

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEES ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH AND
HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND
THE HOMELESS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, April 28, 2016
1:15 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM, CO-CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB, CO-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

RESOLUTION 160235 - Resolution authorizing the
Joint Committees on Children and Youth and
Housing, Neighborhood Development and the
Homeless to hold hearings to discuss the issue
of Youth Homelessness in Philadelphia in order
to work towards a strategic plan to address
this issue.

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COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good

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morning, everybody -- or good afternoon

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rather, everybody. I want to welcome all

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of you to City Hall, and I want to

6

welcome you all to this joint committee

7

on an issue that is so deeply important

8

to us in the City, us in City Council,

9

and one that we're working hard in

10

collaboration with everyone who came out

11

today about shining the light on the

12

issue of youth homelessness and youth who

13

are experiencing homelessness in our

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city.

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This hearing is now called to

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order. This is a public hearing of the

17

joint City Council Committees on Children

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and Youth and Housing, Neighborhood

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Development and the Homeless. The

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purpose of this public hearing is to hear

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testimony on Resolution No. 160235.

22

I'd like to recognize my

23

colleague and Co-Chair of the Committee

24

on Housing, Neighborhood Development and

25

the Homeless, Councilman Allan Domb.

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2 Councilman Domb, would you like
3 to have any opening remarks?

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
5 Madam Chairwoman. This is the first time
6 we're together like this. It's pretty
7 cool.

8 But this is a very important
9 issue, and I'm glad to see everybody is
10 here. We're going to get started so as
11 not to waste your time. We value your
12 time.

13 So we are concerned about this
14 issue. It's just amazing to me that this
15 issue exists. I don't understand why it
16 exists and why we're not dealing with it,
17 because it's terrible to have
18 homelessness. It's worse to have young
19 people homeless. This is something
20 that's hard to fathom.

21 So we want to hear all these
22 issues, try to figure out some solutions
23 and try to hopefully end it. So thank
24 you for your participation today, and
25 I'll turn it back to you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
3 very much, Councilman.

4 I'd like to also add my
5 gratitude to everybody who came out here
6 today. So often when issues are brought
7 to light, it's in part because people
8 don't understand the faces behind it. We
9 have a lot of statistics on poverty in
10 Philadelphia and deep poverty in
11 particular. We know that 39 percent of
12 our young people in our city suffer from
13 poverty, but we've often said that
14 poverty can't just be relegated to a
15 bunch of statistics and numbers. It's
16 actually a very lived experience. And
17 how people experience poverty in our city
18 is important for us to not just see
19 through numbers, but through the actual
20 things that we have to do and think about
21 as legislators, as a city to raise moral
22 attention to issues that deeply matter to
23 the most vulnerable of folks.

24 And the other thing that we
25 want to thank everybody here are all of

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2 you who have the courage to come forward
3 and tell your stories. It's not always
4 easy to feel like you can tell your
5 stories, especially when they're stories
6 of struggle or pain, when they involve
7 personal details and members of your own
8 family, when they can involve struggles
9 with government that should have done
10 better, schools that should have served
11 better, institutions that should have
12 been there before. But this is partly
13 what we're trying to push hard on.

14 We want to assure everybody
15 here that Councilman Domb, myself, and
16 other members of City Council are fully
17 dedicated to seeing an expansion in the
18 number of services to youth who are
19 experiencing homelessness, not five years
20 down the road, not months and months
21 later, but we're looking to move
22 something in the next fiscal year. And
23 with your support and with your voices
24 brought to the table, we know that we can
25 make this a priority for our city.

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2 This is a long-term partnership
3 that I see going forward. This is not
4 going to stop here today, but all of us
5 really need to form a strong coalition
6 and voice to put our faces out there, to
7 not be afraid to tell our stories, to be
8 both seen and heard so that these issues
9 can reach the kind of level of change
10 that needs to happen.

11 We're going to open up with a
12 very brief video made by our partners at
13 NBC 10 who did a really wonderful series
14 on this issue.

15 (Video shown.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Well, thank
17 you very much. And, again, I want to
18 reiterate thanks to so many people here
19 who care so deeply, to our providers, to
20 our City agencies, to our advocates, and
21 to the young people who are here today as
22 well.

23 We're going to get started.
24 The Clerk will now read the title of the
25 resolution.

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2 THE CLERK: Resolution 160235,
3 authorizing the Joint Committees on
4 Children and Youth and Housing,
5 Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
6 to hold hearings to discuss the issue of
7 youth homelessness in Philadelphia in
8 order to work towards a strategic plan to
9 address this issue.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
11 very much.

12 The Clerk will please call the
13 first witness to testify on the
14 resolution.

15 THE CLERK: Panel 1, we have
16 Office of Supportive Housing, Liz Hersh;
17 Department of Human Services, Gary
18 Williams; and Mayor's Office of LGBT
19 Affairs, Nellie Fitzpatrick.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
23 afternoon. Welcome.

24 MS. HERSH: Good afternoon.
25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: If you could
3 please just state your name for the
4 record and proceed with your testimony.

5 MS. HERSH: Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
7 And we'll go through all of three of you
8 first and then have some questions.

9 MS. HERSH: Okay. Good
10 afternoon. My name is Liz Hersh. I am
11 the Director of the Office of Supportive
12 Housing. This is the City's department
13 whose mission it is to provide the
14 planning, coordination, services to make
15 homelessness rare, brief, and
16 non-recurring. I want to thank you,
17 Councilman Domb and Councilwoman Gym, for
18 giving us this opportunity to testify on
19 the critical issue of youth homelessness.

20 I was noticing that today is
21 Bring Your Children to Work today this
22 morning, and this afternoon is Bring Our
23 Children Home.

24 The Office of Supportive
25 Housing work is accomplished through

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2 partnerships with providers such as those
3 who are here today and with other
4 governmental agencies - HUD, the Housing
5 Authority, the Department of Behavioral
6 Health, and DHS - and together this
7 network provides a range of homeless
8 outreach, engagement, prevention,
9 diversion, emergency assistance, case
10 management, and supportive services. And
11 together with all of that, we are able to
12 address a small part of the needs of this
13 community to keep people stably housed.

14 Before her untimely death,
15 Dr. Perelman, Stacey Perelman, documented
16 the lifelong untold costs when young
17 people experience homelessness in their
18 early years. They are more likely to
19 commit suicide, suffer behavioral and
20 physical health problems, be system
21 dependent, and poor. Too many young
22 people in Philadelphia experience
23 homelessness.

24 So how many young people are
25 homeless, experiencing homelessness in

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2 Philadelphia? Well, the short answer is,
3 we don't really know, and the other
4 answer is, it depends how you count, how
5 you define homelessness, and how you ask.

6 But I'll tell you what we know so far.

7 Each year the Office of Supportive

8 Housing is required to conduct a Point in

9 Time survey. This is done on January

10 27th in the middle of winter. This year

11 we found 705 people who were without

12 shelter. We estimated that 4 to 8

13 percent of those people were 18 to 24,

14 which brings us somewhere between 21 and

15 42 individuals. And of those in

16 overnight cafes, four were between 18 and

17 24.

18 We know that in emergency and
19 transitional housing programs, that there
20 were 257 unaccompanied youth under the
21 age of 24, 20 under the age of 18, and
22 291 parenting youth households,
23 representing a total of 703 young people
24 at that moment in time.

25 But I think we can all

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2 acknowledge that the Point in Time count
3 is likely to undercount young people who
4 are experiencing homelessness. Under the
5 leadership of Valley Youth House with the
6 OSH funding through the HUD Continuum of
7 Care planning grant, the Youth Count
8 Coalition conducted four counts in 2015 -
9 January, June, August, and November. And
10 of the 252 people they surveyed, 55
11 percent were unstably housed; that is,
12 couch-surfing, 22 percent were homeless,
13 11 percent in shelters, 11 percent in
14 outdoors or public transportation
15 centers, and one in a drop-in center. A
16 total of nearly 200 of the individuals
17 were identified as either homeless or
18 unstably housed. And I think you will
19 hear from Covenant House and the young
20 people who are here today that they
21 turned away 546 youth because of lack of
22 places for people to go.

23 I think we can stipulate that
24 one is too many. It just is useful to
25 know what the magnitude of the problem is

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2 for resources and planning. So

3 Philadelphia is pleased to now be part of

4 an innovative national research project

5 being conducted by Chapin Hall to look

6 at -- called the Voices of Youth Count to

7 use a youth engagement approach and peer

8 network to more accurately capture the

9 number of youth experiencing

10 homelessness. We look forward to having

11 this data. We think it will be very

12 helpful.

13 So let me turn my attention now

14 to the resources that exist. There are

15 currently -- and I have provided this for

16 your information in as much detail as we

17 were able to come up with.

18 There are currently 388

19 service-enriched housing beds for

20 homeless youth in the City. Five

21 programs provide a total of 109 emergency

22 housing beds to young people ages 13 to

23 24. Eight programs provide a total of

24 223 transitional housing beds, and three

25 programs provide a total of 56 permanent

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2 supported housing beds.

3 So even with these sobering
4 numbers -- and they are sobering -- our
5 situation is far from homeless. We can
6 rewrite the future history of our
7 children by providing four core outcomes,
8 and the sooner, the better - stable
9 housing, permanent connections, education
10 and employment, and social and emotional
11 well-being.

12 And because young people's
13 brains are still growing, they are
14 resilient. So it is critical that we
15 take action now while people are young to
16 help them break up any cycle of
17 homelessness and poverty.

18 The Office of Supportive
19 Housing conducted a very quick survey of
20 homeless youth-serving organizations, the
21 demand for their services, the need and
22 potential capacity to address this need
23 in the coming year if, if they had the
24 necessary resources. We believe that we
25 could, within a relatively short time,

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2 implement a comprehensive collaborative
3 strategy of homeless outreach to youth,
4 intervention, housing and services to
5 interrupt and address youth homelessness.
6 The model would be that which our youth
7 homeless providers currently use. It
8 would be resiliency based,
9 trauma-informed, and built on positive
10 youth development. We believe that they
11 could, with a modest investment of \$3 and
12 a half million, provide an estimated 400
13 homeless young people with emergency
14 housing, rapid rehousing, and/or
15 transitional housing, conduct extensive
16 year-round outreach and engagement to
17 youth experiencing homelessness and the
18 legal representation, if needed, to
19 reconnect them with school. This is
20 within our grasp.

21 Ending youth homelessness is
22 not out of reach for Philadelphia. We
23 welcome the opportunity to work with the
24 provider community and with City Council,
25 with young people themselves to make our

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2 vision of a city without youth

3 homelessness a reality.

4 Thank you again for this
5 opportunity.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
7 much, Ms. Hersh.

8 And before Mr. Williams
9 started, I want to acknowledge the
10 presence of two of our fellow colleagues
11 on City Council. First and foremost, I
12 want to acknowledge Councilwoman Jannie
13 Blackwell, who has been a leading
14 advocate on the issue of housing and
15 homeless for this city for many decades,
16 former Chair of the Housing Committee on
17 City Council, and has been a passionate
18 advocate on this issue. So thank you
19 very much, Councilwoman Blackwell.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you very much. This is such an important
22 issue and such an important committee and
23 so well attended. We certainly thank you
24 for all the work you've done. And may I
25 say a couple words?

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Absolutely.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And

4 for all the work you've been doing with
5 children and youth. This is an important
6 committee, and Councilwoman Gym has
7 worked so hard on this issue and is
8 always trying to work with children and
9 youth. So we thank everyone on this
10 important committee.

11 We've had hearings over the
12 years. I think that she's bringing new
13 energy and reenergized us to deal with
14 the struggle. Many, many years ago we
15 had hearings on University City High
16 School, and many people -- some of you
17 know, you adults do, but University City
18 High School will be a new school, because
19 you know that school was torn down. And
20 it's in the heart of University City.
21 And we had hearings on young people
22 becoming independent parents. We dealt a
23 lot in our work with homelessness and
24 those who need help and those who need
25 places to stay to talk about the

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2 important issue, and your leaders here at
3 the table know what we mean when we --
4 and some of you know when we talk about
5 filing as an independent adult, whether
6 or not it was good to do or bad to do,
7 and we had a lot of discussion about what
8 is best, because being an independent
9 student has its benefits, but it also has
10 a lot of detriments. You really have to
11 pay for it yourself when you do that.

12 But there are so many young
13 people who have children and who are
14 still in school and who need help.
15 That's a real important, a whole part of
16 this issue.

17 Another important aspect of
18 needing housing is certainly -- another
19 important part of this issue, as you
20 know, in dealing with homelessness so
21 long, we've also had the discussion about
22 how youngsters look when they go to
23 school. Children who go to school and
24 who come from a shelter shouldn't be
25 identifiable, and too often children

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2 don't have their hair combed or they
3 still have issues with hunger, which is
4 why we had hearings recently on what
5 happens when schools are closed for so
6 many youngsters who need food and what do
7 they do all day when they have several of
8 their meals at school.

9 So we realize that when we're
10 dealing with housing and dealing with
11 homelessness and dealing with young
12 people, there are many aspects thereof
13 that we have to deal with. Certainly
14 representing PEC, which is the oldest
15 shelter in the state, has been a real
16 important aspect of it all for me, and
17 I'm proud to be in the area to represent
18 West and Southwest Philadelphia where
19 there is so much we can do.

20 But, again, we'll come back
21 later and say a few things, but we want
22 to thank my colleague Councilwoman Gym
23 for this and Councilman Domb, Allan Domb,
24 because they are really interested in
25 this important issue, and we want to do

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2 what we can to improve the quality of
3 life and help our system and work closely
4 with leadership so we can do that.

5 Thank you, Councilwoman.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
7 much.

8 And if I could just take a
9 moment. Councilwoman Blackwell, you've
10 been a true leader on the issue of
11 housing and homelessness for decades in
12 the City and an issue in which so many
13 people don't take the time to pay
14 attention to it. You've been really
15 fighting to get that. So this new --

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you. Thank you. Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And we also
20 have another hundred people in the
21 balcony. So thank you very much.

22 I also want to acknowledge a
23 new colleague on Council, Councilman
24 Derek Green as well.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,

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2 Madam Chair. I just want to say a few
3 brief words. Having worked for
4 Councilwoman Tasco for a number of years,
5 we've often worked on these issues in
6 dealing with not only public health but
7 also the area of supportive housing and
8 these issues, especially in reference to
9 homelessness.

10 One of the concerns I've had is
11 homelessness actually as it pertains to
12 children who are also in foster care.
13 Councilwoman Tasco was very active with
14 the Rise Charter School, which is no
15 longer with us, and now we have the CB
16 Community School, and I had an
17 opportunity to visit the school and
18 really want to help support them going
19 forward.

20 But this issue of homelessness,
21 especially as it pertains to children and
22 youth, is something that's really
23 troubling and concerning, because these
24 are our most precious citizens in the
25 City of Philadelphia. And prior to

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2 working with Councilwoman Tasco, I worked
3 for a number of years in the City's Law
4 Department where I used to represent the
5 Office of Supportive Housing and working
6 with the Office of Housing and Community
7 Development and working with Community
8 Development Block Grant and seeing how
9 those dollars are not always where they
10 need to be to really work in the area of
11 housing, especially for our most precious
12 individuals.

13 So Councilwoman Gym and
14 Councilman Domb, thank you for your
15 leadership and advocacy on this issue,
16 from some of your earlier tours and walks
17 in the City and bringing additional light
18 to the issue, as well as Councilwoman
19 Blackwell who has been on this forefront
20 and on the battlefield for a long time
21 dealing with the issues of homelessness.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
23 much, Councilman Green.

24 Thank you very much for your
25 patience and, Mr. Williams, please

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2 proceed with your testimony.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

4 Thank you so much. First and foremost, I

5 want to just also echo my gratitude --

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Just state

7 your full name for the record.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

9 Will do.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

12 I'm Gary Williams. I'm the Deputy

13 Commissioner for the Children and Youth

14 Division at DHS, and it is my privilege

15 and honor to be here as part of this

16 hearing on today. I just wanted to

17 simply thank all of the Councilmembers

18 for your leadership, your effort, your

19 passion and directing attention to this

20 very important matter. Thank you.

21 I'm here today to testify

22 regarding Resolution No. 160235

23 authorizing the Joint Committees on

24 Children and Youth and Housing,

25 Neighborhood Development and the Homeless

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2 to hold hearings to discuss the issues of
3 youth homelessness in Philadelphia in
4 order to work towards a strategic plan to
5 address this issue. I will talk briefly
6 about the connection between homelessness
7 and the child welfare system and some of
8 DHS's efforts in this particular area.

9 The issue of youth homelessness
10 in Philadelphia is very much related to
11 child welfare. The federal
12 Administration of Children and Families,
13 Family and Youth Services Bureau recently
14 released a data collection study gathered
15 through the Bureau's Street Outreach
16 program. The results provide an overview
17 of the grim circumstances for homeless
18 and runaway youth and their history of
19 involvement in the child welfare system.
20 The study indicated that more than half
21 of the youth identified as homeless had
22 been in foster care, and youth with
23 foster care history had been homeless for
24 much longer, 27 months on average,
25 compared to youth who had never been in

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2 foster care, 19 months on average. Youth
3 that had been in foster care were more
4 likely to have experienced a violent
5 episode versus those that had not been in
6 foster care. Former youth had a higher
7 likelihood of being in mental health
8 facilities, 47 percent versus 21 percent;
9 were more likely to have spent time in a
10 drug or alcohol treatment facility, 17
11 percent versus 9 percent. While this
12 data is national, I believe that it is
13 consistent with the profile and
14 experience of homeless youth in
15 Philadelphia.

