

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CITY AND PRIVATE SECTOR
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICIES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, September 28, 2026
10:05 a.m.

PRESENT:

HAROLD T. EPPS, CO-CHAIR	LYNN NEWSOME
REGINA HAIRSTON, CO-CHAIR	MICHAEL O'BRYAN
KEN ANDERSON	BRIAN OGLESBY
BRIAN ANSARI	ANGELO PERRYMAN
JANIRA BARROSO	DAN RHOTON
BUTCH BENNETT	DEAN ROBATEAU
MACY BROOKS/ROBERT WRIGHT	MELISSA ROBBINS
GLENN BRYAN	MARIA ROBERTS
LYNN CUTLER	JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ
MICHELLE FLAMER	BLANE STODDART
GIANNA GROSSMANN	NICOLE STOKES
JODIE HARRIS	JOHN THOMAS
CATHERINE HICKS	TOM WEBSTER
JEFF HORNSTEIN	ZACHARY WILCHA
VICTORIA HOSENDORF/DELLA CLARK	CRAIG WILLIAMS
SHEILA IRELAND	CAROL ZACHARY SMITH
NICO MEYERING	KHINE ZAW ARTHUR

RESOLUTION: 240107

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MR. EPPS: Good morning.

2 It's 10:08 a.m. And again, good
3 morning. This is the public
4 hearing and public meeting of the
5 Special Committee on City and
6 Private Sector Diversity, Equity
7 and Inclusion Policies. My name is
8 Harold T. Epps. I serve as
9 Co-Chair of the committee, along
10 with my fellow Co-Chair Ms. Regina
11 Hairston.

12 This committee was
13 created to examine city and private
14 sector policies and to recommend
15 ways to strengthen them for
16 minority, women and disabled-owned
17 businesses.

18 MS. HAIRSTON: Good
19 morning. I am Co-Chair Regina A.
20 Hairston. Thank you, Co-Chair
21 Epps.

22 Mr. Groomes, will you
23 please read the title of the
24 resolution authorizing the

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 committee (inaudible) and will take
2 attendance.

3 THE CLERK: Good
4 morning. Resolution No. 240107,
5 authorizing the creation of a
6 Special Committee on City and
7 Private Sector Diversity, Equity
8 and Inclusion Policies to examine
9 the impact of such policies and to
10 provide practical, evidence-based
11 recommendations to enhance policy
12 effectiveness and the promotion of
13 minority, women and disabled-owned
14 businesses in the City of
15 Philadelphia.

16 I will now call the
17 roll.

18 Harold T. Epps.

19 MR. EPPS: Present.

20 THE CLERK: Regina
21 Hairston.

22 MS. HAIRSTON: Present.

23 THE CLERK: Michelle
24 Flamer.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MS. FLAMER: Present.
2 THE CLERK: Brian
3 Ansari.
4 (Inaudible.)
5 THE CLERK: Victoria
6 Hosendorf for Della Clark.
7 MS. HOSENDORF: Present.
8 THE CLERK: Jodie
9 Harris.
10 (Inaudible.)
11 THE CLERK: Khine Zaw
12 Arthur.
13 (No response.)
14 THE CLERK: Macy Brooks
15 for Member Robert Bright.
16 (Inaudible.)
17 THE CLERK: Angelo
18 Perryman.
19 (Inaudible.)
20 THE CLERK: Carol
21 Zachary Smith.
22 (Inaudible.)
23 THE CLERK: Dean
24 Robateau.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MR. ROBATEAU: Present.
2 THE CLERK: Lynn
3 Newsome.
4 MS. NEWSOME: Present.
5 THE CLERK: Craig
6 Williams.
7 MR. WILLIAMS: Present.
8 THE CLERK: Maria
9 Roberts.
10 MS. ROBERTS: Present.
11 THE CLERK: Jeff
12 Hornstein.
13 MR. HORNSTEIN: Present.
14 THE CLERK: Ken
15 Anderson.
16 (Inaudible.)
17 THE CLERK: Blane
18 Stoddart.
19 (Inaudible.)
20 THE CLERK: Glenn Bryan.
21 (Inaudible.)
22 THE CLERK: Brian
23 Oglesby.
24 MR. OGLESBY: Present.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 THE CLERK: Jennifer
2 Rodriguez.
3 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Present.
4 THE CLERK: John Thomas.
5 MR. THOMAS: Present.
6 THE CLERK: Melissa
7 Robbins.
8 (Inaudible.)
9 THE CLERK: Zachary
10 Wilcha.
11 (Inaudible.)
12 THE CLERK: Nicole
13 Stokes.
14 (Inaudible.)
15 THE CLERK: Janira
16 Barroso.
17 (Inaudible.)
18 THE CLERK: Lynn Cutler.
19 (Inaudible.)
20 THE CLERK: Sheila
21 Ireland.
22 MS. IRELAND: Present.
23 THE CLERK: Nico
24 Meyering.

