
16 opposed? The ayes have it. And --

17 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

18 Motion carries.

19 CHAIRMAN JONES: -- motion
20 carries. And now you can leave.

21 This concludes the business of the
22 committee of Public Safety on these
23 following bills. Thank you all for
24 your patience.

1 (COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING concluded at.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings and
evidence are contained fully and accurately in the
notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a
correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda J. Rios
Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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