

6/2/2022

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CHILD SEPARATION
IN PHILADELPHIA

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Thursday, June 2, 2022
1:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN DAVID OH, CO-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CO-CHAIR
JUDGE PAUL PANEPINTO, Former Administrative
Judge, Family Court Division, Philadelphia
Court of Common Pleas
SHERIFF ROCHELLE BILAL, Philadelphia Sheriff's
Office
RICHARD WEXLER, Executive Director, National
Coalition for Child Protection Reform
YOLANDA BRYANT, CEO of nonprofit organization,
Families Are Important To Heal (FAITH)
Advocacy Movement
RYSHEE SHAW

RESOLUTION: 220402

6/2/2022

1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Good

3 afternoon. I understand that the
4 state law currently requires that the
5 following announcement be made at the
6 beginning of every remote public
7 hearing as follows: Due to the
8 current public health emergency, City
9 Council Committees are currently
10 meeting remotely. We are using
11 Microsoft Teams to make these remote
12 hearings possible.

13 Instructions for how the
14 public may view and offer public
15 testimony at public hearings of
16 Council Committees are included in the
17 public hearing notices that are
18 published in the Daily News, Inquirer
19 and Legal Intelligencer prior to the
20 hearings and can also be found on
21 PHLCouncil.com. I now note that the
22 hour has come.

23 Clerk, will you please call
24 the roll to take attendance. Members
25 that are in attendance, will please

6/2/2022

1 indicate that you are present when
2 your name is called. Also, please say
3 a few brief words when responding so
4 that your image will be displayed on
5 screen when you speak.

6 THE CLERK: Councilmember
7 David Oh.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: Present. I
9 am here. Thank you very much.

10 THE CLERK: Councilmember
11 Cindy Bass.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
13 afternoon, everyone. I am present.
14 Thank you.

15 THE CLERK: Judge Paul
16 Panepinto.

17 JUDGE PANEPINTO: Thank you
18 very much. I am here.

19 THE CLERK: Sheriff Rochelle
20 Bilal.

21 SHERIFF BILAL: Good
22 afternoon, everyone. I am present.

23 THE CLERK: Richard Wexler.

24 MR. WEXLER: Good afternoon,
25 everybody. It's great to be here.

6/2/2022

1 THE CLERK: Nadeem Bezar.

2 (No response.)

3 THE CLERK: Robin Cooper.

4 (No response.)

5 THE CLERK: Vickie Suarez.

6 (No response.)

7 THE CLERK: Brianna Donahue.

8 (No response.)

9 THE CLERK: Yolanda Bryant.

10 MS. BRYANT: Good afternoon,

11 everyone. I'm attending.

12 THE CLERK: Ryshee Shaw.

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you

15 very much. A quorum of the Committee

16 is present and this hearing is now

17 called to order, the public hearing on

18 the Special Committee on Child

19 Separation pertaining to Resolution

20 No. 220402.

21 Clerk, will you please read

22 the title of the resolution.

23 THE CLERK: Resolution

24 220402, authorizing Council's Special

25 Committee on Child Separation in

6/2/2022

1 Philadelphia to hold public hearings
2 regarding its final report of findings
3 and recommendations.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.
5 Before we begin to hear testimony from
6 any witnesses we may have today,
7 everyone who has been invited to the
8 meeting to testify should be aware
9 that this public hearing is being
10 recorded. Because the hearing is
11 public, participants and viewers have
12 no reasonable expectation of privacy.
13 By continuing to be in the meeting,
14 you are consenting to being recorded.

15 Additionally, prior to
16 recognizing Members for the questions
17 or comments they have for witnesses, I
18 will note for the record at this time
19 we will use the chat feature available
20 in Microsoft Teams to allow Members to
21 signify that they wish to be
22 recognized. In order to comply with
23 the Sunshine Act, the chat feature
24 must only be used for this purpose.

25 Would any members of the

6/2/2022

1 Committee like to make any remarks?
2 If so, please use the chat feature or
3 the hand feature under reactions. If
4 somehow I don't recognize you, just
5 let me know verbally and I will
6 recognize you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
8 Mr. Chairman or my Co-Chair Councilman
9 Oh.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes,
11 Co-Chair. I'm sorry.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's
13 okay. That's all right. Listen, I
14 just really wanted to thank you for
15 your attention to this very important
16 issue. Child separation is something
17 that's not to be taken lightly. I
18 think as parents, we all know the
19 feeling of something happening to your
20 child, particularly being removed from
21 your care. Just the very image of
22 that in your mind can really be
23 disruptive to just your state of well-
24 being.