1 (Inaudible.)

2 THE CLERK: Gianna

3 Grossman.

4 (Inaudible.)

5 THE CLERK: Michael

6 O'Brien.

7 (Inaudible.)

8 THE CLERK: Dan Rhoton.

9 (Inaudible.)

10 THE CLERK: Butch

11 Bennett.

12 (Inaudible.)

13 THE CLERK: Catherine

14 Hicks.

15 (Inaudible.)

16 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank

17 you. A quorum of the committee is

18 present and this hearing is now

19 called to order.

20 MR. EPPS: Before we

21 begin, I want to frame the purpose

22 of today's hearing. Again, this

23 committee was created to examine

24 city and private sector DEI

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 policies. Our goal is to recommend
2 ways to strengthen them for
3 minority, women and disabled-owned
4 businesses.

5 Our review has found
6 persistent structural barriers.
7 The testimonies we receive today
8 will help disclose in greater
9 detail the findings set out in the
10 committee's report. Today we hear
11 from those closest to the work.

12 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
13 you, Co-Chair Epps. We will now
14 turn to our first panel. To make
15 sure every voice is heard, we will
16 follow a time limit. Each witness
17 will have two to three minutes for
18 spoken testimony.

19 THE CLERK: We will now
20 call the witnesses for the first
21 panel: Donna Allie and Patricia
22 Sanford. And could you please
23 state your name and organization
24 for the record.

1 (Witnesses approached
2 witness table.)

3 MS. ALLIE: My name is
4 Donna Allie and I am President and
5 CEO of Team Clean, which is a
6 building maintenance firm.

7 MS. SANFORD: Patricia
8 Sanford, CEO, Alexander Perry, Inc.
9 a construction management and
10 architectural design company.

11 THE CLERK: You may
12 begin with your testimony when
13 you're ready.

14 MR. EPPS: Let's just
15 clarify before you do that. This
16 panel will discuss the nature of
17 inclusive participation policies in
18 municipal contracting
19 opportunities. Witnesses will
20 share success stories that
21 illustrate the merits and benefits
22 of strong, diverse participation
23 programming. Ms. Allie, please
24 proceed.

1 MS. ALLIE: Well, first
2 of all, thank you very much to the
3 committee for allowing me to
4 testify today. Let me just say
5 that Team Clean has been providing
6 janitorial services and ancillary
7 services for the City of
8 Philadelphia since 1993. When I
9 began right after college, I began
10 cleaning homes on the Main Line
11 because I didn't have a job.

12 And so, I started
13 cleaning homes. Within three
14 years, I was about up to 55 houses
15 a week. But then I was introduced
16 to a program MBEC, which is now
17 OEO, which really changed my life.
18 It really did. It changed my
19 business and my life. And at that
20 time, it was under the leadership
21 of Councilmember Jones and
22 supported by Leaders Marlon
23 Hamilton and Jim Roundtree.

24 So when I entered the

1 program, it gave me an opportunity
2 to subcontract on larger projects
3 in the city. We did not simply
4 wait for the next opportunity. We
5 used those skills and the knowledge
6 and the relationships that we
7 gained through the program to
8 pursue new opportunities, went on
9 to the Convention Center, City
10 Hall, Art Museum, Baltimore
11 Convention Center. Things that I
12 would never had an opportunity to
13 do if I had not been introduced to
14 MBEC.

15 So over the years, we
16 have built successful partnerships
17 again, which I never, ever would
18 have known if it wasn't for the
19 program. We built partnerships
20 with big firms, big local firms
21 like Elliott-Lewis and PRWT and US
22 Facilities. Those relationships
23 made possible because we developed
24 the skills. We didn't sit on our

1 laurels. We didn't wait for the
2 next OEO opportunities. We used
3 our skills and capabilities to go
4 out there and get more.

5 So today, as I look to
6 retire one day hopefully, I find
7 myself reflecting on the next
8 generation. I am not concerned
9 about my own success right now. I
10 am concerned about those who will
11 follow, who is going to ensure that
12 they have the opportunities that I
13 have had. I understand that
14 policies and priorities evolve and
15 we may need to pivot away from
16 certain terminology, but I -- and I
17 don't have the plan.