16 The youth most vulnerable of
17 becoming homeless are those who leave our
18 system at age 21 without finding
19 permanency. For example, in Fiscal Year
20 '15, 235 youth aged out were 18 to 21
21 years old and left the system without
22 reaching permanency. Permanency being
23 defined as reunified with their family or
24 finding a permanent adoptive or custodian
25 house or placement with a relative. In

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2 this fiscal year through March 31st,
3 2016, 176 youth aged out. DHS is making
4 a major concerted effort to find
5 permanency for these youth, as we
6 understand how important it is to their
7 long-term stability and overall success
8 as adults.

9 DHS also serves many families
10 that are accepted for service partly due
11 to inadequate housing, frequently coupled
12 with other reasons. For example, in
13 Calendar Year 2015, there were 276 cases,
14 which translates to 8.5 percent that were
15 accepted that had inadequate housing or
16 homelessness in the allegations. These
17 are families that are being served by
18 DHS, but may contain youth or have older
19 youth as head of household.

20 Like homeless youth generally,
21 foster youth in particular are at
22 heightened risk of being involved in sex
23 trafficking. DHS is in the process of a
24 major initiative to screen, identify, and
25 provide services and referrals to youth

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2 who become known to DHS who are the
3 victims of sex trafficking. These
4 efforts are mandated by the federal
5 Preventing Sex Trafficking and
6 Strengthening Families Act. DHS is
7 currently one of six counties piloting a
8 state screening and assessment tool and
9 is working diligently internally to try
10 to develop specialized services and
11 resources for this particular youth.
12 There are currently very few resources to
13 meet this specific need.

14 We are also aware that a
15 significant number of homeless youth are
16 LGBT. At DHS, we are working to identify
17 resource foster homes that are
18 specifically LGBT friendly so that LGBT
19 youth who have ended up in foster care,
20 sometimes due to the lack of family
21 acceptance, will have a safe environment
22 to call home. By identifying
23 LGBT-friendly resource homes, we are
24 hoping to break the cycle of youth
25 leaving foster care, sometimes due to

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2 lack of acceptance or understanding by
3 foster parents as well, only to end up
4 homeless.

5 There are many things that DHS
6 tries to do to prepare youth in foster
7 care for transitioning to adulthood and
8 to avoid homelessness and the heightened
9 danger that such a situation places on
10 youth. Our Achieving Independence
11 Center, AIC, exists to provide a safe
12 communal space where youth in or formerly
13 in foster care can be connected,
14 educated, and empowered as they strive
15 toward attaining and maintaining
16 independence. The AIC is dedicated to
17 providing support and real-life tools for
18 youth who want to make an investment in
19 their future. Youth work with AIC
20 coaches to create a customized service
21 plan that will help them achieve their
22 goals related to completing high school,
23 GED, enrolling in college or vocational
24 schooling, computer literacy,
25 employment/career planning, housing,

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2 permanency, and personal development.

3 The AIC focuses on helping youth to
4 develop the life skills that they will
5 need to get and maintain an education
6 and/or a job and to obtain and maintain
7 housing. The staff at AIC as well as the
8 youth's case manager also strives to
9 connect the youth with mental health and
10 drug and alcohol treatment resources as
11 needed.

12 DHS also has a Housing Unit
13 which manages a number of programs to aid
14 youth in finding stable housing.
15 Responsibilities of this unit include
16 maintaining the referral system,
17 providing support to DHS and Community
18 Umbrella Agency social workers,
19 assessment of clients needed to determine
20 eligibility for appropriate housing,
21 maintaining current logs for data
22 purposes, attendance at monthly housing
23 meetings, participation at citywide
24 housing committees, and conducting
25 housing workshops for both parents and

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2 youth. The Housing Unit assists families
3 to find both permanent and supportive
4 housing.

5 With regard to permanent
6 housing, DHS collaborates with the
7 Philadelphia Housing Authority and the
8 Office of Supportive Housing on several
9 programs, including the Family
10 Unification program, the Shelter Plus
11 program, and the FAST program, Family and
12 Supportive Service Team program, for
13 heads of households who meet the certain
14 criteria to provide housing and
15 supportive services. The total number of
16 families served in permanent housing is
17 525. These units are for families and,
18 while not youth-focused, are part of
19 DHS's overall efforts.

20 The Housing Unit helps youth to
21 access the Supportive Housing program,
22 which provides supportive services and
23 housing to achieve self-sufficiency and
24 independence for youth 16 to 21 who meet
25 the following criteria: One, are

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2 considered to be homeless according to
3 HUD; two, previous placement history with
4 DHS; and, three, are current residents of
5 Philadelphia. The Supportive Housing
6 program services are provided through the
7 collaborative efforts between PHA, OSH,
8 and DHS. Services involve life skills
9 instruction, counseling, job readiness,
10 education, academic guidance, cash
11 supports, medical, and mental health
12 linkages.

13 Valley Youth House provides
14 supportive housing and services to youth
15 who present as homeless.

16 Carson Valley Children's Aid
17 transitional housing program meets the
18 unique needs of older homeless youth, 18
19 to 25 years of age, who are Philadelphia
20 residents. This program services both
21 parenting and non-parenting youth.

22 Northern Homes provides
23 transitional housing to homeless mothers
24 and their child between the ages of 18
25 and 21 years of age who have aged out of

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2 care and have exited care. This program
3 is based on residential suites and may
4 house a mother and up to two children.

5 Methodist Fresh Start is a
6 program developed to serve youth who have
7 exited the foster care, group home or
8 supervised independent living programs
9 and who have become homeless. The
10 project is especially designed to serve
11 females with special needs who may be
12 pregnant or have an infant.

13 PHA Quads is a supportive
14 housing program and a transitional
15 housing project in which older youth
16 receive housing and supportive services
17 in order to facilitate their capacity to
18 be successfully discharged to
19 self-sufficiency. The program is
20 designed to house four efficiency
21 apartments in one unit. Unfortunately,
22 the total number of youth served in
23 supportive housing is 70 youth, which in
24 no way addresses the vast need for
25 services for youth transitioning out of

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2 foster care who are in need of housing.

3 Room and Board program provides
4 temporary housing for youth 18 to 21 who
5 have exited the foster care system and
6 are now requesting to reenter care due to
7 experiencing homelessness in
8 Philadelphia. There are 12 to 15 units.

9 Finally, PRIDE is a housing
10 resource we refer to under the auspices
11 of Valley Youth House. It creates a safe
12 space for youth who identify as LGBTQ.
13 It provides first, last month, and
14 security, as well as case management
15 services for a period of three to six
16 months. The case management services are
17 aimed to connect youth to services such
18 as Mazzoni and the Attic for the support
19 in the LGBTQ community. They provide
20 both individual and group counseling to
21 help address issues that range from
22 housing discrimination to education
23 around gender identity.

24 We are aware that much more
25 needs to be done to meet the needs of

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2 youth in care transitioning to adulthood
3 so that they will not end up homeless.
4 We look forward to partnering with City
5 Council to develop solutions and
6 resources to meet the needs of homeless
7 youth here in Philadelphia.

8 Thank you so much for this
9 opportunity to provide testimony on this
10 very important issue. Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
12 very much, Mr. Williams.

13 Ms. Fitzpatrick.

14 MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you.
15 Thank you, Councilwoman. With the
16 permission of the Committee, I would like
17 to invite two friends who are here up to
18 submit testimony as part of the Office of
19 LGBT Affairs' testimony here before the
20 Council.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Sure.

22 MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
3 afternoon.

4 MS. FITZPATRICK: Good
5 afternoon, Chairperson Gym and
6 Chairperson Domb and the members of the
7 joint Committee on Children and Youth and
8 Housing, Neighborhood Development and
9 Homelessness. My name is Helen
10 Fitzpatrick, but most of you know me as
11 Nellie. I'm Director of Lesbian, Gay,
12 Bisexual and Transgender Affairs for the
13 City of Philadelphia. I'm here today to
14 testify on Resolution No. 160235 to
15 discuss the issue of youth homelessness
16 in Philadelphia in order to work towards
17 a strategic plan to address this issue.

18 I applaud and am grateful for
19 all those who have worked to ensure that
20 youth experiencing homelessness are
21 present for and participating in today's
22 hearing. I would like to take this
23 moment to publicly thank my friends Kemar
24 Jewel and Phantazia Washington for
25 joining me here today and submitting

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2 testimony as a part of the Office of LGBT
3 Affairs' testimony before you.

4 As a proud lesbian and devoted
5 Philadelphian, it is an honor to testify
6 before you all today, and like so many in
7 our diverse community, I am grateful to
8 live in a city that has made such
9 incredible and inspiring strides towards
10 equality. However, we must all remain
11 keenly aware of the enormous amount of
12 work there is still left to do to achieve
13 equality for all LGBT communities and
14 people here in Philadelphia. Ending
15 youth homelessness is one of the most
16 critical challenges that together we must
17 meet and conquer.

18 Youth experiencing homelessness
19 live at the intersections of various
20 marginalized identities. Race, gender
21 identity and expression, age, sexual
22 orientation, immigration status,
23 inability, and many more must be
24 considered in the discussion surrounding
25 homelessness and the tremendous impact

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2 racism, poverty, and identity have on
3 these young people. A disproportionate
4 number of lesbian, gay, bisexual,
5 transgender, and queer youth in our
6 country today have or are experiencing
7 homelessness. Nationally, LGBT youth
8 make up only 5 to 7 percent of the
9 overall youth population. However, 32 to
10 40 percent of homeless youth identify as
11 LGBT.

12 Here in Philadelphia, a 2015
13 youth count revealed that up to 54
14 percent of homeless youth identify as
15 LGBT, meaning over half of the population
16 this Committee is formed to serve
17 identify as LGBT here in our city.

18 Studies by the national LGBTQ
19 Task Force and True Colors reveal that
20 LGBT youth are significantly more likely
21 to experience victimization on the street
22 and experience longer periods of
23 homelessness than heterosexual and
24 cisgender youth. The result is a
25 disproportionate number of LGBTQ youth

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2 who engage in survival crimes, resulting
3 in incarceration and criminal records
4 that compound their marginalization,
5 placing them in further states of
6 homelessness and vulnerability. For
7 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and
8 queer youth experiencing homelessness, a
9 coordinated community-wide system of
10 services, organizations, and providers
11 must make an organized and corresponding
12 effort to end the homelessness and
13 housing instability. Everyone serving
14 LGBT youth through social service
15 agencies, educational systems, the
16 juvenile, legal, and justice systems, and
17 the child welfare system must work
18 together to make sure these types of
19 assistance are created and that youth are
20 able to access and fully understand the
21 available services.

22 All programs and people within
23 these systems must have the competencies
24 and confidence needed to serve all LGBTQ
25 youth and, most importantly, there should

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2 be enough assistance for everyone, not
3 just a selected few.

4 For a very long time, LGBTQ
5 youth have relied on a few underfunded
6 community-driven providers. It is time
7 for us to listen, learn, and build
8 together with the youth and those who
9 have fought for them and with them for
10 decades to end this devastating problem.
11 While I am confident you will hear of the
12 enormous barriers faced by all homeless
13 youth and the critical need for more
14 services, shelters, beds, and
15 opportunities, it's imperative that this
16 joint Committee remain cognizant of the
17 additional needs of and barriers faced by
18 LGBTQ youth, as they are over half the
19 youth you are aiming to serve. It is
20 imperative that we all listen to the LGBT
21 youth who have or are experiencing
22 homelessness and involved and in the
23 conversations and solutions we are all
24 aiming to create together.

25 Thank you for allowing me to

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2 testify on this measure, and as further
3 testimony from the Office of LGBT
4 Affairs, I would turn my time over now to
5 whoever wants to speak first.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Hi.

7 Welcome. We'll take your testimony as
8 well, and feel free to summarize it. You
9 don't have to read all of it, but if you
10 could just tell your story, that would be
11 great. Thank you.

12 MR. JEWEL: So hello, everyone.

13 My name is Kemar Jewel. So I want you
14 all to try and imagine not having a place
15 to lay your head at night. Imagine
16 having to fantasize about food just to
17 stop your stomach from growling. Imagine
18 not being able to take your own personal
19 belongings with you everywhere you went.
20 Imagine encountering sexual abuse,
21 physical abuse, verbal abuse almost every
22 day of your life. Imagine going through
23 all this simultaneously while faking a
24 smile so that everyone thinks that you're
25 okay. Now imagine going through all this

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2 and you're not even 18 years old yet.

3 For a lot of youth, especially
4 LGBTQ youth in Philadelphia, they don't
5 have to imagine any of this because this
6 is their reality every single day. And
7 the reason why I am here today is because
8 I was one of those people. When I was 16
9 year old, I was kicked out of my home and
10 forced onto the streets of Philadelphia.
11 Through my two years of homelessness and
12 couch-surfing, I dealt with physical
13 abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse,
14 financial abuse, and of course sexual
15 abuse. And sometimes I sit and think
16 about how many like -- wow, I really have
17 to sit and count sometimes how many times
18 I've been raped. I've been raped four
19 times, that each one was worse than the
20 last, because I had to sit and say to
21 myself I let that happen again, and all
22 that happened because I had nowhere safe
23 to go.

24 Even to this day, I am still
25 going through therapy for these and other

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2 traumatic events during the era of my
3 life. At times I had to steal and even
4 use my body just to be able to get a meal
5 or even place my head down at night. I
6 dealt with all this while being in high
7 school. And we already know how hard
8 that is alone.

9 The worst part about all this
10 was that I felt like I had no one to talk
11 to, no family, no friends, no school
12 peers. I felt alone, and that made my
13 situation ten times worse. To kind of
14 get a glimpse of what I was going
15 through, in my senior year of high
16 school, I stayed up with a friend in West
17 Oak Lane and I was going to school out in
18 the suburbs. I would get up at 4:00
19 a.m., leave out at 4:30. I would catch
20 three buses and two trains to get to
21 school. I would be in school from 7:00
22 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. I would leave and go
23 to work from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. I
24 would head all the way back to the crack
25 of West Oak Lane around midnight. By the

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2 time I shower, ate, did my homework and
3 ironed my clothes for the next day, it's
4 about 1:30, 2:00, and I have to get back
5 up in two hours again just to go to
6 school. And I did all this for about a
7 year while I was in high school.

8 My life didn't turn around
9 until I started going to the Attic Youth
10 Center, Philadelphia's only LGBTQ youth
11 center, and I started receiving
12 counseling, meals, tutoring, HIV
13 services, help with scholarships and my
14 FASFA and even more. The most important
15 thing that they did was link me with
16 Valley Youth House. Valley Youth House
17 provided me with classes that improved my
18 life skills and prepared me for the real
19 world by teaching me about leases,
20 credits, saving money and so much more.
21 Once I completed their program, Valley
22 Youth House helped me to find my first
23 apartment and they paid for all my moving
24 costs and even my first few months rent.
25 I'll never forget that day, September

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2 1st, 2010. That was the first day that I
3 moved into my -- that was the day that I
4 moved into my first apartment. I
5 remember walking in and just laying on
6 the floor and starting to cry, because
7 that was the first time in a long time
8 that I felt like the world did not hate
9 me. From that day forward, I vowed to be
10 the best me that I could possibly be.

11 Today, I stand before you as a
12 college graduate who is currently
13 preparing for grad school. Today, I
14 stand before you as a professional
15 dancer --

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. JEWEL: Today, I stand
18 before you as a professional dancer and
19 director, whose artistic work has been
20 featured in Huffington Post, MSNBC, Fox
21 News, and the list goes on and on. I
22 even had the blessing of going on tour in
23 Europe last year for four months just to
24 do what I do best, which is dance.

25 Today, I stand before you as a

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2 proud black gay man who is working with
3 LGBTQ agencies as a mentor to ensure that
4 we have less people that have to stand up
5 here and tell their horror stories like
6 me, because I believe that my ancestors
7 died so I could be here and have so many
8 opportunities, and I want to stand on
9 their shoulders to ensure that I can help
10 my future as well.

11 But keep in mind, I am just one
12 of the lucky few. Many of my LGBTQ
13 brothers and sisters that have gone
14 through the same things are now battling
15 addictions. They may be incarcerated or
16 no longer with us because of murder
17 and/or suicide. And just to think, I
18 would have never gone through most of
19 this pain and suffering in my life
20 mentally, physically, and sexually if
21 there was a place that LGBTQ homeless
22 youth could go and, more importantly,
23 feel safe.

24 Now, finally, imagine a place
25 in the City that LGBTQ young people can

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2 go and find a place to sleep and/or eat.

3 Imagine that young person being happy,

4 healthy, and ready to take on the world

5 day by day. Imagine that young person

6 becoming the next President, the next

7 great inventor or even the next Kemar

8 Jewel. Those are the things that I like

9 to imagine, because they are possible.

10 It starts with me. It starts with you.

11 And I hope that we can get it started

12 today.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
16 much for that story. I know how personal
17 that is, and we're very grateful that you
18 were able to share it and also to talk
19 about what it took to help make a
20 difference. Thank you.

21 MR. JEWEL: Thank you so much.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We're
23 very proud of you.

24 MR. JEWEL: Thank you so much.

25 MS. WASHINGTON: Hi. My name

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2 is Phantazia Washington and I work at the
3 Attic Youth Center as an LGBTQ trainer.

4 Youth homelessness is an
5 incredibly multi-layered issue, and I
6 wish I could simply name one cause or one
7 solution, but in actuality, it's a web of
8 overlapping and intertwined barriers, and
9 much like an actual web, the harder you
10 struggle to escape, the deeper you fall
11 into it.