25 The idea that a child will be

6/2/2022

1 removed without cause from someone's
2 home is very concerning, and I think
3 when you look at the fact that
4 Philadelphia has had a history of
5 having more out-of-home placements
6 than any other city in the nation,
7 that by itself calls for us to really
8 pay attention to what is happening.

9 So I just really wanted to
10 thank you for your attention on this
11 matter as we proceed with today's
12 hearing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
14 very much. And let me thank you as
15 well because this has been a very
16 difficult issue and it has been one
17 that has been extremely hard to bring
18 to light. And I think the community
19 and the children and the parents thank
20 you, Councilwoman Bass, for speaking
21 up and stepping up at a time where you
22 would actually acknowledge the
23 severity of this problem.

24 And let me go on. I do see
25 that Committee member Ryshee Shaw is

6/2/2022

1 on with us and --

2 MR. SHAW: Councilman, how
3 are you?

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Doing very
5 well. Thank you. And I just asked
6 the members of the Committee if
7 anybody would like to make a statement
8 before we proceed on. The Co-Chair
9 Councilmember Bass did. If you would
10 like to or anybody else, please let me
11 know.

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILMAN OH: There being
14 none, let me just thank the members of
15 this Committee. Very difficult work,
16 very emotional. There have been a lot
17 of challenges, not to mention the
18 pandemic that occurred in the middle
19 of everything. But we finally have
20 completed a very thoughtful and I
21 think very thorough report that I
22 think should be taken very seriously
23 not just here in Philadelphia, but in
24 our state and across the nation.

25 I want to especially thank

6/2/2022

1 Richard Wexler for lending his
2 tremendous expertise. We are all very
3 committed, but I will say that Richard
4 Wexler being a journalist certainly
5 had the gift of writing, which was
6 super helpful along with his
7 expertise. But to all the members,
8 thank you for your concern and your
9 willingness to devote your time and
10 efforts and it's not over.

11 We are now distributing this
12 report. We're going to also give a
13 copy to City Council. We will have to
14 adopt it in Council. We have sent it
15 to every legislator. I'll say I know
16 we've gotten it certainly to most
17 legislators. Maybe there's a few more
18 envelopes we've got to send out.
19 We're going to send it to people in
20 our City. We're going to send it to
21 our universities. We're going to send
22 it to the federal government. We're
23 going to send it to the Governor's
24 Office. We are going to do that, and
25 our Committee will continue to work to

6/2/2022

1 bring attention to what is happening
2 here, so thank you for that.

3 And to all the witnesses at
4 all our hearings, I know it wasn't
5 easy. There were certainly a lot of
6 tense times. I appreciate that. And
7 to all the people out there, children,
8 adults, former foster care children
9 and parents and those still struggling
10 and trying to reunite with their
11 families, I appreciate your support
12 and I appreciate your criticism.

13 I know that there are many
14 people distraught and they wish we
15 could do more. This is what we can
16 do. We will do our best to try to
17 move things forward. We need your
18 help. Again, I know people are very
19 upset. They want things to be solved.
20 They will get solved a lot better if
21 you help us get those things done.

22 So having said that, let me
23 move on. We will now convene the
24 public meeting.

25 Clerk, will you please call

6/2/2022

1 the roll to take attendance. Members
2 that are in attendance will please
3 indicate that you are present when
4 your name is called. Also, please say
5 a few brief words when responding so
6 that your image will be displayed on
7 screen when you speak.

8 THE CLERK: Councilmember
9 David Oh.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: I am present.

11 THE CLERK: Councilmember
12 Cindy Bass.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I am
14 present as well. Thank you.

15 THE CLERK: Judge Paul
16 Panepinto.

17 JUDGE PANEPINTO: I am
18 present. Thank you very much.

19 THE CLERK: Sheriff Rochelle
20 Bilal.

21 SHERIFF BILAL: Good
22 afternoon. I am present. Thank you
23 very much.

24 THE CLERK: Richard Wexler.

25 MR. WEXLER: Good afternoon.

6/2/2022

1 I'm here. Thanks very much.

2 THE CLERK: Nadeem Bezar.

3 (No response.)

4 THE CLERK: Robin Cooper.

5 (No response.)

6 THE CLERK: Vicki Suarez.

7 (No response.)

8 THE CLERK: Brianna Donahue.

9 (No response.)