18 But I do know that if we
19 go to local businesses and support
20 local small businesses, and I'm
21 thinking maybe that's in place of
22 diversity, we have to make sure
23 that they are truly local
24 businesses. I recall going to D.C.

1 one time to get an opportunity, and
2 they flat out told me if you're a
3 corporate staff was not paid from
4 here, if your managers are not paid
5 from here, sorry, you don't
6 qualify. So I say that we really
7 need to ensure if we're going to
8 pivot to local, that these
9 companies are truly local.

10 So I close by
11 emphasizing that our responsibility
12 is really to the next generation.
13 We must continue to create pathways
14 for entrepreneurs and small
15 businesses. We have to look to the
16 private sector. They come to
17 Philadelphia to do business. It
18 makes sense to do business with
19 local businesses. We live here.
20 We care. We educate our kids here.
21 I mean, what more can I say. But
22 we need to absolutely make sure
23 that we have -- that we're
24 supporting our local businesses and

1 our minority and small businesses.

2 And with that, I'll turn

3 it over to my friend --

4 MS. SANFORD: My dear

5 friend here.

6 MR. EPPS: I'll take a

7 minute. Are there any questions

8 coming from the panel to Ms. Allie?

9 (No response.)

10 MR. EPPS: I don't see

11 any. So of course those of you who

12 know me, I always have a question.

13 And so, my question is this: Can

14 you share with us, with any

15 reasonable range, the percentage of

16 your employees that live in

17 Philadelphia?

18 MS. ALLIE: 99 and

19 three-quarters percent.

20 MR. EPPS: And I'm going

21 to assume that many of them ride

22 SEPTA?

23 MS. ALLIE: Most of them

24 ride SEPTA.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MR. EPPS: Thank you.

2 I'll stop there. Thank you very
3 much.

4 Any other questions?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. EPPS: Ms. Sanford.

7 MS. SANFORD: All right.

8 Thank you so much. Good morning,
9 Council President in his absence,
10 Co-Chairs, members of the committee
11 and distinguished guests. Again,
12 my name is Patricia Sanford. I'm
13 the CEO and founder of Alexander
14 Perry, Inc., and I'm honored to
15 speak today about the impact that
16 diversity, equity and inclusion
17 policies have had on my company, my
18 career and the communities that we
19 serve.

20 I stand before you or
21 sit before you as proof that when
22 opportunities are intentionally
23 created, diverse businesses can
24 compete, grow and contribute at

1 highest levels. Over the years
2 since 1992, Alexander Perry, Inc.
3 has participated in supplier,
4 diversity, cohort, mentoring,
5 inclusion programs that open doors
6 to meaningful public and private
7 sector opportunities. Through
8 these opportunities, we have
9 successfully delivered projects for
10 the School District of
11 Philadelphia, energy service
12 companies PGW, Exelon, Comcast, LF
13 Driscoll and the City of
14 Philadelphia.

15 Our project that is
16 especially meaningful to me is our
17 construction management work at
18 Alain Locke Elementary School. It
19 is an honor to help improve a
20 school where I attended
21 kindergarten. DEI policies did
22 more than create a contract
23 opportunity. They created a full
24 circle moment where a local student

1 returned as a business owner,
2 helping to improve the learning
3 environment for future generations.

4 We have also supported
5 the city through work with the
6 Mayor's Office for People with
7 Disabilities, helping advance ADA
8 compliance, accessibility
9 throughout the entire City of
10 Philadelphia. These efforts help
11 ensure that public spaces and
12 facilities serve all residents.

13 Beyond my business, I
14 have also served for 12 years as a
15 Philadelphia Art Commissioner.
16 That experience -- and appointed by
17 two mayors. That experience
18 reinforced the importance of
19 ensuring that every community has a
20 voice and an opportunity to
21 participate in shaping our city.
22 Our growth was made possible
23 through mentorship, supplier
24 diversity initiatives, and access

1 to opportunities partnerships with
2 some of the groups that are even
3 here, PGW again, public entities
4 have helped to build my capacity,
5 strengthen our workforce and
6 compete for increasingly larger and
7 more complex projects.

8 The value of DEI is not
9 simply about awarding contracts.
10 It's about creating pathways for
11 businesses to gain experience,
12 build financial strength, create
13 jobs, and become long-term
14 contributors to Philadelphia's
15 economy. Relationships and access
16 are equally important.