12 This is my web: In 2006, I
13 started high school at a magnet school in
14 Philadelphia. Within the first few
15 months, I came out as queer, only to find
16 immense homophobia from both youth and
17 administration, from fights based on
18 homophobia to in-house suspensions for
19 hugging other girls. At home, I spent
20 most of my time alone, an only child to
21 an alcoholic and often absent single
22 mother. I started the first day of my
23 tenth grade year with a diagnosis of
24 major depression, countless disciplinary
25 write-ups on my record, and a letter

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2 telling me that I was no longer enrolled
3 in my school and I had to leave
4 immediately. They claim that they sent
5 letters out over the summer informing me
6 and my mother that I had been expelled.
7 My mother explained that we were
8 experiencing homelessness so we couldn't
9 receive mail. She explained that I had
10 been diagnosed with depression and that I
11 would not thrive in my neighborhood high
12 school, but they didn't care. My mother
13 was so genuinely afraid for me to go to
14 my neighborhood high school that at 15
15 years old, I stopped going to school
16 altogether. I never felt right saying
17 that I dropped out. It wasn't until
18 reading Dr. Monique Morris's book,
19 Pushout: The Criminalization of Black
20 Girls in School, that I understood what
21 happened to me as school pushout.

22 Many people here already know
23 the connection between education,
24 employment, and housing. In Philly,
25 93,000 young people between the ages of

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2 16 and 24 years old are not enrolled in
3 school. Almost 46,000 are not enrolled
4 or working, and the unemployment rate for
5 youth not enrolled in school is 30
6 percent.

7 I found myself trapped in a
8 cycle. You need an education to find a
9 job and a job to afford housing. But how
10 can I focus on school when I don't know
11 where I'm going to sleep tonight? As
12 much as we all like to think that this is
13 an issue for 18 to 24 year olds, this is
14 very much an issue that existed for me at
15 16 years old, when I found myself on the
16 streets with nowhere to go and no way to
17 support myself. Like many LGBT young
18 people, I chose the street over the child
19 welfare system. For some of us it's a
20 lack of family acceptance. For others
21 it's alcoholism or drug-addicted
22 caregivers. For others, abuse or
23 neglect. I'd like to share with you a
24 few quotes from a 2013 focus group with
25 LGBTQ homeless youth put together by

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2 youth facilitators at the Attic,
3 including myself and Kemar.

4 "My dad was an alcoholic who
5 would beat his girlfriend. When I
6 defended her, he threatened to kill me,
7 so I ran away."

8 "My mom found out I was gay
9 through her co-worker. When I got home,
10 all my things were in bags and I wasn't
11 allowed to live there anymore."

12 "After my father was murdered,
13 my mom was in and out of rehab, so my
14 sister and I stayed on the streets at 13
15 and 14 years old."

16 Once on the street, homeless
17 LGBTQ youth become nearly impossible to
18 find. Some make the conscious choice to
19 become invisible, often in an effort to
20 avoid the child welfare and juvenile
21 justice system. This is the strategy I
22 used. Avoid systems at all costs was a
23 vital part of sustaining myself. This is
24 frequently an effective survival
25 strategy. Fifty-six percent of LGBTQ

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2 young people in the foster care system
3 spend time on the streets because they
4 feel safer there than they do in a group
5 or foster home placements. And how could
6 anyone feel safer on the streets? Of
7 Philly, no less. Right? The reality is
8 that we as a city have not adequately
9 provided the necessary supports to assure
10 LGBTQ youth in this city find safe
11 placements within the child welfare
12 system. How can we find LGBTQ affirming
13 foster parents when we don't ask young
14 people entering care their sexual
15 orientation and gender identity? We know
16 that 54 percent of homeless youth in the
17 City of Philadelphia are LGBTQ, but we'll
18 never understand exactly how good these
19 young people are at hiding on the streets
20 until we collect the data to find out how
21 many of these young people make it to DHS
22 custody. Because what we do know is that
23 many of these young people will instead
24 enter the juvenile justice system, since
25 homeless LGBTQ are 200 percent more

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2 likely than heterosexual youth to be
3 arrested for status offenses, like
4 running away, truancy, and curfew
5 violations. For youth who manage to
6 avoid the juvenile justice system or
7 child welfare system, homeless shelters
8 is another option. But what happens when
9 the LGBTQ young person is placed in the
10 shelter system? Let's return to some of
11 those focus group quotes.

12 "At the youth housing program,
13 I was told that if I told my roommates I
14 was gay, they would hurt me or try and
15 sleep with me. I was kicked out a month
16 later after someone placed a knife in my
17 locker."

18 "I heard the staff trying to
19 guess who was gay in the program, so I
20 got scared and left."

21 "As a trans woman staying, at a
22 shelter was as scary as it gets."

23 When we hear these experiences
24 and we think that more than half of the
25 homeless young people in this city

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2 identify as LGBTQ, I hope it becomes
3 incredibly clear that we must address
4 this issue in full recognition of
5 institutionalized heterosexism,
6 homophobia, cis-sexism, and transphobia
7 that exists within our child welfare and
8 shelter system. Let us require that
9 youth-serving systems be LGBTQ
10 youth-serving systems that recognize
11 trauma, not perpetrator it. Let us
12 create systems not built to diminish the
13 power of young people, but to lift them
14 to a power of command over their own
15 lives.

16 I was lucky to make it out of
17 this web with love and support from the
18 LGBTQ community, with individuals from
19 organizations who saw my experience as
20 expertise and lifted me to a place of
21 command over my own life. Now I work as
22 an LGBTQ educator with the Bryson
23 Institute of the Attic Youth Center. In
24 our work we provide trainings on best
25 practices for supporting LGBTQ youth in

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2 their everyday context - child welfare
3 institutions, juvenile detention centers,
4 foster care parents, teachers, students,
5 and safe communities. In my work I've
6 learned that only through a point of
7 intervention that addresses systemic
8 trauma based in oppression can youth
9 escape this web.

10 We need DHS to collect data on
11 LGBTQ youth to find appropriate
12 placements. LGBTQ cultural competency
13 needs to be mandated to any and every
14 person who engages with a young person in
15 the child welfare and shelter system.
16 Hiring practices and foster parent
17 recruitment need to include LGBTQ
18 cultural competence. We need shelters
19 and affordable housing programs
20 specifically for LGBTQ youth. We need to
21 decriminalize status offenses related to
22 homelessness and find LGBTQ youth beds
23 that aren't in detention centers.

24 But what we really need to do
25 is begin to evaluate the systemic course

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2 of disenfranchisement. We send every
3 single young person in this city down if
4 we remove every pillar of success
5 possible from their sight. We need to
6 address the failing education system in
7 this city, the staggering youth
8 unemployment rates, and the continued
9 lack of affordable housing.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. WASHINGTON: And we need
12 these things now, because if we're going
13 to continue to call ourselves the City of
14 Brotherly Love, we must remember that
15 justice is what love looks like in
16 public.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

18 Thank you all very much.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
21 very much for your testimony. We really
22 appreciate it. And if you could turn in
23 your testimony to us, that would be very
24 helpful.

25 I know that our staff had a

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2 couple of questions for Ms. Hersh and
3 Mr. Williams. If you could come back up.

4 Thank you to the panel very
5 much for that.

6 MS. FITZPATRICK: Thank you
7 very much, Council, for allowing the
8 Office of LGBT Affairs' testimony to be
9 complete by including voices of the
10 community.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Madam
13 Chair?

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Let me
16 say as bad as times are, I've been around
17 so long we didn't have any -- people on
18 the streets knew. Folks knew who were
19 gay, and it's always like that.
20 Everybody knows the real deal. But as
21 bad as it is now, we didn't have any
22 home. Everybody just had to live with it
23 and people find their own way.

24 So we're proud of these young
25 people and we admire their courage, and

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2 we commend them for standing up for the
3 others and you as well.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
5 Thank you, Councilwoman Blackwell.

6 I had a couple of very quick
7 questions for Ms. Hersh and Mr. Williams
8 just in the interest of time. I know we
9 have a number of speakers who are here
10 today. But just for clarity, Ms. Hersh,
11 you were saying that about 90 percent of
12 youth in the youth count do not stay in
13 shelters, roughly. Like about 11 percent
14 in the youth count are somewhere in the
15 shelter system, but it looks like 90
16 percent do not feel or weren't counted
17 there, is that correct, from your
18 testimony?

19 MS. HERSH: I'm not sure that
20 that's what I said.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It just says
22 that of the 252 individuals surveyed, how
23 they were -- how they were kind of
24 sheltered or experiencing their
25 situation.

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2 MS. HERSH: Yeah. Just 11
3 percent were in shelter.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Just a small
5 percent were in the shelter system. And
6 could you talk a little bit about what it
7 is about the shelter system that is not
8 responsive to young people.

9 MS. HERSH: I think that in --
10 well, we heard what Phantazia said.
11 She's an expert. And I'm so sorry for
12 any harm that anyone has experienced in
13 the homeless shelter system.

14 I don't think shelters are the
15 right place for young people. I think
16 that they need to be in permanent
17 supported or transitional housing
18 programs or other kinds of residential
19 programs that have specialized services
20 that are tailored to their needs with
21 other kids and with staff who understand
22 how to work with young people. That's
23 really the ideal situation.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then
25 could you also talk a little bit about

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2 the federal grant that came through to
3 take a look at the issue of homelessness
4 in our city, roughly \$28 million, and how
5 flexible is that grant in terms of its
6 usage in different areas and is there any
7 possibility of looking at it in terms of
8 services for youth in particular?

9 MS. HERSH: There's no
10 flexibility. It was -- it's project
11 specific. It was all renewal funding for
12 existing programs to continue them, and
13 as -- Roberta Cancellier is here.

14 Is any of that for youth? Just
15 let us know.

16 We'll look. We'll get back to
17 you with that number, but, no. The short
18 answer is that's not discretionary money.
19 It's renewal funding. It was
20 competitively scored through a lengthy
21 process, and it's only for use by those
22 projects that HUD determined could be
23 funded.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

25 Councilman Domb.

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2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
3 Madam Chairwoman.

4 Thank you all for your
5 testimony today and also for the two of
6 the people who testified. Very moving
7 testimony, very sad.

8 I'm trying to understand, so
9 I'm going to ask you a few questions and
10 maybe you can shed some light on this
11 issue.

12 The categories of homeless
13 youth, do you start at age 13? Is that
14 the starting point? And does it go to --
15 I'm looking at different categories, 13
16 to 17, then it goes to 18 to 21, and then
17 there's another category that's 18 to 25.
18 Are there three categories? I'm just
19 trying to understand.

20 MS. HERSH: We count two
21 different categories. Under 18, the 13
22 to 18, and they are -- and that's because
23 those programs are funded to serve what
24 we call runaway youth. And then 18 to
25 24, because they're young adults and they

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2 may be parenting. They may be heads of
3 households or they may not be. That does
4 not include any of the young people who
5 come into our system with their parents.
6 Those are just either heads of
7 households, parenting heads of
8 households, or young people who are not
9 there with their parents.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Do we have
11 any statistics of the numbers within
12 those two categories of homeless youth
13 right now between 13 and 17 and 18 and
14 24?

15 MS. HERSH: The under 18, I
16 think there are just 20 who are served in
17 our system, and the older kids --

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: But how many
19 would you estimate are -- 20 are served.
20 What's the number that we're not serving?

21 MS. HERSH: Well, you know,
22 that's really anybody's guess. We based
23 on the -- and Valley Youth House may be
24 better able to answer this question.
25 Based on their count, there were 252 that

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2 they counted in their most recent count.

3 That was, I think, in January.

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And that's 13
5 to 17?

6 MS. HERSH: No. That's anybody
7 under the age of 24.

8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: 252 are not
9 being served right now.

10 MS. HERSH: Well, you know --
11 and, again, this is one count by one set
12 of standards. So I would really caution
13 using that number. I think you'll hear
14 from Covenant House a number of young
15 people they turned away. The problem
16 with any of these counts is, as you heard
17 from Phantazia especially, is that young
18 people who are experiencing homelessness
19 hide. They don't -- they're afraid that
20 if they're counted, that adults will
21 intervene and take away -- make their
22 lives worse, not better. And so it's
23 really -- I would say it's the best we've
24 got so far, but I would not build a
25 system around those numbers.

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2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And also in
3 your testimony I think you mentioned an
4 investment of \$3 and a half million would
5 provide an estimated 300 or 400 homeless
6 young people with emergency housing,
7 rapid rehousing, and transitional
8 housing. Is that annually?

9 MS. HERSH: We didn't look at
10 it annually. We were thinking about
11 jump-starting the problem and intervening
12 now. The information that I don't have,
13 Councilman, is how long young people
14 would be in any of those services and
15 whether they could use that as a
16 springboard for independent living or how
17 long they would need a subsidy. Perhaps
18 one of the youth service providers would
19 have more expertise about how long, the
20 kind of duration of services would be
21 appropriate.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I have
23 another question. It might be for -- is
24 it Nellie? I want to make sure I heard
25 this correctly. Was there a

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2 recommendation that for youth LGBT we
3 should have a separate facility or can it
4 be the same facility? Give us your
5 opinion on how that should be.

6 MS. FITZPATRICK: I think you
7 need a combination. And when we're
8 talking about separate facilities, there
9 needs to be a continuum of different
10 options for LGBT youth. Some LGBT youth
11 do want to access a place where the
12 entire mission of the place is to empower
13 them. Some do not. We see successes in
14 places like the Ali Forney Center and
15 True Colors in New York, and then you
16 also hear from kids where those places
17 have not necessarily met the needs for
18 them. This is why it's important that
19 throughout all the systems that already
20 exist, we do the level of competency and
21 confidence that's necessary and create an
22 actual continuum so that an LGBT youth
23 can actually navigate, understand, and
24 safely move through these systems being
25 empowered, but also have systems in place

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2 for them where they are truly focused on
3 and exclusive for LGBT youth.

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. The
5 three of you are way more experienced
6 than I am on this issue and if we said to
7 you we want to solve this problem, how do
8 we do it?

9 MS. FITZPATRICK: Find the
10 money.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How much is
12 it?

13 MS. FITZPATRICK: Millions.

14 MS. HERSH: Let's start with
15 that 3 and a half million that we know
16 that the array of youth-serving homeless
17 providers can immediately deploy to do
18 outreach and engagement and basic
19 survival needs of kids on the street, get
20 them into residential care that's
21 appropriate, the continuum, as Nellie
22 said, and get reattached to school or
23 employment, rebuild a peer network if
24 they need to that are trauma-informed,
25 positive youth development based. That

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2 we know we can do.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. So 3
4 and a half million to get started. And
5 can you let us know maybe another date if
6 that's an annual expenditure or one-time
7 expenditure just so we can understand it
8 from a budgeting standpoint.

9 MS. HERSH: I would recommend
10 that maybe if I might suggest that that
11 may be something we could explore through
12 the strategic planning process. We
13 really provided that as kind of a quick
14 estimate because we knew that was doable,
15 and we're really looking forward to the
16 opportunity to drill down in much more
17 detail about what the range or the
18 continuum is that would be needed.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Thank
20 you very much. Thank you for coming
21 today.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
23 very much, Councilman.

24 The Chair recognizes Councilman
25 Green.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair.

4 In reference to that amount,
5 you said 3.5 million to really address
6 the issue and have a substantial impact
7 in reference to trying to end
8 homelessness. Are you familiar with
9 either social impact bonds or Pay for
10 Success bonds and, if so, have you seen
11 them used in this space? We had hearings
12 earlier this year in looking at that type
13 of funding for recidivism and also
14 educational attainment. However, not
15 necessarily as I've seen it in this
16 space. So I'm curious if you've seen any
17 research, any activities in other
18 jurisdictions where that's been used as a
19 funding mechanism?

20 MS. HERSH: This is not my area
21 of expertise. My understanding is that
22 social impact bonds are in their very
23 early stages for use around homelessness.
24 There is a theory that if people are
25 stably housed, that it does save other

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2 systems money. There's questions about
3 whether having a for-profit entity being
4 involved and motivated is a plus or a
5 minus and who really benefits. So sort
6 of my quick judgment based on what I know
7 is that that would be premature and that
8 that might be something down the road
9 that we can explore.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Well, the
11 reason I ask that, because just yesterday
12 I was in a conversation also in reference
13 to the public safety space and the
14 concept was in reference to providing
15 housing for people who were returning
16 citizens who often have a challenge and
17 they need more long-term housing options,
18 and there was a suggestion of looking at
19 using social impact bonds in that space.
20 And so thinking about homelessness, it
21 made me think of that could also be
22 another area where we could provide a
23 possible funding stream to address this
24 issue. Traditionally the way social
25 impact bonds have worked, you have a

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2 private entity that provides dollars to
3 an intermediary, which is often a
4 non-profit associated with the
5 jurisdiction. Then that intermediary
6 will then provide the dollars to the
7 social service provider. And another
8 component is that you have to have a
9 third-party entity to really evaluate and
10 set a benchmark of what would be the
11 threshold upon which either the City
12 would have to pay back the dollars that
13 were invested or the private entity would
14 lose money.

15 So in thinking about the
16 conversation over the past couple days in
17 the previous hearings regarding social
18 impact bonds, it made me think that this
19 type of public-private partnership may
20 work in this space.

21 So from your experience and
22 also working with other providers in the
23 field, are there those that provide data
24 collection or research on how certain
25 type of programs help address

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2 homelessness in reference to the funding
3 or other measures?

4 MS. HERSH: Yeah. Well, in
5 terms of the social impact bond, just one
6 small difference between the homeless
7 system and corrections. Corrections has
8 a very robust revenue stream and you can
9 track savings back in from that system by
10 housing people and avoiding recidivism,
11 so that there's a revenue stream there
12 that doesn't exist within the homeless
13 system.

14 In terms of research, our local
15 expert, Dennis Culhane at the University
16 of Pennsylvania, is a great resource.
17 Chapin Hall, which is doing the Voices of
18 Youth Count this summer that's affiliated
19 with the University of Chicago, is
20 another great resource on research that's
21 been done to look at evidence-based and
22 data-informed practices to address
23 homelessness. Although I will say you
24 have really a treasure trove of expertise
25 here in this room with the provider

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2 community from the ground.