10 THE CLERK: Yolanda Bryant.

11 MS. BRYANT: Good afternoon.

12 I am present.

13 THE CLERK: Ryshee Shaw.

14 MR. SHAW: Good afternoon. I
15 am here.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
17 very much.

18 We will now go into our
19 public meeting. This is a public
20 meeting for Resolution 220402.

21 The Chair recognizes
22 Councilmember Bass, the Co-Chair, for
23 a motion on the final report and
24 recommendations of the Special
25 Committee on Child Separation in

6/2/2022

1 Philadelphia.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank
3 you, Mr. Chairman.

4 I move that the final report
5 and recommendations of the Special
6 Committee on Child Separation in
7 Philadelphia be issued by this
8 Committee to the Council.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: It has been
10 moved and properly -- oops --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: A second.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: -- oh, I need
13 a second.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Did we get a
16 second?

17 SHERIFF BILAL: Rochelle
18 Bilal seconds.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Sheriff Bilal
20 seconds.

21 It has been moved and
22 properly seconded that the final
23 report and recommendations of the
24 Special Committee on Child Separation
25 in Philadelphia be issued by this

6/2/2022

1 Committee to the Council.

2 All those in favor of the
3 motion will signify by saying aye.
4 Those opposed will say nay. So all
5 those in favor, aye.

6 (Ayes.)

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Any opposed?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILMAN OH: The ayes have
10 it.

11 This concludes the business
12 before this Special Committee on Child
13 Separation in Philadelphia. This
14 public hearing is recessed to the call
15 of the Chair. Thank you all very much
16 and have a great day.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank
18 you, Mr. Chairman.

19 MR. SHAW: You too. Thank
20 you so much.

21 SHERIFF BILAL: Thank you so
22 much.

23 MR. SHAW: Have a great day.

24 MR. WEXLER: Thank you very
25 much. Great job.

6/2/2022

1 (Special Committee on Child
2 Separation in Philadelphia concluded
3 at 1:13 p.m.)
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6/2/2022

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

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I, hereby certify that the
proceedings and evidence noted are contained
fully and accurately in the stenographic notes
taken by me in the foregoing matter, and that
this is a correct transcript of the same.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

(The foregoing certification of
this transcript does not apply to any
reproduction of the same by any means,
unless under the direct control and/or
supervision of the certifying reporter.)