3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And just one
4 other question, slightly different topic,
5 but still based on this issue. In
6 reference to the issue of sex
7 trafficking, I know that was something
8 that was testified to earlier. I know
9 Judge Lori Dumas is doing a lot of work
10 in that area. Has there been any work or
11 outreach with reference to some of the
12 initiatives that she's been doing to
13 address that issue?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

15 Yes, Councilman. Her efforts -- we
16 actually have attempted to partner and we
17 have partnered in many instances with
18 Judge Dumas and also the state. In fact,
19 the reference that I made with regard to
20 the piloting initiative of a screening
21 tool that would actually be mandated
22 across the state, Philadelphia is one of
23 six counties that's actually testing this
24 particular assessment tool. So there is
25 a local group that's working diligently

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2 and then there's a state group that's
3 working diligently on really identifying
4 how to identify these young people, and
5 not only identify the young people,
6 develop resources to really help serve
7 them. So there is some work being done.
8 Much more is needed, and you'll hear more
9 about that as we move forward.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
12 very much, Councilman.

13 Mr. Williams, do you know what
14 percentage of youth in foster care age
15 out of the system with a known housing
16 placement? Do you track that?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

18 Well, the closest statistic that I could
19 give you today is approximately 250 young
20 people, approximately, aged out of the
21 system without reaching permanency.

22 Statistically these are the young people
23 who actually end up homeless and in some
24 instances incarcerated, et cetera.

25 We currently serve in terms of

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2 dependent placement, we have over 6,000
3 children in care currently. So that
4 gives you some kind of an idea of the
5 children who are not reaching permanency.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And is that
7 annually?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:
9 We are -- when you look at last fiscal
10 year --

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: This is your
12 total of the young people?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:
14 Yes, Councilwoman. So when you look at
15 last year, actually it was closer to 275
16 or in that area, and we are pretty much
17 kind of on track to probably land at that
18 number again unfortunately for this
19 fiscal year.

20 The department, we're actually
21 involved in a systemwide strategic plan
22 with increasing permanency, and one of
23 the things that we're doing is trying to
24 use our data to really speak to length of
25 stay in foster care and actually do

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2 permanency case reviews earlier prior to
3 a child aging out of the system. So at
4 this point, we're identifying when young
5 people stay in care at least six months,
6 there's a required case review for that
7 particular child.

8 The other thing is, we have our
9 Achieving Independence Center. That
10 initiative and program is really a
11 one-stop shop for young people.
12 Typically historically a young person had
13 to be 16 to be referred to the AIC. We
14 lowered the age requirement to 14. We
15 understand that if we wait 16, 17, that's
16 way too late in terms of helping young
17 people with transition plans.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And how many
19 young people in foster care age out in
20 general?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:
22 Again, I would have to -- the only
23 number --

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I'm trying
25 to get a sense of the 250, who actually

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2 age out without a placement, how that
3 compares to the percentage of students
4 who are aging out actually as opposed to
5 against the total number of students who
6 are in the foster care system.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

8 I would have to get back to you with that
9 specific information. What I can tell
10 you is that we had close to -- we had
11 over 5,000 children in care last fiscal
12 year, and of that number, we had the 275
13 that aged out. So in terms of a
14 comparison, we would have to -- I would
15 have to look at the last several years to
16 kind of really get a true depiction of
17 how many children are actually aging out.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Because it
19 sounds like against those numbers, that
20 the 250 is very high.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

22 Yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That young
24 people who leave foster care are unlikely
25 to have any kind of known placement for

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2 them for housing.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:
4 For that particular -- yes, for that
5 particular --

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Particular
7 aging out group.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:
9 Yes.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And that
11 that's a place to really focus a lot of
12 attention on.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:
14 Absolutely. Absolutely.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Well, thank
16 you very much to this panel. I really
17 appreciate it.

18 We have a number of other
19 providers and young people testifying,
20 and if there's any way for the City
21 departments to be able to stay and hear
22 some of these stories, I know your time
23 is very precious, but it is really
24 powerful stuff that I think people are
25 going to be bringing. So thank you all

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2 very much.

3 MS. HERSH: Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Could the

6 Clerk please call the next panel.

7 THE CLERK: Panel 2, we have

8 Larbriah Morgan, Joe Willard, and Carolyn

9 Crouch-Robinson.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
13 afternoon. Thank you very much. We want
14 to be respectful of everybody's time, and
15 we know that many of you have submitted
16 testimony. We have some of our staff who
17 will just let you know when to roughly
18 wrap up your testimony, and feel free to
19 summarize. But thank you very much for
20 coming and for your patience, and if you
21 could just state your name for the record
22 and then proceed with your testimony.

23 So, Ms. Morgan. Hello. Good
24 afternoon.

25 MS. MORGAN: Hello. Good

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2 afternoon.

3 Good afternoon. My name is
4 Larbriah Morgan and I am a young adult
5 advocate for youth fostering change. I
6 would like to thank you for inviting me
7 here to testify on such an important
8 topic.

9 I am an alumni of foster care
10 who narrowly avoided aging out into
11 homelessness. I am also an advocate for
12 former and current youth in foster care.
13 I aim to help them voice their opinions
14 or have their voices heard.

15 I will also be graduating from
16 Temple University in May. Youth --

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. MORGAN: Thank you.

19 Youth homelessness is very
20 different from adult homelessness. Youth
21 can experience homelessness in various
22 ways. Youth homelessness can look like
23 youth sleeping out on the street just as
24 adult homelessness, but it can also look
25 like youth sleeping in cars, going from

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2 couch to couch, and even going to parties
3 or other outings that they may not
4 originally have even wanted to go to just
5 to have somewhere to sleep for the night.
6 All of these temporary fixes and others
7 should be characterized as homelessness
8 for youth.

9 Youth who age out of care often
10 don't have resources necessary to live
11 independently. In my case, I aged out of
12 care at the age of 21 and I did not have
13 financial stability in order to live on
14 my own. I had to pay for rent, utility
15 bills for my apartment, food for myself,
16 basic necessities, and also school costs,
17 the cost of my textbooks that my
18 financial aid did not cover. There's no
19 way that I could work and pay for all of
20 these things while going to school. I
21 asked for help from social workers,
22 school counselors, school advisors, and
23 received little to none.

24 There was no room for me at my
25 grandparents' house, and my parents

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2 didn't have the means to help me in my
3 situation, and the only reason why I
4 avoided homelessness was because the
5 Juvenile Law Center helped me bring
6 awareness to my situation through one of
7 the speaking events that they have us
8 speak at.

9 This is not a common
10 opportunity for a lot of other youth,
11 though. Not everyone is encouraged to
12 help themselves or advocate for
13 themselves, and not a lot of them are
14 brought into speaking events where
15 they're interviewed by news reporters in
16 order to voice their situation like I
17 was.

18 There are other youth and peers
19 of mine that I know right now, right this
20 second that had to choose between
21 somewhere to live and their education,
22 and a lot of them chose a roof over their
23 head as opposed to their education, and
24 to this day, they're living paycheck to
25 paycheck because of that decision,

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2 because that was the decision that had to
3 be made. And there are youth that are
4 moving from house to house, and a lot of
5 them have children with them.

6 There are three ways that my
7 peers and I -- three suggestions that we
8 came up with for the prevention and
9 decrease of youth homelessness in
10 Philadelphia.

11 One is earlier discharge and
12 transition planning that focuses on plans
13 for housing, income, education, and
14 employment. The second was to change the
15 definition of homelessness to reflect
16 youth homelessness specifically so
17 resources can be directed at that
18 problem. And the third was to provide
19 supportive and subsidized housing for
20 youth ages 18 to 25.

21 Youth must start planning for
22 their transition out of care at the age
23 of 14, which is kind of done at the AIC
24 currently. But the plans should be
25 realistic and focus on concrete options

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2 for housing and how they will pay for it.

3 This is possible by focusing more on the

4 financial realities as opposed to

5 spending so much time teaching youth life

6 skills. Learning to wash clothes, cook,

7 clean, about health and all the other

8 life skills that they learn are very

9 important, but they don't do much good

10 when the young person has nowhere to go

11 to implement the skills.

12 DHS and private providers

13 serving youth must devote more staff to

14 help youth plan ahead. The staff should

15 be well trained and should like to work

16 with young adults.

17 Youth homelessness can also be

18 prevented by changing the definition of

19 homelessness to reflect the youth. As of

20 now, youth are considered homeless if

21 they're sleeping on the street or in a

22 shelter. As I explained, there are other

23 various ways that youth homelessness is

24 manifest. So by including those aspects

25 into the definition, we could bring in

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2 more resources for the youth.

3 And, lastly, which I think is
4 most importantly, is the preventative
5 step to create more housing opportunities
6 for older youth, specifically ages 18 to
7 25. Society considers age 18 as grown,
8 but when youth don't have the necessary
9 support or resources, they can't survive
10 on their own. Depending on the
11 situation, youth in this age bracket
12 should be granted subsidized or free
13 housing or living arrangements.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. MORGAN: These housing
16 opportunities should act as a stepping
17 stone to help these youth complete -- to
18 reach complete independent.

19 Many youth who age out end up
20 in dangerous and unhealthy living
21 situations because they don't have good
22 choices or resources. For example, youth
23 often move back in with the same family
24 members they were taken away from and the
25 circumstances have not changed from that

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2 household or they may stay in or enter
3 unhealthy relationships in order to keep
4 a roof over their head. Youth aging out
5 of foster care are strong, talented, and
6 they work hard, but they need more
7 support than they are given right now to
8 be able to fulfill their full potential.
9 Getting and keeping an affordable place
10 and safe place to live is essential to
11 helping them get the education and jobs
12 they need to reach independence.

13 If I did not get help with my
14 housing when I aged out, it is possible
15 that I would not be graduating next week.
16 It is terrifying to think that all of my
17 hard work and all of the hard work of
18 those who supported me and helped me
19 through my journey would have been lost
20 because I entered homelessness.

21 I know that many youth do not
22 have the connections that I had and they
23 don't receive the amount of attention
24 that I did when I was about to age out of
25 care, but we can help them. We can

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2 change that. And if we don't, we're
3 going to continue to lose a lot of
4 talented youth within the City of
5 Philadelphia.

6 By pledging to prevent and end
7 youth and young adult homelessness, City
8 Council can show youth, especially in
9 foster care, that they value them and
10 their potential. Because you invested in
11 me and didn't leave me behind, you're
12 getting a strong, smart, compassionate
13 woman who wants to make Philadelphia a
14 great place for all of its children and
15 youth. I want more of my peers to have
16 the same opportunities and resources that
17 I did, but in order to make these
18 changes, we have to, you know, think of
19 other policies and other resources that
20 we can depend on that target peers my age
21 and younger.

22 So thank you again for having
23 me.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
25 much. Thank you so much, Ms. Morgan.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I think I
4 can speak on behalf of all of Council
5 that we feel very fortunate that you're
6 out there talking to foundations and to
7 other organizations and groups who have
8 the wherewithal to keep driving attention
9 to this issue. So thank you so much.

10 MS. MORGAN: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good
12 afternoon.

13 MR. WILLARD: Good afternoon,
14 Councilwoman. Thank you. My name is Joe
15 Willard. I'm the Vice President for
16 Policy at the People's Emergency Center.
17 Our mission is to nurture families,
18 strengthen neighborhoods, and drive
19 change. We work out in West Philadelphia
20 with families, children, and youth who
21 experience homelessness. And I will
22 shorten my testimony somewhat to pick up
23 some time.

24 I want to thank City Council
25 for showing interest in youth who are

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2 experiencing homelessness in

3 Philadelphia. PEC is enthused to work

4 with you and the Kenney Administration on

5 this issue.

6 The City of Philadelphia is

7 facing a daunting task in the next four

8 years as it considers what to do when

9 working with its citizens who are

10 experiencing homelessness. If you look

11 at the data from the last four years from

12 the Philadelphia Office of Supportive

13 Housing, you could reasonably expect that

14 some 3,000 families whose head of

15 households is under the age of 24 will

16 become homeless and access emergency

17 housing in the next four years. The

18 question is, is Philadelphia prepared?

19 The good news is that the

20 federal government and state government

21 are bringing some new resources and new

22 funding and strategies. The City of

23 Philadelphia needs to step up and

24 consider expanding its part. The role of

25 City Council is very important. Without

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2 the resources and leadership that you
3 could bring to bear, the City will not
4 succeed.

5 The first thing City Council
6 should consider is if Philadelphia can
7 manage this crisis with the same level of
8 resources that are now provided to the
9 Office of Supportive Housing and with the
10 same structure that is currently
11 supported. Other than the new domestic
12 violence facility created a few years
13 ago, the Class 200 General Fund line item
14 in OSH's budget has not kept up with
15 inflation. In fact, there are fewer
16 funds being proposed this year than the
17 past year. If you can solve the crisis
18 of youth homelessness by cutting budgets,
19 then you shouldn't listen to any of us.

20 In addition, the homeless
21 system is really set up to work with
22 adults, and there seems to be a huge and
23 significant disconnect with it and the
24 Department of Human Services. OSH is
25 given the responsibility to work with all

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2 homeless persons but, in my opinion, not
3 given the authority and not given the
4 resources to manage the problem. Also,
5 in my opinion, OSH does not have the
6 staffing that is expert in youth, but
7 they're incentivized by HUD to be our
8 leader.

9 The second thing that you
10 should realize is that Philadelphia has
11 not had a focus on homeless youth and are
12 just beginning to work together, thanks
13 in part to federal requirements. While
14 that is welcomed, we strongly think that
15 local leaders need to create local
16 solutions rather than following 100
17 percent of the federal diagnosis and
18 prescription. And because there has not
19 been a focus, no one in Philadelphia can
20 tell you how many youth are homeless, the
21 amount of resources needed to end youth
22 homelessness, and what the consensus goal
23 should be. The number of homeless youth
24 are determined by the funding stream and
25 the reporting requirements.

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2 OSH serves an estimated 350
3 teens annually in the housing programs.
4 It counted 299 unaccompanied youth and
5 300 parenting youth in the 2015 Point in
6 Time count. The School District served
7 300 teens.

8 If you look at something called
9 the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, which
10 the School District manages, 9 percent of
11 high school students ages 13 to 17
12 reported having ever considered
13 themselves as homeless. Extrapolating
14 the data, you're looking at 3,600
15 teenagers 13 to 17 as having reported of
16 ever considered themselves homeless.

17 The next couple pages are
18 slides. You have the percentage of 11th
19 grade homeless students in the School
20 District. They score lower on English,
21 math, and science than the overall
22 student body. You may ask, well, so
23 what? Left unaddressed, homelessness
24 places these youth at increased risk of
25 dropping out of high school,

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2 unemployment, adult homelessness and
3 worse. All research known to PEC
4 indicates that homeless youth have higher
5 risk factors than housed youth in the
6 domains of mental health, high school
7 graduation, physical health and more.

8 For example, they have three
9 times more likely to have committed
10 suicide, almost five times more likely to
11 have been injured during an attempted
12 suicide and a lot more that the Youth
13 Risk Behavioral Survey will show, which I
14 won't repeat here, but is in the slides
15 before you.

16 What is there to lose if City
17 Council does nothing? Right now more
18 than 100 families per week and 40 adult
19 youth per month are turned away from the
20 emergency housing. This is not new
21 information. The former directors of the
22 Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing
23 have been testifying to City Council
24 since the year 2011 at least that they
25 are turning away families and cannot

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2 handle the volume of those who seek
3 emergency housing. Many, if not most, of
4 these families and young people were
5 either homeless or housing insecure in
6 their teen years. Now they are homeless
7 and cannot receive help unless they're
8 lucky enough to get into the adult
9 housing system.

10 Continue not to address youth
11 homelessness will cost you in a few years
12 in unemployed adults, homeless families,
13 remedial education, and workforce
14 training and a new group of young people
15 on the path to not being productive
16 citizens for Philadelphia.

17 Second, I would tell you that
18 the fact that services are not
19 coordinated is not news. The 2007 report
20 from the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission
21 on Children's Behavioral Health, there
22 was countless recommendations that the
23 departments are not coordinating. So
24 this is not news.

25 Fortunately, City and

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2 non-profit agencies are talking together
3 in the past two years and we're coming up
4 with a lot of ideas and solutions. Some
5 of them are -- that City Council could
6 play a key role in -- is, one, support
7 the Kenney Administration's work to
8 develop a unifying plan, which is what we
9 lack. We need a plan.

10 Two, consider a new
11 administrative structure that connects
12 OSH and the Department of Human Services
13 and DBH. Support any strategy to
14 increase the number of counselors, social
15 workers, and nurses in each and every
16 school. By increasing access to
17 high-quality early learning programs,
18 double the City Housing Trust Fund to
19 prevent homelessness, and finally
20 increase resources of OSH's budget by 10
21 percent.

22 Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
25 very much, Mr. Willard. I appreciate

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2 your testimony. I especially appreciate
3 your taking care to delineate all the
4 budget requests that have been made from
5 OSH from 2011 to today. So very
6 humbling.

7 MR. WILLARD: Excuse me.

8 Larbriah has to get to school. Can she
9 be excused?

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes.

11 Absolutely.

12 Thank you so much, Ms. Morgan.

13 MS. MORGAN: Thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Ms. Morgan,
15 excuse me. Councilman Domb had one quick
16 question for you before you leave.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I have two
18 questions for you. Very nice testimony.
19 What are you majoring in at Temple?

20 MS. MORGAN: Adult and
21 organizational development.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Have you been
23 interviewing for a job?

24 MS. MORGAN: No, not recently.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Well, good

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2 luck with that. It's great you're doing
3 that. Congratulations.

4 MS. MORGAN: Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

6 Thank you very much.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good

9 afternoon.

10 MS. CROUCH-ROBINSON: Good

11 afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity
12 to offer remarks here today on behalf of
13 Project HOME community, addressing the
14 need to end and prevent homelessness
15 among young adults in Philadelphia. My
16 name is Carolyn Crouch-Robinson and I am
17 the Director of Residential Services at
18 Project HOME, and I am presenting on
19 behalf of Sister Mary Scullion who is
20 unable to be here today. I'm joined here
21 by members of the Project HOME community,
22 including young people who have
23 themselves experienced homelessness who
24 are interested in being part of this
25 conversation.

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2 As you may know, Project HOME
3 operates 39 units of supportive housing
4 for families, including as many as 100
5 formerly homeless children at any given
6 time. We also serve youth in our
7 Honickman Learning Center and Comcast
8 Technology Labs and our Stephen Klein
9 Wellness Center. However, I am here
10 today to talk about the needs among young
11 adults experiencing homelessness, sadly
12 one of the fastest growing segments of
13 the homeless population and one which we
14 see too much too often in the
15 City-sponsored Homeless Death Review
16 Team.

17 In 2013, Project HOME initiated
18 a pilot permanent supportive housing for
19 homeless and at-risk young adults,
20 including those who are sexual and gender
21 minorities, ages 18 to 24. This pilot
22 has grown to include 20 designated units
23 and as many as 20 additional young adult
24 units throughout Project HOME. We are
25 expanding partnerships with organizations

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2 such as Covenant House, the Mazzoni
3 Center, and the Attic Youth Center to
4 meet the needs and to learn together how
5 to best serve these young adults.

6 The National Alliance to End
7 Homelessness estimates that during a
8 one-year episode, there are 550,000
9 unaccompanied youth and young adults up
10 to the age of 24 who experience
11 homelessness for more than a week.
12 Further, a 2012 survey of over 350
13 housing organizations nationwide, the
14 Williams Institute found that 40 percent
15 of youth clients identified as LGBTQ.

16 On a local level, 4,689
17 students were identified as homeless by
18 the School District of Philadelphia
19 during the 2009-2010 school year.
20 Additionally, 36 percent of homeless
21 youth surveyed by Philadelphia Safe and
22 Sound and the Greater Philadelphia Urban
23 Affairs Coalition identified as LGBTQ.
24 Together, this is 1,688 LGBTQ youth
25 experiencing homelessness in

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2 Philadelphia, with many LGBTQ youth who
3 are homeless also going unreported.

4 It is clear that many of the
5 issues leading to youth homelessness such
6 as family conflict, poverty, neglect,
7 abandonment, physical violence, and
8 sexual abuse exist both for LGBTQ and
9 non-LGBTQ alike. However, according to
10 the Williams Institute study, nearly
11 seven in ten providers report family
12 rejection as a major factor in LGBTQ
13 youth homelessness, meaning a significant
14 number of these youth are coming into
15 shelters and/or foster care agencies as a
16 result of involuntary separation from
17 their families. Other youth may enter
18 the system via conflict such as truancy
19 or criminal charges. LGBTQ youth are
20 also twice as likely to drop out of high
21 school in response to unsafe learning
22 environments. For some, rejection and
23 discrimination at home does not
24 entirely -- not directly lead to an
25 ejection from their house, but instead

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2 may result in social and emotional
3 difficulties that can cause family
4 relationships to become severed. As a
5 direct result, youth may end up in the
6 foster care system or homeless.

7 Once homeless, these youth are
8 particularly vulnerable. Research
9 indicates the LGBTQ youth are at greater
10 risk for physical and sexual assault,
11 unsafe sexual behaviors, and have a
12 higher incidence of mental health
13 problems than non-LGBTQ homeless youth.
14 Additionally, homeless LGBTQ youth are
15 also twice as likely, 62 percent, to
16 attempt suicide than non-LGBTQ homeless
17 youth, 29 percent.

18 Unfortunately, best practices
19 for working with and supporting LGBTQ
20 youth has not been the norm for child
21 welfare agencies and housing programs.
22 These youth have experienced abuse,
23 trauma, and rejection specifically
24 related their sexual orientation or
25 gender identity that often go unaddressed

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2 and/or are exacerbated. Many LGBTQ youth
3 report feeling safer and prefer the
4 streets to persistent harassment,
5 discrimination, and neglect they
6 encounter by staff, peers, and foster
7 families. Transgender youth tend to
8 identify even more difficulty when they
9 seek shelter, as they are often placed
10 without regard to their gender identity,
11 which may lead to isolation and a lack of
12 safety.

13 The following data indicates
14 that the current child welfare system is
15 failing LGBTQ youth. Eighty-eight
16 percent of the professional staff working
17 in out-of-home placements stated that gay
18 and transgender youth were not safe in
19 group home environments. Seventy-eight
20 percent of LGBTQ youth were removed or
21 ran away from their foster placements as
22 a result of hostility towards their
23 sexual orientation or gender identity.
24 Fifty-six percent of youth interviewed in
25 a New York City study of LGBTQ youth in

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2 foster care spent time on the streets
3 because they felt safer than they did
4 when they were in their group home or
5 foster homes.

6 As a result of these
7 conditions, many LGBTQ youth age out of
8 the child welfare system and become
9 homeless young adults. Project HOME
10 plans to designate, over time, as many as
11 100 units specifically for homeless young
12 adults who need access to safe,
13 inclusive, affirming, and culturally
14 sensitive housing opportunities and
15 supportive services.

16 In 2013, we launched a young
17 adult pilot program at JBJ for eight
18 transitional age young adults
19 experiencing homelessness, aging out of
20 foster care or coming from other
21 institutional settings, and we expanded
22 the pilot to 20 units just a few months
23 ago. Project HOME provides permanent
24 housing and supportive services as a base
25 for residents to achieve their long-term

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2 goals for housing, education, and
3 employment. All of our young adults are
4 working at least part time and most are
5 in college at this time.

6 As you probably know, primarily
7 through collaborations and strategic uses
8 of resources, Philadelphia has made
9 tremendous strides in supporting our most
10 vulnerable citizens. We have
11 functionally ended homelessness for
12 veterans. People with serious mental
13 illness can find their way to housing.
14 We have the lowest per capita rate of
15 street homelessness among major cities
16 despite high poverty. As a city, we have
17 prioritized providing permanent housing,
18 the most effective tool for both
19 addressing and preventing homelessness
20 throughout our communities. Our work at
21 Project HOME and at providers across the
22 City is focused on an overall strategy
23 consistent with the federal plan to end
24 homelessness - ending veteran
25 homelessness by 2015, chronic

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2 homelessness by 2016, and homelessness
3 among children, families, and youth by
4 2020. It is our hope that this Council
5 will join us on the journey to achieve
6 these goals, because none of us are home
7 until all of us are home.

8 We hope to help Philadelphia
9 create policies that improve life, not
10 for the most vulnerable Philadelphians
11 but for the whole community, because none
12 of us are home until all of us are home.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
15 very much. I had a quick question for
16 Mr. Willard. Obviously many of us are --
17 we recognize that a lot of problems that
18 have been going on within all of our City
19 services are longstanding. They're
20 difficult to kind of -- both as some of
21 us who are new to City Council and those
22 of us who have been working on this issue
23 for many decades understand, but your
24 second recommendation that this new
25 administrative structure connects OSH and

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2 DHS. So we have -- they're in an
3 umbrella under Eva Gladstein. And then
4 the question is, do you have like right
5 now a very specific area that they need
6 to directly align on? And I think that
7 we've gotten some indications that
8 clearly this aging out in the foster care
9 system is very, very obvious to us, but
10 are there very specific areas that we
11 could take a look at so that we could see
12 some movement? I know that just saying
13 that these departments should align is
14 very vague and difficult and will take us
15 a very long time before that happens, but
16 if there are specific areas that you
17 could speak to, that would be helpful.

18 MR. WILLARD: Couple things.

19 So there's this concept of having an
20 interagency council on homelessness,
21 which tends to be reporting directly to
22 the top executive, whether it's the Mayor
23 or the Managing Director, something like
24 that. So it's a concept that's being
25 played out throughout the United States.

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2 There are some cities that have some of
3 these things. It's mostly a
4 state-oriented thing. But the concept is
5 to really have those five or six
6 departments that touch upon the
7 population and be led by somebody who has
8 authority to get those five or six
9 agencies to actually implement a plan.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. Thank
11 you. Thank you very much.

12 The Chair recognizes
13 Councilwoman Blackwell.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you.

16 So the issue still seems to be
17 kids aging out. I mean, in the old days
18 when they aged out, they were told
19 options. But I'm told that some of the
20 issues are that not only when youngsters
21 are aging out do they not have
22 followthrough, but if they're acting out
23 or if they have other emotional problems
24 or so in a lot of the places they are,
25 they're told they have to go if they do

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2 act out, with no place to go, and that's
3 what we really want to respond to and get
4 some answers to. If you can't be where
5 you want to be, you got to at least be
6 able to be inside.

7 So could you or someone else
8 here respond to these? What happens when
9 youngsters in various shelters, when they
10 have problems there or don't get along
11 with management or don't get along with
12 each other, what happens to them, and
13 then what happens? What is the general
14 system of followthrough for those aging
15 out?

16 MR. WILLARD: Councilwoman, hi.
17 Great to see you again.

18 I think some of the speakers
19 coming up can speak specifically about
20 the foster care population. I think at
21 PEC, we have staff available on a crisis
22 basis. They're there 24/7. And you also
23 may hear from some of us that there needs
24 to be more either drop-in centers or a
25 combination of types of programs where

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2 youth can access services quickly.

3 MS. CROUCH-ROBINSON: I would
4 also say that since 2009, we've seen a
5 huge increase in people aging out of
6 foster care that are not getting
7 placement. So really working with that
8 population. Earlier you mentioned 250
9 really working with that group too. I'd
10 also say that there's a large population
11 of young adults who do not go into
12 shelter, and those are the group -- we
13 have the Couches Don't Count campaign,
14 I'm sure will come up later with Valley
15 Youth House and others. People just
16 don't come into shelters. They're not
17 made for young adults. People don't feel
18 safe in the shelters, and for good
19 reason. So having another -- having
20 other options within that continuum and
21 that safety net is really important.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yeah,
23 but they have to be told something. You
24 can't tell a 16-year-old, It's not
25 working, so I'll see you, or you're

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2 arguing and so you got to go. You can't
3 tell -- because technically, according to
4 the law, we have to do something, because
5 they have to have some kind of case
6 management provided for people who have
7 behavioral health problems too. How do
8 you all deal with that? Those who have
9 behavioral health, what kind of case
10 management do those with behavioral
11 health issues get?

12 MS. CROUCH-ROBINSON: Well,
13 within the Department of Behavioral
14 Health, if someone does have a serious
15 mental illness, they are able to get
16 intensive case management services. We
17 do have mobile psych rehab for people
18 that are within our supportive housing
19 network. So there are options. There's
20 also lots of peer aides and peer
21 facilitators that can also be linked with
22 people who have serious mental illness.
23 So that's within the Department of
24 Behavioral Health. DHS, I can't speak to
25 that as much for people that are aging

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2 out of foster care without plans.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So
4 Behavioral Health you're saying at your
5 specific site or somewhere downtown or
6 what? Because we're really not getting
7 specific answers.

8 MS. CROUCH-ROBINSON: Sure. So
9 I can speak to Project HOME, and we do
10 have the ability to have ICMs, peer case
11 aides, peer support, and mobile psych
12 rehab for anybody who does have a serious
13 mental illness diagnosis, and we have
14 plenty of folks that do have that support
15 right at Project HOME. Our issue is that
16 we are just getting into young adults and
17 serving young adults and developing
18 permanent supportive housing for them.
19 So right now we're at about 40 people,
20 and we hope to expand that to about 100
21 people by 2019.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: People
23 who deal with this --

24 MS. CROUCH-ROBINSON: Young
25 adults. So young adults aging out of

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2 foster care, coming out of homeless
3 shelters that need housing. And then we
4 have wraparound supports with employment
5 services, health services, education
6 services, but also if someone has a
7 special need, then more intensive
8 services that I spoke about before.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
10 you're saying you have about 40
11 youngsters?

12 MS. CROUCH-ROBINSON: 40 right
13 now, yeah. We started getting into this
14 in 2013. So this is new for us.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
16 know. Life changes.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
19 very much, Councilwoman.

20 Thank you very much to our
21 panel. We really appreciate it, and we
22 are sure we'll be following up with you
23 both.

24 Could the Clerk please call the
25 next panel.

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2 THE CLERK: Panel 3, we have
3 Charisma Cooper, Shani Meacham, Kate
4 Gormley, Marianne Bellesorte, and Claire
5 Grandison.

6 (Witnesses approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Welcome.
9 Thank you so much for coming to Council.
10 We welcome you here. If you could please
11 state your full name for the record and
12 then proceed with your testimony.

13 MS. COOPER: Charisma Cooper.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Could you
15 speak into the microphone.

16 MS. COOPER: Charisma Cooper.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
18 You can proceed with your testimony,
19 Ms. Cooper.

20 MS. COOPER: Good afternoon.
21 My name is Charisma Cooper and my
22 daughter's name is Angel. Thank you for
23 the opportunity to speak here today and
24 share my story.

25 Three years ago I was happily

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2 with my mom and my siblings. We were all
3 together celebrating holidays and
4 birthdays like a normal family. Then
5 last year after our family could no
6 longer afford to pay heat, water, and
7 rent, we found ourselves with no food,
8 split apart, and homeless. While my
9 family went to a shelter, my daughter,
10 Angel, and I basically went from place to
11 place trying to find a stable home, from
12 my aunt's couch to going to OSH each
13 morning to try to get a bed for the
14 night. When Angel and I were on the
15 street, it made me feel shame. I never
16 imagined being in this situation, and I
17 felt the pain of not being able to care
18 for my baby. Most days I cried as I held
19 my child and tried to get myself together
20 for her sake. Finally, OSH told me about
21 Covenant House, and that's when I got a
22 glimpse of hope. Even though I found
23 myself in a horrible situation, once I
24 got into Covenant House, that's when
25 things started to change.

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2 When I first walked through the
3 doors, I was asked if I wanted a hot
4 meal, but even though I was hungry, I
5 said no, because I wasn't used to people
6 taking care of me. Over time I learned
7 to not push people away who want to help
8 me and I began to see staff as people I
9 can trust. They taught me how to budget,
10 save my money, and maintain a job. But
11 more than all that, they gave me love
12 without strings attached, unconditional
13 love.

14 Last month I transitioned to
15 Covenant House's Rights of Passage
16 program where I have my own apartment and
17 I learned how to manage living on my own
18 and how to be the best parent for my
19 baby. While I'm here, I plan to get a
20 head start on my goals. My next step is
21 to get my Associate's Degree to work
22 towards my dream, which is to become a
23 pediatrician, helping small children who
24 suffer from tumors.

25 Although I've had a rough

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2 journey, I am much stronger because of it
3 and I've seen myself stretch to new
4 heights. That's why I'm here today,
5 because I know there are other youth
6 struggling with homelessness trying to
7 find even a safe place to sleep and food
8 for today. And I hope that me being here
9 and sharing my story will open your eyes
10 to see realities and challenges we face
11 every day. I hope that my voice will
12 help other youth speak up and know that
13 we can change the world if we never give
14 up.

15 Thank you. I hope me standing
16 here and telling my story inspires all of
17 you to help us youth stand strong and
18 continue pressing our way through all of
19 this, because it's success at the end of
20 the tunnel.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
22 much.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
25 much, Ms. Cooper. Thank you.

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2 Before we introduce the rest of
3 the panel, do you mind if I break
4 protocol, because we have another youth
5 leader who is here and I just wanted him
6 to come up in case he had to leave, and
7 that's Mr. Joseph Hill-Coles.

8 (Applause.)

9 (Witness approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Welcome,
12 Mr. Hill-Coles. Good to see you again.
13 If you could just state your name for the
14 record.

15 MR. HILL-COLES: Thank you.
16 I'm Joseph Hill-Coles.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

18 MR. HILL-COLES: Good
19 afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name
20 is Joseph Hill-Coles and I am 22 years
21 old. My story is about who I was and who
22 I am today.

23 I was born to a drug-addicted
24 mother in Philadelphia. My dad was never
25 on the scene, and my mom made an attempt

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2 to raise me for three years while child
3 services kept their eyes on her, as they
4 had since I was born. At age 3, my mom
5 was forced to put me up for adoption, but
6 because I was so hard to place, I spent
7 eight years in more foster homes than I
8 can remember, only staying for a few
9 weeks at a time, passed around, a problem
10 left for caseworkers to figure out, a
11 name on a file, a number. I was someone
12 no one seemed to want.

13 Finally adopted at age 10 by a
14 loving single lady, I had found a home.
15 In spite of my good fortune, I was still
16 a very angry child. Anger not only
17 consumed me, it directed my behavior. I
18 was kicked out of numerous schools. I
19 was damaging the relationship with my
20 adoptive mom and destroying any
21 opportunity to make something positive
22 out of myself. After a few years, my
23 life began to become as much about
24 leaving home on my own to go and do what
25 I wanted to being kicked out by my mom

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2 because I was running wild. I was a
3 complete mess.

4 At age 18, I was arrested and
5 locked up as an adult for a year and a
6 half. There I was, a number yet again.
7 Once released, it became all about
8 survival. I house-hopped until I wore
9 out my welcome, and then spent a couple
10 of months living on the streets, selling
11 drugs just to be able to have money to
12 eat. I slept in Love Park, in abandoned
13 buildings, and eventually found myself in
14 and out of adult shelters. I wonder if
15 any of you here today have ever been to
16 an adult shelter. Let me tell you, it is
17 absolutely no joke. All types of people
18 crammed together in one building, chronic
19 homelessness, drug addicts, people that
20 just got released from prison, folks with
21 serious mental health issues, all piled
22 in one building. Thirty men in one
23 shower room, bed bugs, terrible food.
24 One night I woke up and there was a rat
25 on my cot.

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2 Now, I'm sure those places try
3 to do some good, but it didn't feel that
4 way at the time. I was just another
5 homeless person in the way, just a
6 number, just a body filling a bed.