6/2/2022

<u>WORD</u> <u>INDEX</u>					
< 1 >	12:22 13:2, 11, 14 14:17	Clerk 2:23	3:6, 10 8:9	10:11	history 7:4
1:00 1:1	beginning 2:6	3:6, 10, 15, 19,	11:8, 11 12:22	Family 1:1	hold 5:1
1:13 15:3	best 10:16	23 4:1, 3, 5, 7,	Council's 4:24	favor 14:2, 5	home 7:2
< 2 >	better 10:20	9, 12, 21, 23	COUNCILWO	feature 5:19,	hour 2:22
2 1:1	Bezár 4:1	10:25 11:8, 11,	MAN 1:1	23 6:2, 3	< I >
2022 1:1	12:2	15, 19, 24 12:2,	3:12 6:7, 12	federal 9:22	idea 6:25
220402 1:1	BILAL 1:1	4, 6, 8, 10, 13	7:20 11:13	feeling 6:19	image 3:4
4:20, 24 12:20	3:20, 21 11:20,	Coalition 1:1	13:2, 11, 14	final 5:2	6:21 11:6
< A >	21 13:17, 18,	CO-CHAIR	14:17	12:23 13:4, 22	Important 1:1
accurately	19 14:21	1:1 6:8, 11	Court 1:1	finally 8:19	6:15
16:1	Brianna 4:7	8:8 12:22	16:12	findings 5:2	included 2:16
acknowledge	12:8	come 2:22	criticism 10:12	following 2:5	indicate 3:1
7:22	brief 3:3 11:5	comments 5:17	current 2:8	follows 2:7	11:3
Act 5:23	bring 7:17	committed 9:3	currently 2:4,	foregoing 16:1,	Inquirer 2:18
Additionally	10:1	COMMITTEE	9	17	Instructions
5:15	BRYANT 1:1	1:1 4:15, 18,	< D >	Former 1:1	2:13
Administrative	4:9, 10 12:10,	25 6:1 7:25	Daily 2:18	10:8	Intelligencer
1:1	11	8:6, 15 9:25	DAVID 1:1	forward 10:17	2:19
adopt 9:14	business 14:11	12:25 13:6, 8,	3:7 11:9	foster 10:8	invited 5:7
adults 10:8	< C >	24 14:1, 12	day 14:16, 23	found 2:20	issue 6:16
Advocacy 1:1	call 2:23	15:1	devote 9:9	fully 16:1	7:16
afternoon 2:3	10:25 14:14	Committees	difficult 7:16	< G >	issued 13:7, 25
3:13, 22, 24	called 3:2	2:9, 16	8:15	gift 9:5	its 5:2
4:10 11:22, 25	4:17 11:4	Common 1:1	direct 16:20	give 9:12	< J >
12:11, 14	calls 7:7	community	Director 1:1	go 7:24 12:18	job 14:25
allow 5:20	care 6:21 10:8	7:18	displayed 3:4	going 9:12, 19,	journalist 9:4
and/or 16:20	CARROLL	completed 8:20	11:6	20, 21, 23, 24	JUDGE 1:1
announcement	16:11	comply 5:22	disruptive 6:23	Good 2:2	3:15, 17 11:15,
2:5	cause 7:1	concern 9:8	distraught	3:12, 21, 24	17
anybody 8:7,	CEO 1:1	concluded 15:2	10:14	4:10 11:21, 25	June 1:1
10	certainly 9:4,	concludes	distributing	12:11, 14	< K >
apply 16:18	16 10:5	14:11	9:11	gotten 9:16	know 6:5, 18
appreciate	certification	consenting	Division 1:1	government	8:11 9:15
10:6, 11, 12	16:17	5:14	Doing 8:4	9:22	10:4, 13, 18
asked 8:5	certify 16:1	contained 16:1	Donahue 4:7	Governor's	< L >
attendance	certifying	continue 9:25	12:8	9:23	law 2:4
2:24, 25 11:1,	16:21	continuing	Due 2:7	great 3:25	Legal 2:19
2	Chair 12:21	5:13	< E >	14:16, 23, 25	legislator 9:15
attending 4:11	14:15	control 16:20	easy 10:5	< H >	legislators 9:17
attention 6:15	Chairman 6:8	convene 10:23	efforts 9:10	hand 6:3	lending 9:1
7:8, 10 10:1	7:12 13:3	Cooper 4:3	emergency 2:8	happening	light 7:18
authorizing	14:18	12:4	emotional 8:16	6:19 7:8 10:1	lightly 6:17
4:24	challenges 8:17	copy 9:13	envelopes 9:18	hard 7:17	Listen 6:13
available 5:19	chat 5:19, 23	correct 16:1	especially 8:25	Heal(FAITH	location 1:1
aware 5:8	6:2	COUNCIL	everybody	1:1	look 7:3
aye 14:3, 5	CHILD 1:1	1:1 2:9, 16	3:25	health 2:8	lot 8:16 10:5,
Ayes 14:6, 9	4:18, 25 6:16,	9:13, 14 13:8	evidence 16:1	hear 5:5	20
< B >	20, 25 12:25	14:1	Executive 1:1	hearing 2:7,	< M >
BASS 1:1	15:1	COUNCILMA	expectation	17 4:16, 17	matter 7:11
3:11, 12 6:7,	children 7:19	N 1:1 2:2	5:12	5:9, 10 7:12	16:1
12 7:20 8:9	10:7, 8	3:8 4:14 5:4	expertise 9:2, 7	14:14	means 16:19
11:12, 13	CINDY 1:1	6:8, 10 7:13	extremely 7:17	hearings 2:12,	meeting 2:10
	3:11 11:12	8:2, 4, 13	< F >	15, 20 5:1	5:8, 13 10:24
	CITY 1:1 2:8	11:10 12:16	fact 7:3	10:4	
	7:6 9:13, 20	13:9, 12, 15, 19	Families 1:1	help 10:18, 21	
		14:7, 9		helpful 9:6	
		Councilmember			