7 When I first arrived at
8 Covenant House, I was still
9 institutionalized and very street-minded.
10 After being passed around so many times,
11 I didn't think they were going to be
12 anything different. Three hots and a cot
13 was all I expected and I allowed myself
14 to get. I didn't trust anyone. I didn't
15 care about the rules. And I tried to do
16 just what I wanted to do. Needless to
17 say, I was in and out of the Covenant
18 House several times. But they never gave
19 up on me and always welcomed me when I
20 came back. Then one day something in me
21 changed. I realized in this repeated
22 vicious cycle, I was going nowhere. The
23 streets had nothing to offer to me
24 besides eventually time behind bars again
25 or a coffin. The people at the Covenant

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2 House really did seem to care. I had a
3 home setting again that could provide me
4 with the structure and love I desperately
5 needed. It was clean, it was safe, so
6 different from any of the other shelters
7 I had been to. I made an active decision
8 at that moment to change. I followed a
9 schedule. I actively searched and found
10 legitimate employment. I learned to
11 think ahead and not just think of now. I
12 decided to trust the staff and build a
13 relationship with them. I was pushed to
14 succeed, and I respect the staff for
15 doing that. Covenant House gave me a
16 firm foundation from which to start again
17 and to help me work to the point that I
18 didn't have to see homelessness as an
19 option anymore. I began to make
20 transformation from who I was for so many
21 years to who I am today sitting in front
22 of you.

23 During my time at the Covenant
24 House, I moved from the Covenant House's
25 shelter to its transitional living

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2 program, the Rights of Passage, where I
3 had an apartment, but still had the
4 support I needed. I worked first at the
5 Monkey and the Elephant, a great coffee
6 shop that seeks to employ former foster
7 care youth. Isn't that awesome? A
8 business --

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. HILL-COLES: A business
11 that hasn't forgot about those of us that
12 were left behind by others.

13 I've also been a mentor at
14 YouthBuild Charter School, helping people
15 just like me, and now I work at Urban
16 Tree Connection as a garden educator, an
17 organization that turns vacant lots into
18 community gardens. And a few weeks ago,
19 I moved into my own beautiful apartment
20 at the brand new Francis House of Peace
21 just a few blocks from here.

22 I was many things before the
23 Covenant House, but I have chosen not to
24 let those things in my past define me.
25 The staff helped to shape me into the man

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2 before you today. My commitment, my
3 passion is to give back and to help shape
4 the lives of younger youth so that they
5 don't end up on the streets like I did.
6 I am success. I am a leader. I am
7 wanted. I am supported and cared for. I
8 am loved. I am Joseph.

9 Thank you for the opportunity
10 to be here and give my testimony today.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
13 much, Mr. Hill-Coles. Your story has
14 been inspiring, and we are working hard
15 to make sure that it's not -- that you're
16 not the exception.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And if
18 I might say, Madam Chair, the fact that
19 he's a caring, giving, a good person
20 comes out even in his voice.

21 We're really, really proud of
22 all that you have become. And in fact,
23 my person, my staff reminds me, we toured
24 it, but it's been about ten years. So
25 I'm trying to recall at this point

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2 remembering what it looked like. We were
3 there many years ago. But God bless you.
4 We're sure you're going to do just fine.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: We'd like to
7 welcome Councilwoman Cindy Bass to the
8 hearing, who is also the Chair of Health
9 and Human Services. So Councilwoman
10 Bass.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

12 But I wanted to also commend
13 you, sir, on your testimony and really
14 bringing so many issues to light and
15 making sure that folks hear you and
16 understand. I wanted to commend you on
17 the way you made a personal decision to
18 go in a different direction to try to
19 change what the probable outcome would
20 have been, and I just wanted to encourage
21 you to continue on your path and keep
22 telling your story. You know, we have to
23 keep talking. There's so many issues out
24 here, we have to tell our stories over
25 and over. People will hear you. People

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2 will listen. And you certainly know how
3 to deliver it in a way that makes people
4 stop, pause, think, and hopefully take
5 action.

6 So I just really wanted to
7 commend you on being here today, and we
8 thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you,
11 Councilwoman.

12 Thank you very much, panel.
13 Please proceed.

14 MS. MEACHAM: Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Welcome.

16 MS. MEACHAM: Thank you. My
17 name is Shani Meacham. I am the Director
18 of Housing and Emergency Services in
19 Philadelphia for Valley Youth House. I
20 want to thank you for the opportunity to
21 testify on behalf of the young people in
22 Philadelphia who are striving to overcome
23 poverty, housing instability, abuse,
24 neglect, and discrimination. Valley
25 Youth House began in 1973 as a single

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2 shelter. We now serve nearly 1,500 young
3 people in Philadelphia per year in four
4 short-term housing programs, permanency
5 services, and the lead agency managing
6 the DHS-sponsored Achieving Independence
7 Center.

8 Additionally, Valley Youth
9 House operates the Synergy Project and
10 Street Outreach program tasked with
11 reaching over 4,000 youth through
12 outreach activities and providing
13 services and supplies to over 2,000 youth
14 throughout 2016.

15 We work with young people ages
16 14 to 23 that have been in part of foster
17 care; are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and
18 transgender; who have experienced housing
19 instability and homelessness; and those
20 who have experienced sexual exploitation.
21 These youth are extraordinary, and they
22 move beyond life challenges that average
23 Philadelphians cannot even imagine.

24 Today you're hearing testimony
25 outlining the crisis facing the homeless

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2 youth of Philadelphia. You have listened
3 to youth eloquently and generally speak
4 of their experiences. I want to honor
5 those youth who have spoken today and
6 those brave youth who have given us
7 permission to share their stories with
8 you. Although the names may have been
9 changed, the experiences are real. The
10 City's continued support is needed to
11 help reach all the youth that have yet to
12 be seen, and system resources must be
13 increased to meet the need of the
14 staggering numbers you have referenced
15 here today in this hearing.

16 Youth experiencing homelessness
17 are often referred to as the invisible
18 population. They actively seek to avoid
19 shelter and the stigma of being homeless.
20 You've heard Director Hersh already today
21 discuss the youth counts and our role in
22 them, and I want to specifically note
23 some statistics we've gotten from those
24 counts.

25 On average -- an average of 56

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2 percent of youth surveyed in the
3 Philadelphia Youth Counts had a DHS
4 placement history. An average of 31
5 percent of youth surveyed identified as
6 LGBTQ. These reports indicate that
7 Philadelphia's youth exiting foster care
8 and LGBTQIA youth are experiencing
9 homelessness at a disproportionate rate.
10 Youth in foster care have long been
11 identified as having a greater risk for
12 homelessness upon discharge. These youth
13 represent over 90 percent of the young
14 people served by Valley Youth House in
15 Philadelphia. As a society, we have come
16 to accept that our children are not
17 transitioning to the full responsibility
18 of adulthood at 21. Typically youth are
19 living with parents or supported
20 environments on average until the age of
21 26. Youth exiting foster care, however,
22 this transition is more shocking. They
23 are expected to transition to full
24 independence and suitable housing on or
25 before their 21st birthday, many at the

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2 age of 18. Think about a young person in
3 your life between the ages of 18 and 21.
4 Maybe they are your child, sibling, niece
5 or nephew. Maybe they are in college or
6 studying for a trade. Maybe they stay at
7 home while saving money for the first few
8 months or even years of employment.

9 Imagine all the benefits they may have
10 received by having a stable and
11 supportive home.

12 Now imagine that those supports
13 are gone or they never existed. Imagine
14 that youth is Sasha, a youth in our
15 Supportive Housing program, who was in
16 foster care since she was 9 years old.
17 While in care, she lived at six different
18 placements and attended nine different
19 schools. She was often left behind
20 academically. Sasha experienced other
21 traumas while in care, including a sexual
22 assault. She was discharged from care at
23 18 years old, with no job or means of
24 income. After a few weeks of
25 house-hopping, she was forced to spend

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2 her nights at Penns Landing. For months
3 she was homeless and alone. She was
4 finally connected to shelter and
5 eventually our Supportive Housing
6 program, only after reengaging with her
7 coach and the housing liaison at the
8 Achieving Independence Center.

9 It is projected, based off of
10 the needs-based budget plan provided by
11 the Office of Children and Youth and
12 Families, that 841 youth will age out of
13 foster care between July 2015 and June
14 2016. Of these youth, it is projected
15 only 477 will exit to permanent
16 residence. This is only 57 percent.
17 Programs like the Valley Youth House
18 Supportive Housing program and Room and
19 Board program with funding by HUD and DHS
20 help to address some of this need, but as
21 Deputy Commissioner Williams mentioned,
22 the existing programs are not enough to
23 meet the housing needs of the 346 youth
24 that they project will exit the system
25 this year without a permanent residence.

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2 Based on current funding, Valley Youth
3 House can only serve 41 youth at any
4 given time, which is just 12 percent of
5 the overall number projected.

6 Having a safe place to live
7 creates an environment for young people
8 to excel. Almost 90 percent of the youth
9 in both of those programs exit to
10 permanent residence. They can focus on
11 school, work, and the typical issues
12 affecting youth in Philadelphia.

13 I just want to -- I know my
14 time is coming to an end, but I want to
15 note some of the photographs that were
16 attached to my testimony. You'll see
17 them here. In a tragic irony, one of
18 them in a tent camp found by our Synergy
19 Project says "dream homes." Can you
20 imagine identifying academic success and
21 a job if you're living in this type of
22 environment, if you're living in
23 abandoned warehouses, cars, shelters --
24 without shelter. I apologize.

25 I also wanted to note that most

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2 often youth homelessness also includes
3 house-hopping and couch-surfing. These
4 are mild-sounding terms, but they
5 represent situations that can be very
6 dire. A couch-surfing youth is anxiously
7 awaiting the end of a time limit when the
8 goodwill of a friend or a neighbor runs
9 out, and the streets and, sadly, many of
10 the adult shelters offer dangerous
11 alternatives. A more frightening and
12 very real scenario is that the
13 couch-surfing youth is forced into
14 survival sex, trading sex in exchange for
15 a place to stay for the night or falling
16 victim to the human trafficking trade.
17 The programs that exist for LGBTQ youth
18 such as PRIDE and for youth exiting
19 foster care such as Supportive Housing
20 program and our Room and Board program
21 work, but our funding does not allow us
22 to serve all the youth that have been
23 referred. Forty percent of youth
24 referred to PRIDE tonight will not secure
25 housing through the program without

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2 increased resources.

3 I want to thank you for your
4 time, and I believe we all share a mutual
5 belief that young people deserve to have
6 an environment where they feel safe and
7 that fosters their transition to becoming
8 a positive contributor to our community.

9 We remain motivated because our goal
10 tonight and every night is to provide
11 access to a safe sleeping situation to
12 any young person who wants one.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

15 Thank you, Ms. Meacham.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Hi. Good
18 afternoon.

19 MS. BELLESORTE: My name is
20 Marianne Bellesorte. Thank you so much
21 for allowing me to testify today. I am
22 the Vice President of Advocacy at
23 Pathways PA. We work each year with
24 4,500 women, children, and families to
25 help them become self-sufficient. We do

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2 that through a variety of programs, but
3 the ones that are most pertinent to this
4 testimony are our Basic Center program,
5 our Center for Families, and our
6 Transitional Living program.

7 I want to talk today about two
8 specific vulnerable populations that we
9 work with. The first of them being girls
10 who have faced human trafficking.

11 Between 2007 and 2015, the National Human
12 Trafficking Resource Center reported over
13 2,600 calls coming to their hotline
14 referencing Pennsylvania. Unfortunately,
15 trafficking is so highly underreported,
16 we know there are far many more instances
17 of adults and children being victimized
18 for labor and/or sex each day.

19 An FBI Bulletin from 2011
20 estimates that nearly 300,000 American
21 youth are currently at risk of becoming
22 victims of commercial sexual
23 exploitation. Philadelphia is one of the
24 top 15 cities in the United States for
25 domestic sex trafficking.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: For
3 what?

4 MS. BELLESORTE: Domestic sex
5 trafficking.

6 The most common age for people
7 entering into trafficking is between 12
8 and 14 years old. Many of the girls that
9 we've worked with have it start with
10 something that seems pretty innocent,
11 maybe someone coming up and saying they
12 want this girl to be part of a modeling
13 photo shoot. That instance actually
14 resonates with me a lot, because when I
15 was talking to some of our staff about
16 it, I suddenly remembered being right out
17 of college and someone coming up to me
18 and offering the same thing and wondering
19 now what would have happened if I had
20 gone ahead with that. So to know it's
21 still happening is pretty shocking.

22 Over the years, we've worked
23 with a lot of clients who have said, yes,
24 they participated in this type of thing,
25 and while they don't want to talk about

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2 what happened at those photo shoots, we
3 know that nationally a lot of this type
4 of unsolicited thing ends up as something
5 far worse.

6 We do see victims of
7 trafficking at PathWays PA. I can't get
8 into a lot of the details, although I did
9 include in my testimony a poem from one
10 of the victims, but I'd be happy to meet
11 with any of the Councilmembers
12 individually to talk about it further.
13 We just want to protect their privacy.

14 In addition to working with
15 young women who have survived
16 trafficking, we also work to prevent very
17 young women from becoming involved in
18 trafficking by providing a safe and
19 temporary place for them to live. At our
20 Basic Center program, we work with girls
21 ages 13 to 17 who are homeless or who
22 have run away. We know that girls who
23 have run away or have been kicked out or
24 abandoned are disproportionately more
25 likely than other girls to have sex prior

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2 to age 13. More than one in five runaway
3 and homeless teen girls who have been
4 kicked out, run away or abandoned have
5 gotten pregnant at least one.

6 At the Basic Center program, we
7 have five clients age 13 to 17 years old
8 at any one time. They can only stay with
9 us for 21 days, and during that time, we
10 work with them to assess their health,
11 reengage them in school, and reunite them
12 with a safe and supportive family member.
13 It's not necessarily their parents who we
14 reunite them with.

15 Because of their age, any girls
16 who cannot be reunited with family have
17 to be referred to DHS at the end of their
18 time with us. But since January, we've
19 been able to reunite all but one youth
20 during that 21-day period.

21 In recent months, a lot of the
22 girls who are coming to us are having
23 problems with their caregivers or their
24 guardians. They've ended up living with
25 their friends, with extended family,

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2 couch-surfing, even living with teachers
3 or coaches. We had one girl who came to
4 us because she was no longer getting
5 along with her foster mother, and so she
6 spent two weeks with a friend, she went
7 to a sister, she continued to house-hop
8 until finally she had no other choice but
9 to go to DHS, and now she's at our Basic
10 Center.

11 With this population, we're
12 finding that not only do the girls need
13 help, but so do their caregivers. A lot
14 of the time the girls are coming in with
15 problems that are not that far out of the
16 normal teenage realm, but the caregivers
17 just aren't able to deal with it. So
18 what we are doing as much as we can is
19 getting involved early so that we can
20 help the entire family, and we definitely
21 recommend help not just for the teens but
22 also for their family members so that
23 they can stay in a safe household for
24 longer.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
3 very much.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
6 for all of your work, Ms. Bellesorte.
7 Thank you.

8 Good afternoon.

9 MS. GORMLEY: Hi. Good
10 afternoon, and thank you for the
11 opportunity to speak here today. My name
12 is Kate Gormley and I'm a licensed social
13 worker from the Mazzoni Center. The
14 Mazzoni is a Philadelphia-based
15 non-profit which was established in 1979
16 and serves the health and wellness needs
17 of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and
18 transgender communities.

19 In Fiscal Year 2015, we
20 impacted over 35,000 individuals,
21 including nearly 4,000 youth and young
22 adults. We are the oldest HIV-serving
23 agency in the state and the fourth oldest
24 in the country.

25 Today I'd like to talk

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2 specifically about the unique needs of
3 gay and lesbian, bisexual, transgender,
4 and questioning youth and the risk
5 factors associated with being queer or
6 trans as related to youth homelessness.

7 While LGBTQ individuals and
8 issues have become commonplace
9 discussions in many households and within
10 the halls of government, we face immense
11 challenges in terms of caring for and
12 improving outcomes for our gay, lesbian,
13 bisexual youth and especially our
14 transgender young adults.

15 LGBTQ youth are more likely to
16 experience rejection from family members
17 and harassment and violence in the
18 schools than their heterosexual and
19 cisgender peers. Numerous studies have
20 outlined that the most common reason for
21 LGBTQ youth being kicked out of the home
22 is in fact family rejection.

23 In 2009, the National School
24 Climate Survey published the results of a
25 nationwide study of middle and high

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2 school-aged youth found that LGBTQ youth
3 were 61 percent more likely to report
4 feeling unsafe in the school environment
5 than their heterosexual and cisgender
6 peers. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth
7 are also four times more likely than
8 their heterosexual peers to attempt
9 suicide. Additionally, nearly half of
10 trans youth reported having considered
11 suicide, with 25 percent of these youth
12 had made previous attempts on their
13 lives. As a result, many LGBTQ youth are
14 pushed out of the home at an early age or
15 forced to leave violent and abusive
16 environments and seek shelter away from
17 their families.

18 The 2012 study, entitled
19 "Serving Our Youth," reported that while
20 nationally LGBTQ account for an estimated
21 10 percent of the total young adult
22 population, they represent a whopping 40
23 to 50 percent of the homeless youth
24 population. Research has demonstrated
25 that once LGBTQ youth find themselves

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2 homeless, they're at far greater risk of
3 future victimization. The National
4 Alliance to End Homelessness reported
5 that once LGBTQ youth are homeless, they
6 experience an average of 7.4 or more acts
7 of sexual violence towards them than
8 their heterosexual peers. These
9 statistics speak to the vulnerable nature
10 of this invisible population and the many
11 barriers and challenges LGBTQ youth may
12 face while seeking services and housing.

13 It is very important that we
14 understand that the LGBTQ umbrella
15 represents many communities and many
16 experiences.

17 I'd like to talk briefly about
18 the specific needs and barriers facing
19 the transgender community as they relate
20 to accessing housing.

21 A 2010 survey by the Center for
22 American Progress clearly exemplifies
23 this point by reporting that transgender
24 youth first experience housing
25 instability on average by the age of 13

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2 years old. This is an entire year
3 earlier than their gay, lesbian, and
4 bisexual peers. Can you imagine being
5 homeless at 13 years old?

6 For the transgender community,
7 these dismal statistics are only the
8 beginning. The National Transgender
9 Discrimination Survey found that
10 transgender individuals are twice as
11 likely to be unemployed as a result of
12 discrimination in the workplace and are
13 four times more likely to live on less
14 than \$10,000 a year.

15 The unique stressors and
16 repeated trauma experienced by many queer
17 and trans youth, when coupled with
18 discrimination and harassment in the
19 community, place these teens at a far
20 higher risk for depression, substance
21 use, and long-term negative health
22 outcomes. As the City of Philadelphia
23 works to increase supports available to
24 homeless youth, it is imperative that we
25 keep the voices of LGBTQ youth central to

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2 this conversation.

3 Philadelphia is home to a
4 thriving LGBTQ community, but far more
5 resources are required to serve our more
6 vulnerable populations. We owe our youth
7 greater access to a future rich in
8 educational, employment, and housing
9 opportunities, and the first steps toward
10 this future is increasing access to
11 affordable, safe, and affirming housing
12 options for youth.

13 Thank you for your time.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
16 much, Ms. Gormley.

17 Good afternoon.

18 MS. GRANDISON: Good afternoon.
19 My name is Claire Grandison, and I am an
20 Independence Fellow and Staff Attorney at
21 Community Legal Services where I also
22 co-lead our new Youth Justice Project.

23 Community Legal Services is the
24 largest provider of free legal services
25 in the City of Philadelphia, and our

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2 newly formed Youth Justice Project seeks
3 to provide holistic and age-appropriate
4 legal services to youth ages 16 through
5 24 who are making the transition to
6 adulthood in the face of significant
7 challenges, including homelessness.

8 Based on the areas of our work,
9 CLS's Youth Justice Project is primarily
10 concerned with three populations, which
11 is what I will address today - youth with
12 justice system involvement, youth with
13 disabilities, and young parents.

14 First consider Youth Justice
15 Project client Rose who at age 22 could
16 not find a job because of her criminal
17 record and could no longer afford to pay
18 her rent. Rose had been struggling with
19 drug addiction and was given entry into a
20 diversion program for first-time drug
21 offenders, but she could not afford to
22 pay the associated fines and costs
23 necessary to complete the program and get
24 her record expunged. She and her two
25 very young children became homeless. DHS

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2 got involved, and her children were
3 removed from her care until she could
4 find a stable place to live.

5 It's National Reentry Week this
6 week, so it's a good time to recognize
7 that barriers to employment and housing
8 must be removed to increase available
9 income, ensure housing stability, and
10 stop punishing youth indefinitely for
11 things that happened in the past.

12 Youth of color are particularly
13 likely to be arrested, convicted, and
14 incarcerated. Employers and housing
15 providers alike often have policies that
16 categorically exclude young people with
17 juvenile and criminal records despite
18 guidance from the Equal Employment
19 Opportunity Commission and the Department
20 of Housing and Urban Development stating
21 that such blanket exclusions are likely
22 to produce a disparate racial impact and
23 violate several rights laws.

24 The second group of concern is
25 youth with disabilities. Take Youth

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2 Justice client Mariana who came to CLS
3 after losing her Medicaid and her SSI
4 disability benefits, which had been her
5 only source of income. She had bipolar
6 disorder, but was not able to fill her
7 prescriptions. She was not able to see
8 her psychiatrist or her therapist without
9 insurance. She moved among friends'
10 houses and a shelter because without
11 treatment, it was difficult for her to
12 avoid conflicts. The Youth Justice
13 Project got her both Medicaid and
14 continuing SSI benefits while she waits
15 the two years that it currently takes to
16 get a hearing and a decision in an SSI
17 appeal.

18 In Pennsylvania, three out of
19 fourteen recipients of SSI lose their
20 disability benefits when they turn 18,
21 just like Mariana, and many are left with
22 no income. Youth with disabilities are
23 employed at half the rate of those
24 without disabilities and thus face
25 greater challenges securing other sources

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2 of income.

3 The final group I will address
4 is young parents who often face
5 homelessness due to lack of family
6 support networks, lack of affordable
7 child care, which is necessary for young
8 parents to be able to work, and while
9 cash assistance may provide a modest
10 source of income to young parents, they
11 are unlikely to be able to afford housing
12 without some additional help.

13 When young parents and their
14 children are thrust into homelessness,
15 they are often forced to separate based
16 solely on a shortage of parent-child
17 shelter beds, foster homes or other
18 placements. Lack of resources should
19 never be a reason for separation, which
20 is highly stressful, traumatic, and
21 damaging to child development.

22 The Youth Justice Project fully
23 supports more shelter placements for
24 youth when they become homeless,
25 especially placements that take into

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2 account the need for young parents to
3 remain with their children. The Youth
4 Justice Project also recognizes that
5 future homelessness can be prevented by
6 ensuring access to legal representation
7 in areas such as eviction prevention,
8 public benefits, and expungements by
9 providing holistic and wraparound
10 supports.

11 Thank you for the opportunity
12 to offer remarks on this important issue.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
15 much for your testimony.

16 We'd like to thank you very
17 much for your testimony and especially
18 for all the services that you provide. A
19 number of you have been around in a
20 couple of tables. We'll be following up
21 especially around a number of the issues
22 that you've raised.

23 I did have one quick question
24 for the Attic, which is that youth who
25 experience all this trauma in foster care

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2 in particular, whether there's ever been
3 any discussion with DHS about having an
4 emergency call line or anything like that
5 for young people. I know that it's
6 traumatic for a lot of young people. I'm
7 sure LGBT youth aren't the only ones who
8 suffer from feeling that, but given the
9 kind of prevalence that we're hearing on
10 a repeated basis, has that ever been
11 discussed or are there thoughts about how
12 to handle that level of harassment when
13 it's dealing with a foster care parent in
14 particular?

15 MS. GORMLEY: Not to my
16 knowledge. I work at the Mazzoni Center.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Oh, I'm
18 sorry.

19 MS. GORMLEY: No; it's okay. I
20 don't know if the Attic has had any
21 conversations with DHS. I think that
22 would be a wonderful idea and a great
23 place to collaborate to help bring these
24 issues to the providers in a more
25 positive way than they're sometimes dealt

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2 with.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. Thank
4 you so much, Ms. Gormley. So thank you,
5 and we'll just continue the
6 conversations. Thank you very much for
7 your work.

8 Could the Clerk please call the
9 final panel.

10 THE CLERK: Panel 4, Alex
11 Dutton, Jenny Pokempner, and John Ducoff.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Welcome.
15 Thank you so much for your patience. We
16 appreciate it. And if you could just
17 state your name for the record and then
18 proceed with your testimony.

19 MR. DUTTON: Good afternoon.
20 My name is Alex Dutton. I'm an
21 Independence Foundation Public Interest
22 Law Fellow and attorney at the Education
23 Law Center. I thank Councilwoman Gym and
24 Councilman Domb for this opportunity to
25 give remarks on this important topic.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Mr. Dutton,
3 could you just place your microphone a
4 little closer.

5 MR. DUTTON: Sure.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

7 MR. DUTTON: ELC is a statewide
8 public interest law firm dedicated to
9 ensuring that all of Pennsylvania's
10 public school students and especially its
11 most vulnerable and educationally at risk
12 have access to a quality public
13 education, and as a part of this mission,
14 we advocate on behalf of homeless and
15 unaccompanied youth to ensure that they
16 have equal access to quality public
17 schools.

18 I want to talk to you a little
19 bit about the rights that homeless
20 students have in public schools.
21 Homeless youth have certain rights and
22 protections in schools pursuant to the
23 McKinney-Vento federal law. And the
24 definition of homeless children and youth
25 under that law includes individuals who

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2 lack a fixed, regular, and adequate
3 nighttime residence, and this also
4 includes those youth who are sharing the
5 housing with other persons due to loss of
6 housing, economic hardship, and other
7 similar reasons. The law also defines
8 unaccompanied youth as youth who is not
9 in the physical custody of a parent or a
10 guardian. The distinction between this
11 definition is important in terms of our
12 identification of those unaccompanied
13 homeless youth who may or may not be
14 coming to the surface to our school
15 districts.

16 Key rights that the law
17 provides are maintenance in the student's
18 school of origin. So when a highly
19 mobile youth is moving from school to
20 school, they have the right to remain in
21 the school in which they are staying in
22 order to ensure school stability, even
23 despite their housing instability or
24 mobility.

25 Another key right that the law

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2 provides is immediate enrollment in
3 another school even if that youth does
4 not have the required documents under
5 Pennsylvania law or state law to enroll,
6 and that includes proof of age,
7 residency, and immunizations, another
8 measure to ensure the school stability of
9 our highly mobile youth.

10 In addition, the law provides
11 for the appointment of a McKinney-Vento
12 liaison at every local educational agency
13 to ensure that students are -- homeless
14 students are identified and are
15 maintaining school stability and as well
16 as being afforded access to the same
17 educational opportunities that their
18 peers and non-homeless peers are
19 afforded. And that includes reengagement
20 in learning opportunities, remedial and
21 supplemental instructions, school
22 supplies, SAT prep and the like.

23 So in terms of issues and
24 policy recommendations, we must
25 proactively identify unaccompanied

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2 homeless youth in addition to homeless
3 children and youth through interagency
4 collaborations that ensure that the
5 School District provides these needed
6 services. In the 2013-14 school year,
7 the School District of Philadelphia
8 identified about 4,300 homeless children
9 and youth, but only 45 identified of
10 those youth identified as unaccompanied.

11 This suggests that there's a disparity
12 between homeless youth and unaccompanied
13 homeless youth and an
14 under-identification of those who are
15 unaccompanied, who are often our older
16 youth, who are often stigmatized by their
17 homeless status and they're not coming
18 forward and are unaware of their rights
19 under the McKinney-Vento law to a quality
20 and equal public education. And these
21 students face barriers to enrollment as I
22 suggested because they do not have access
23 to families who have the documents that
24 they need to enroll, so it's important to
25 identify them so that our School

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2 District, the McKinney-Vento liaison, can
3 ensure that they enroll in school
4 promptly and maintain constant enrollment
5 in school despite mobility outside in
6 their home life.

7 So we need to destigmatize this
8 so that youth can self-identify. This
9 includes perhaps creating a call -- like
10 confidential call line, but it also
11 includes training our staff and
12 administrators, teachers at schools to
13 understand the signs of homelessness and
14 understand the definition of homelessness
15 under the McKinney-Vento law so that
16 these youth are identified and provided
17 the services to which they're entitled.

18 In addition, this requires
19 interagency collaboration so that our
20 youth-serving organizations and
21 departments in the other areas in the
22 housing world and in the child welfare
23 world are referring these students to the
24 McKinney-Vento liaisons at the School
25 District so that they're receiving the

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2 supports that they need.

3 Secondly, we must improve
4 academic achievement through access to
5 services and opportunities. We know that
6 a high rate of mobility certainly
7 decreases -- is one of the largest
8 impediments to academic progress and
9 decreases the chance of graduation by the
10 time a child turns 25. So that's another
11 important area we must ensure that our
12 School District is funded properly to
13 provide all of these services to students
14 who are experiencing homelessness.

15 One thing I want to mention
16 here is that it's really important to
17 provide the full range of highly -- of
18 challenging academic curriculum to
19 homeless students as it is to our
20 non-homeless students despite the
21 challenges that homeless students face.

22 Finally, I think the last issue
23 is credit recovery and graduation
24 planning for our highly mobile youth.
25 And so what this means is that the youth

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2 Department of Education has cited credit
3 accrual as one of the largest impediments
4 and barriers facing students experiencing
5 homelessness as they attempt to resume
6 their education. So as a result, we must
7 implement policies and adopt practices
8 that ensure access for our homeless
9 students to credit recovery programs that
10 provide the flexibility that these
11 students need to maintain stability in
12 their education. At the same time, we
13 must maintain quality opportunities to
14 challenging curriculum and not just place
15 these students in accelerated programs or
16 online programs that don't provide them
17 the equal access to the school curriculum
18 that their students are achieving as
19 well.

20 And, finally, we need to ensure
21 that our schools are providing graduation
22 plans for these students that are
23 flexible to their needs. And so that may
24 include graduation pursuant to state
25 standards as opposed to local educational

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2 agency standards. So students who are
3 highly mobile may have taken a course at
4 one high school that's not actually a
5 course required for graduation at another
6 high school and end up having -- their
7 being over-credited and not being able to
8 graduate pursuant to the local high
9 school requirements, and that's an
10 important piece of this too, to ensure
11 that graduation planning is
12 individualized so that those students can
13 leave school with a diploma and enter the
14 workforce as productive citizens.

15 So thank you, Councilmembers,
16 for this opportunity to speak about the
17 impact of homelessness on education and
18 students in school, and I appreciate the
19 opportunity. Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
22 very much, Mr. Dutton.

23 Welcome.

24 MS. POKEMPNER: Good afternoon.

25 My name is Jenny Pokempner. I work at

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2 the Juvenile Law Center. We are a legal
3 advocacy organization in its 41st year in
4 Philadelphia. We work on behalf of older
5 youth in the child welfare and juvenile
6 justice system. We also have two youth
7 engagement programs, Youth Fostering
8 Change and Juveniles for Justice.

9 Larbriah Morgan is one of our alumni
10 leaders.

11 Today you've heard a lot from
12 youth and from advocates about the nature
13 of the problem of youth and young adult
14 homelessness. You've heard that youth in
15 the child welfare system are at extremely
16 high risks of aging out, and that's very
17 accurate. I also want to add that youth
18 leaving the juvenile justice system are
19 also at extremely maybe even higher risk
20 than youth aging out of the foster care
21 system, and I want to address some
22 recommendations related to those two
23 groups, because I think the opportunity
24 we have is that while it's extremely
25 disturbing that youth that are our

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2 responsibility and actually in our
3 state's care that we remove because of
4 abuse and neglect are at such high risk,
5 it does mean that we have this
6 extraordinary opportunity to do a
7 positive intervention. We know exactly
8 where these youth are and we know a lot
9 about them. We know what their needs
10 are. We need to know more, but we know a
11 lot about who these youth are and what's
12 happening to them, who has behavioral
13 health needs, what risks that that poses
14 to them aging out. So we have this
15 opportunity that we need to take
16 advantage of, and if we do, we can make a
17 big dent in the young adult homeless --
18 homeless young adult population. So I
19 think that's something that at least is
20 something that we need to take advantage
21 of.

22 Our full recommendations are in
23 the testimony I submitted. I just want
24 to highlight a couple that might address
25 some of the issues that have been raised

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2 throughout the hearing.

3 First, the best way to address
4 youth aging out of both systems to
5 homelessness is by preventing them from
6 aging out altogether. So by placing
7 them, reunifying them with family and
8 finding other family resources and
9 investing more in that is something we
10 can do, because we know that if youth are
11 with their families and their families
12 are well supported, that's the best way
13 to help them through the transition to
14 adulthood. We know that from our own
15 transition, and you know that from your
16 kids' transition in how much they rely on
17 you as they're transitioning. So we
18 really do need to put more investment in
19 reunification services at DHS for both
20 dependent and delinquent youth. And we
21 need to understand that working with
22 families to support older youth looks
23 different and requires different
24 expertise than reunifying an infant with
25 a parent, for example. And we also need

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2 the support when those parents can't care
3 for those children, supporting their
4 relatives. And we need to focus -- and
5 having heard from so many youth not just
6 identifying family and placing them, but
7 supporting the family to maintain it
8 stably, so that the youth is not returned
9 home and then in two weeks is kicked out
10 or ends up in a shelter. So really
11 committing to these families and knowing
12 that if we do, we will see the result,
13 because that -- being attached to family
14 we know is one of the best protective
15 factors in that transition.

16 We also need to address that if
17 youth can't be returned or placed with
18 family, that the core function of child
19 welfare is to find them family, and that
20 means adoption, guardianship, and other
21 resources if they cannot return home.
22 And, again, we need to focus on that
23 recruiting resources for young adults,
24 for adolescents. And as people have said
25 and Larbriah said this very well, we need

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2 people who want to work with teenagers
3 and know that that's a skill and will be
4 supported in that, because it is
5 different. And, again, I know all of us
6 don't like to admit that we were
7 difficult as teenagers, but most of us
8 were, and our parents had to have
9 patience and they had to have skill and
10 they also had to have a support system
11 when things got difficult. So we need to
12 invest in recruiting families, foster
13 families, for youth in foster care and,
14 as many of the panelists have said,
15 families that want to work with teenagers
16 but also are willing to support LGBTQ
17 youth, parenting youth, and youth with
18 behavioral health needs. Because, again,
19 we know those are our highest risk youth
20 even in the child welfare system and
21 juvenile justice system for aging out.
22 And we've seen other jurisdictions do
23 that and do that well. So we do have
24 examples of that. I think DHS is
25 starting to do that, but we really need

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2 to put our money where our mouth is both
3 in saying that we want quality care and
4 we want to support it.

5 We also make some very specific
6 recommendations about the structures that
7 can be put in place within DHS, both in
8 terms of creating an adolescent services
9 unit that can really focus on policy
10 development, but also overseeing cases
11 and monitoring. There needs to be more
12 accountability in transition and
13 discharge planning, and the buck needs to
14 stop with the agency being responsible.
15 Right now if youth age out to
16 homelessness, only the youth pays for
17 that. There's no accountability back to
18 say to the system, You messed up, you
19 need to do more. It's the youth that
20 pays. We need to make sure that there is
21 accountability, but I will also clearly
22 say we need to equip DHS with the
23 resources to do this well and acknowledge
24 that it's a really hard task.