6/2/2022

12:19, 20 member 7:25 Members 2:24 5:16, 20, 25 8:6, 14 9:7 11:1 mention 8:17 Microsoft 2:11 5:20 Microsoft® 1:1 middle 8:18 mind 6:22 motion 12:23 14:3 move 10:17, 23 13:4 moved 13:10, 21 Movement 1:1 < N > Nadeem 4:1 12:2 name 3:2 11:4 nation 7:6 8:24 National 1:1 nay 14:4 need 10:17 13:12 News 2:18 nonprofit 1:1 Notary 16:12 note 2:21 5:18 noted 16:1 notes 16:1 notices 2:17 < O > occurred 8:18 offer 2:14 Office 1:1 9:24 OH 1:1 2:2 3:7, 8 4:14 5:4 6:9, 10 7:13 8:4, 13 11:9, 10 12:16 13:9, 12, 15, 19 14:7, 9 okay 6:13 oops 13:10 opposed 14:4, 7 order 4:17 5:22 organization 1:1	out-of-home 7:5 < P > p.m 1:1 15:3 pandemic 8:18 PANEPINTO 1:1 3:16, 17 11:16, 17 parents 6:18 7:19 10:9 participants 5:11 particularly 6:20 PAUL 1:1 3:15 11:15 pay 7:8 people 9:19 10:7, 14, 18 pertaining 4:19 PHILADELPH IA 1:1 5:1 7:4 8:23 13:1, 7, 25 14:13 15:2 PHLCouncil.co m 2:21 placements 7:5 Pleas 1:1 please 2:23, 25 3:2 4:21 6:2 8:10 10:25 11:2, 4 possible 2:12 PRESENT 1:1 3:1, 8, 13, 22 4:16 11:3, 10, 14, 18, 22 12:12 prior 2:19 5:15 privacy 5:12 problem 7:23 proceed 7:11 8:8 proceedings 16:1 properly 13:10, 22 Protection 1:1 public 2:6, 8, 14, 15, 17 4:17 5:1, 9, 11 10:24 12:19 14:14 16:12 published 2:18	purpose 5:24 < Q > questions 5:16 quorum 4:15 < R > reactions 6:3 read 4:21 really 6:14, 22 7:7, 9 reasonable 5:12 recessed 14:14 recognize 6:4, 6 recognized 5:22 recognizes 12:21 recognizing 5:16 recommendatio ns 5:3 12:24 13:5, 23 record 5:18 recorded 5:10, 14 Reform 1:1 regarding 5:2 remarks 6:1 Remote 1:1 2:6, 11 remotely 2:10 removed 6:20 7:1 report 5:2 8:21 9:12 12:23 13:4, 23 Reporter 16:12, 21 reproduction 16:19 requires 2:4 RESOLUTION 1:1 4:19, 22, 23 12:20 responding 3:3 11:5 response 4:2, 4, 6, 8, 13 8:12 12:3, 5, 7, 9 14:8 reunite 10:10 RICHARD 1:1 3:23 9:1, 3 11:24 right 6:13	Robin 4:3 12:4 ROCHELLE 1:1 3:19 11:19 13:17 roll 2:24 11:1 RYSHEE 1:1 4:12 7:25 12:13 < S > saying 14:3 screen 3:5 11:7 second 13:11, 13, 16 seconded 13:22 seconds 13:18, 20 see 7:24 send 9:18, 19, 20, 21, 23 sent 9:14 SEPARATION 1:1 4:19, 25 6:16 12:25 13:6, 24 14:13 15:2 seriously 8:22 severity 7:23 SHAW 1:1 4:12 7:25 8:2 12:13, 14 14:19, 23 SHERIFF 1:1 3:19, 21 11:19, 21 13:17, 19 14:21 Sheriff's 1:1 signify 5:21 14:3 solved 10:19, 20 someone's 7:1 sorry 6:11 speak 3:5 11:7 speaking 7:20 SPECIAL 1:1 4:18, 24 12:24 13:5, 24 14:12 15:1 state 2:4 6:23 8:24 statement 8:7 stenographic 16:1 stepping 7:21 struggling 10:9	Suarez 4:5 12:6 Sunshine 5:23 super 9:6 supervision 16:21 support 10:11 < T > take 2:24 11:1 taken 6:17 8:22 16:1 TANEHA 16:11 Teams 1:1 2:11 5:20 tense 10:6 testify 5:8 testimony 2:15 5:5 Thank 3:9, 14, 17 4:14 5:4 6:14 7:10, 12, 13, 14, 19 8:5, 14, 25 9:8 10:2 11:14, 18, 22 12:16 13:2 14:15, 17, 19, 21, 24 Thanks 12:1 things 10:17, 19, 21 think 6:18 7:2, 18 8:21, 22 thorough 8:21 thoughtful 8:20 Thursday 1:1 time 5:18 7:21 9:9 times 10:6 title 4:22 today 5:6 today's 7:11 transcript 16:1, 18 tremendous 9:2 try 10:16 trying 10:10 < U > understand 2:3 universities 9:21 upset 10:19 use 5:19 6:2	< V > verbally 6:5 Vicki 12:6 Vickie 4:5 view 2:14 viewers 5:11 < W > want 8:25 10:19 wanted 6:14 7:9 well 6:23 7:15 8:5 11:14 We're 9:12, 19, 20, 21, 22 we've 9:16, 18 WEXLER 1:1 3:23, 24 9:1, 4 11:24, 25 14:24 willingness 9:9 wish 5:21 10:14 witnesses 5:6, 17 10:3 words 3:3 11:5 work 8:15 9:25 writing 9:5 < Y > YOLANDA 1:1 4:9 12:10
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