25 So we need to -- in addition to

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2 having, I think, a very specific
3 transition planning type of unit,
4 adolescent services unit, that we need to
5 have clear protocols for discharge
6 planning and transition planning, so that
7 it's clear what is expected, and that it
8 is clear that we prohibit discharging
9 youth to homelessness. And if a youth is
10 about to discharge and they're going to
11 homelessness, the answer is you're going
12 to have to do more, not, Too bad, you're
13 too old, that we say our systems are
14 going to provide services.

15 Finally, I know my time is up.
16 The last recommendation is just
17 reiterating what people have said. For
18 those youth that do age out because we
19 didn't find them families -- and,
20 honestly, when we do that, we fail them.
21 We need to provide the housing support
22 after they leave, because they deserve
23 that. We have to think about what kids
24 between 18 and 26, how they live. And
25 they live with a lot of supports, and we

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2 know that when we provide them that,
3 that, again, we are really impacting the
4 trajectory of their life. We know from
5 the brain development, the choices we're
6 making, if we can help them focus on
7 education, give them the time to get
8 education and skills, we will be making
9 an investment that will yield such
10 results in terms of youth who will be
11 able to pursue their careers. We saw
12 that today when we invested in Briah,
13 when we invested in James -- Joseph. I'm
14 so sorry. I'm so sorry. In Joseph. We
15 are seeing young people who are going to
16 benefit the City, who are going to not
17 just benefit in their careers but they're
18 going to give back, and we will benefit
19 not just in money but just in doing the
20 right thing.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you. My staff tells me exactly what you
25 say, that you're really on point and you

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2 really are saying it as they see it.

3 Thank you for all you're doing.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

5 Hi. Welcome, Mr. Ducoff.

6 MR. DUCOFF: Thank you. Good
7 afternoon. My name is John Ducoff and
8 I'm the Executive Director of Covenant
9 House Pennsylvania. At the outset, I'd
10 like to thank Councilwoman Gym,
11 Councilman Domb, and the entire Committee
12 and Council for your leadership on this
13 incredibly, incredibly important issue.

14 As we've heard today, homeless
15 youth are an invisible population,
16 largely overlooked, forgotten, and
17 ignored. I am here today to say that
18 that is a mistake. These young people
19 are an opportunity, and the mistake of
20 ignoring them certainly is a mistake that
21 harms these young people, but it's also a
22 mistake that harms our city, because if
23 we as a city step up now, these young
24 people will become like Joseph, like
25 Charisma, like Larbriaah, the next

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2 generation of Philadelphia's
3 entrepreneurs and artists, lawyers and
4 doctors, social workers and nurses. If
5 we don't step up now, as our young people
6 often say, they'll become the next
7 generation of chronically homeless
8 adults, in jail or dead. It's our
9 choice.

10 At Covenant House we work
11 exclusively with homeless youth. This is
12 what we do. This is all we do. We serve
13 homeless youth in 27 locations in six
14 countries. We served 51,000 homeless
15 young people last year, including 2,500
16 in Philadelphia alone. We do street
17 outreach where we find young people on
18 the street. They can come into our
19 24/7/365 emergency housing program and
20 receive a full array of services, from
21 behavioral health, mental health,
22 substance abuse, education, vocation,
23 case management. And when they leave
24 that program, they can go to our Rights
25 of Passage transitional housing program

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2 where they can live for up to 18 months
3 while they work and we teach them how to
4 live independently. They pay rent. They
5 get that money back at the end so they
6 can leave us with eight, nine, ten
7 thousand dollars saved for a first and a
8 last on an apartment.

9 But the core of our work really
10 is this: We become family for our young
11 people. As Jenny just said so
12 eloquently, family is what these kids
13 need, and we become family for young
14 people. That's what our kids say:
15 Covenant House is my family. And we all
16 know that family lifts us up. And if we
17 can lift these kids up with family, they
18 can truly transform their lives and
19 achieve and ascend to their full
20 potential.

21 Last year our emergency housing
22 program, our 24/7/365 emergency housing
23 program served 512 homeless young people.
24 We turned away 546 more because our house
25 was full. These 546 young people and the

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2 hundreds and thousands like them are our
3 kids.

4 The young people we serve sit
5 right at the intersection of two City
6 agencies - the Department of Human
7 Services, which is charged with
8 addressing abuse and neglect, and the
9 Office of Supportive Housing, which is
10 charged with addressing homelessness.

11 Now, our young people in many, many cases
12 are homeless because of abuse and
13 neglect, because they've been pushed out,
14 because they've been thrown away. In
15 fact, 40 percent of the young people we
16 serve at our emergency housing program
17 had a foster care involvement. So 40
18 percent of the young people we serve, two
19 out of every five, were at some point in
20 their lives in the custody of the
21 Department of Human Services, and yet
22 they ended up homeless and at our
23 doorstep. And the 60 percent of our
24 youth who weren't in the custody of the
25 Department of Human Services, they very

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2 well could have been. These are the same
3 young people facing the same issues, the
4 same abuses, the same neglect, the same
5 trauma. These young people, the 512 we
6 serve and the 546 we turned away, these
7 are DHS's kids.

8 Now, to its great credit, the
9 Office of Supportive Housing has made
10 real progress. It's functionally ended
11 veteran homelessness and made real
12 progress toward ending chronic adult
13 homelessness, building thousands and
14 thousands of units to serve this very
15 deserving population. But unfortunately
16 the Office of Supportive Housing has made
17 very little progress towards ending youth
18 homelessness.

19 There are only, by my count,
20 based on the 2014 OSH Continuum of Care,
21 76 -- 70 on theirs, six that I know
22 about -- 76 emergency housing beds
23 specifically designed to serve teenagers
24 and adolescents in the entire City of
25 Philadelphia. Seventy-six in the fifth

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2 biggest city in the United States with
3 the highest rate of poverty, 76.

4 OSH counts those beds in its
5 continuum, but funds none of them. In
6 fact, 51 of those 76 are at Covenant
7 House, and they are 100 percent funded by
8 private philanthropy. OSH, well
9 intentioned but did not contribute to
10 help the 512 youth we served last year
11 and did not contribute to help the 546
12 youth we turned away. These youth are
13 OSH's kids.

14 Today, we respectfully
15 recommend two solutions. First, the
16 Mayor's Office should create an
17 interagency council, a task force charged
18 by the Mayor with the sole goal of ending
19 youth homelessness, developing a plan to
20 that end. But a plan is great. A plan
21 is great, but we can't wait for a plan,
22 so we need a plan. We need a plan with
23 all involved stakeholders, all involved
24 agencies, non-government advocates. We
25 need a plan that's transparent, that's

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2 robust, it's resourced, it's smart,
3 that's thoughtful, and that we execute
4 rigorously. But we can't wait for that
5 plan.

6 A few months ago I was standing
7 by our front door and a young woman
8 walked in and I said, Can I help you?

9 And she looked at me and tears
10 started to roll down her cheeks, and she
11 said, I'm 18 years old, I'm eight months
12 pregnant, and I don't have a place to
13 stay.

14 And so I brought her in to our
15 cafeteria. I gave her a sandwich and a
16 drink and we talked for a few minutes,
17 and I told her that we couldn't help her
18 because we were full.

19 We had that conversation 546
20 times last year, and most likely one of
21 my co-workers is going to have that
22 conversation again today twice.

23 We believe that the City needs
24 to immediately significantly expand the
25 number of emergency housing beds for

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2 youth. Now, we stand ready to do our
3 part. I have a list of those 546 kids.
4 I have their cell phone numbers. If we
5 had the resources, we'd start building
6 tomorrow. And I can commit that as we
7 sit here today, within 100 days we would
8 build capacity to serve 180 additional
9 youth. Now, that's a great start, but
10 it's not enough. We need to more than
11 double to address our turn-aways issue,
12 to serve those 546 kids. And if that's
13 what we need to do, we will at Covenant
14 House, and I hope we will as a city,
15 because these are DHS's kids, these are
16 OSH's kids, these are our kids, these are
17 the City of Philadelphia's kids.

18 We're here today because we
19 stand ready to work with Council and the
20 Administration to help these kids. We're
21 here today because we stand with the
22 community of people, many of whom you've
23 seen here today, who care about these
24 kids. And we're here today because we
25 stand with the 546.

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2 Thank you for the opportunity
3 to be here today. I would welcome any
4 questions.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
8 all very much for your testimony. I want
9 to thank Councilman Al Taubenberger, who
10 also joined us today.

11 Councilman Domb.

12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
13 Madam Chairwoman.

14 I have a question for Covenant
15 House. You say in your testimony 51 of
16 the 76 beds that Covenant House are
17 funded 100 percent by private
18 philanthropy.

19 MR. DUCOFF: Yes. That's
20 correct.

21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: You say you
22 could service another 546. What is the
23 cost per bed, roughly?

24 MR. DUCOFF: The cost per bed
25 roughly is about \$27,000, \$28,000. We

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2 estimate we could solve our turn-aways
3 issue \$2.4 million annually.

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Well, 2.4
5 million is not 28,000 per bed.

6 MR. DUCOFF: To solve our
7 problem, we'd have to build about another
8 75 beds, we estimate. So the cost to do
9 75 beds is about -- we projected about
10 \$2.4 million annually.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So help me
12 through this. Seventy-five beds, but you
13 turned away 546 people. Because they're
14 not coming at the same time?

15 MR. DUCOFF: They're not coming
16 at the same time and they stay on average
17 about 30 days. This program is not
18 designed to be a place where people stay
19 forever. It's designed to kind of get
20 kids in, pick them up, give them the
21 skills they need, come up with a plan,
22 and move them on to more permanent
23 housing options, like our transitional
24 housing program.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So we heard

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2 earlier testimony from the City, I
3 believe, that said they needed 3 and a
4 half million for 380 to 400, but you're
5 saying for 75 it's 2.4.

6 MR. DUCOFF: So the 3 and a
7 half million includes -- and I was one of
8 the agencies that submitted that. There
9 were four of us that provided --
10 basically it was if you had a million
11 dollars, what would you do, and one of
12 the things that we said was we would
13 immediately add another 20 beds. We've
14 now -- rather than parse it out, we just
15 looked at all in and said what would it
16 cost to solve the turn-aways problem, our
17 546, and that's the \$2.4 million
18 annually.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Have you ever
20 thought about -- the private
21 philanthropy, are those local
22 foundations?

23 MR. DUCOFF: So it's
24 foundations, it's individual donors, it's
25 event driven. We do -- we're 99.9

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2 percent privately funded. So we get a
3 little public funding just for our street
4 outreach program, not for any of our
5 beds, and we leverage private -- I mean,
6 we're 99.9 percent privately funded. So
7 that's what we do.

8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: That 2.4
9 million, is that an annual cost?

10 MR. DUCOFF: Yes.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: That's every
12 year?

13 MR. DUCOFF: Every year.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How do you go
15 about building out for 75 more beds?
16 Isn't there initial up-front costs?

17 MR. DUCOFF: Yes. So that
18 doesn't include any of the capital costs.
19 We'd have to figure out -- we'd have to
20 find a building. We'd have to figure out
21 capital costs. There are funding streams
22 we could tap into for that, and that's
23 what we would do. We would -- this is
24 just the operating costs, the cost of
25 staff and provide the services.

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2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So are you
3 capable of having the capital costs and
4 just concerned about the operating? Do
5 you have the capital costs taken care of?

6 MR. DUCOFF: We don't have it
7 taken care of, but if we had the
8 operating costs, we would absolutely
9 commit to it. We're investing a capital
10 campaign now, but we want to talk to our
11 partners. We've done some planning on
12 this. We want to be in a position that
13 we can move forward to identify the
14 operating funding and that we can move
15 forward and identify the capital costs.
16 We're talking to the right people, we're
17 looking at the right funding sources, and
18 we're building a plan.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So I'm trying
20 to understand something. Seventy-five
21 beds cost 2.4 million, which is almost
22 30,000.

23 MR. DUCOFF: Somewhere between
24 25 and 30.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Why is it so

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2 much money?

3 MR. DUCOFF: So it's -- to
4 Jenny's point, these kids are kids.
5 They're teenagers. And so they need to
6 provide them, as Jenny said -- and she's
7 right. And even as Director Hersh said,
8 these kids -- because they're
9 adolescents, because they're teenagers,
10 much more staffing and supervision and
11 services, wraparound services that they
12 need. It's a much more intensive
13 intervention. You heard Joseph, a young
14 man who lived with us, describe his
15 experience in the adult shelter system.
16 He sort of -- he came to Covenant House
17 and kind of thought it would be three
18 hots and a cot. Three hots and a cot
19 would be cheaper, no doubt, but three
20 hots and a cot is not what we provide.

21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Right. Okay.
22 Thank you very much. Thank you.

23 MR. DUCOFF: Absolutely.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

25 The Chair recognizes Councilman

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2 Taubenberger.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
4 you, Madam Chair.

5 One question on what you had
6 said earlier, that tonight probably your
7 agency will turn someone away. They've
8 done it, because they're full.

9 MR. DUCOFF: Absolutely.

10 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Where
11 do they go?

12 MR. DUCOFF: This is the
13 challenge. The only place we can refer
14 them is the adult shelter system. And
15 our kids won't go there. You heard
16 Joseph describe his experience, so I
17 don't need to repeat that, and I couldn't
18 say it as nearly as eloquently. Our
19 kids, they're teenagers, they're
20 adolescents. They care about how they're
21 perceived, and they're scared. They
22 don't want to engage in that system. So
23 what happens is, these kids end up maybe
24 on the street, maybe in Love Park. They
25 ending up riding the 23 bus end to end.

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2 They end up on the subway end to end,
3 all-night coffee shops. Big one,
4 abandoned houses. Our young people call
5 them abandos or abandominiums, which is
6 frightening in its kind of gallows humor.
7 But that's where they end up. They end
8 up couch-surfing. So they're trying to
9 find friend to friend to friend. If
10 they've come to us, they've run out of
11 friends. But those are the core places.
12 We have a lot of abandoned houses around
13 the City of Philadelphia, and that's a
14 big place.

15 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
16 if you have room to accommodate them, I
17 think I heard you say, but how long are
18 they then with you normally?

19 MR. DUCOFF: At our program the
20 average is kind of around 30 to 60 days.
21 We have some young people who stay much
22 longer. I talked to a young woman today
23 who has been with us a year. And we have
24 some young people who are shorter,
25 because, again, as Jenny said -- and her

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2 experience is exactly right -- we have
3 young people who walk in the doors and
4 say -- because we're about being a place
5 that's welcoming and supportive, but
6 we're also about rules and expectations.
7 You can't just come in and lay on the
8 sofa and watch TV. So we have young
9 people who will come and say, Whoa, whoa,
10 whoa, all these rules, I'm out. But then
11 our hope is we've been welcoming enough
12 that they come back. So we -- and you
13 heard Joseph say this as well. They will
14 come back time and time again until they
15 finally make that choice that he made.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: One
17 last question. If they do come back, do
18 you accommodate them?

19 MR. DUCOFF: If we can. If
20 we've got the space, absolutely. Our
21 goal is to be there for our kids every
22 time with open arms.

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
24 Thank you very much.

25 MR. DUCOFF: Absolutely. Thank

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2 you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you

4 very much.

5 The Chair recognizes Councilman

6 Domb.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you.

8 One other thought, just as an idea. You

9 know Cristo Rey, the school Cristo Rey?

10 MR. DUCOFF: I do.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: They have a
12 great program where they have their kids
13 work in a job. Is there some way to
14 match -- I heard Joseph speak earlier
15 about that -- match companies with our
16 homeless kids and get them jobs in those
17 companies?

18 MR. DUCOFF: It's a fantastic
19 idea. We do have an education and
20 vocation department that will connect
21 kids with jobs, and we've been doing some
22 outreach. In fact, some of our young
23 people -- we've built some of those
24 relationships. We need to do more. And,
25 honestly, I look at these kids -- I

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2 say -- when I meet with CEOs or when I
3 meet with business people, which we've
4 started doing within the last year, I
5 say, Look, if I've got a kid who pulled
6 himself out of homelessness at age 18,
7 this kid can do whatever job you have.
8 You know, there's a grit and
9 determination that's powerful.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: After this
11 meeting or in the next coming weeks, I'd
12 like to meet with you about that. I
13 think you can expand that program.

14 MR. DUCOFF: Love to. That
15 would be terrific, Councilman. Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
18 very much. I have a million questions
19 actually for Juvenile Justice and Law
20 Center, but I'm going to withhold them
21 because I think we can follow up
22 afterwards. But I do want to thank you
23 all for your work.

24 I want to thank everybody in
25 the audience for their patience and for

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2 their passion about this issue of youth
3 experiencing homelessness. We also
4 invite you on behalf of Council to join
5 us on the northeast corner of City Hall
6 just outside. There is a Couches Don't
7 Count campaign that is being sponsored by
8 Covenant House and Valley Youth House to
9 raise attention to the fact that youth
10 who couch-surf aren't living in a real
11 stable home, and what we are trying to do
12 is raise attention to that. So if we
13 could bring some of us to join members of
14 us on Council, Councilman Taubenberger,
15 Councilman Domb, and Councilwoman
16 Blackwell, that would be wonderful. We
17 invite everybody here.

18 And seeing as there are no more
19 witnesses, this concludes the business of
20 the joint Committee on Children and Youth
21 and Housing. The public hearing on
22 Resolution No. 160235 is recessed to the
23 call of the Chair, and we thank you all
24 very much for your attendance.

25 Thank you.

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2 (Committees on Children and

3 Youth and Housing, Neighborhood

4 Development and the Homeless concluded at

5 4:10 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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