17 Two decades ago, Ernest
18 Jones, CEO of the Philadelphia
19 Workforce Development Corporation,
20 offered my firm an opportunity to
21 provide architectural and
22 construction management services
23 for his organization, garnering a
24 \$6 million project back then and

1 has allowed my firm to grow and be
2 sustainable. One decision, one
3 act. The current Administration,
4 Chambers, city organizations
5 provide influence and access, some
6 of whom are here today. It does
7 make a difference. One decision,
8 one act caused me to still be
9 sitting here today.

10 Today Alexander Perry
11 serves clients through education,
12 energy, healthcare, transportation,
13 hospitality, and public
14 infrastructure. We partner with
15 other diverse and non-diverse firms
16 to help deliver projects that
17 improve communities throughout our
18 region. My story demonstrates when
19 access meets opportunities and
20 policies are implemented
21 thoughtfully, they do not lower
22 standards. They expand
23 opportunities, strengthen
24 competition, create economic

1 impact, and allow businesses like
2 mine to give back to the
3 communities that helped shape us.

4 Thank you for your
5 leadership, your commitment to
6 opportunity and for allowing me to
7 share my story today. After all,
8 if it wasn't for these programs,
9 how could my business grow. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. EPPS: Thank you,
12 Ms. Sanford.

13 And again to the panel,
14 are there any questions before I
15 get to my one?

16 Ms. Rodriguez.

17 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Good
18 morning and thank you so much for
19 being here with us. Your
20 businesses have been now
21 established for a number of
22 decades. The environment is
23 quickly changing. Today, what
24 would you say from your perspective

1 to emerging firms in the
2 marketplace today what do you think
3 or what is your opinion on what
4 needs to be done for them to be
5 able to scale in the way that you
6 have, given the current
7 environment?

8 MS. ALLIE: Wow. Do you
9 want to -- basically, I would think
10 show up. Show up has always been,
11 you know, a way for me to grow.
12 Just show up, look for those
13 opportunities. We don't have DIE
14 anymore, but we just have to make
15 sure that you are aware of all the
16 opportunities. I still read the
17 Philadelphia Business Journal. I
18 read whatever it is, the
19 Philadelphia Inquirer.

20 I'm in janitorial, as
21 you know. So if there's a building
22 that's going to be built, I'm going
23 to know about it. And I comb
24 through, you know, look for the

1 procurement agencies, the person in
2 charge, start sending out letters.
3 And so, I mean it's just show up as
4 much as you can.

5 MS. SANFORD: And I
6 definitely echo that. And my
7 friend here Donna Allie is very
8 tenacious and has always been a
9 go-getter the entire time. So I
10 would say the skill set that she
11 has is something that we all could
12 emulate. In addition to that, I
13 think relationships are important.
14 Don't underestimate. You don't
15 always have to talk to somebody
16 about an opportunity.

17 Maybe you're developing
18 a relationship with them that they
19 can help later. If I didn't have
20 that relationship -- I use that as
21 an example because that's such a
22 clear indication where somebody had
23 an opportunity and they had the
24 sole decision on who would do the

1 work. And that's because I had
2 developed a relationship with Ernie
3 Jones through different nonprofit
4 organizations and a lot of the
5 volunteer work that I did.

6 So relationships, I
7 would say, would be something that
8 an emerging company should think
9 about joining. Associations like
10 the Chamber of Commerces, yours,
11 African American Chamber of
12 Commerce, because then you'll have
13 connections again with people that
14 can help facilitate you in the
15 right way.

16 And also, don't
17 underestimate the industry that
18 you're in. So if you're in HVAC,
19 like Michael Brown, and in fact,
20 you would want to maybe communicate
21 with other people in your industry.
22 So I would say that would be
23 another way. But honestly, if
24 there isn't a situation where

1 someone says you should do business
2 like Atlanta did, we will not build
3 this airport unless X, Y, Z is on
4 the project, unless those things
5 are also in place, it will be
6 difficult to navigate. You can do
7 it, but it would be difficult.

8 MS. ALLIE:

9 Ms. Rodriguez, can I just say add
10 one more thing? Pat is absolutely
11 correct about relationships. Also,
12 because I am a mature business, I
13 often look for opportunities. Like
14 if I'm combing through the
15 Philadelphia Business Journal, if I
16 know something, I will call on
17 Maria Roberts. I will call on Pat.
18 I will call on a janitorial firm
19 that's maybe a tad bit smaller than
20 we are. So I think that's
21 important too, that we really need
22 to support one another. We can't
23 just depend on you all. We have to
24 support one another. And knowing

1 those businesses through the
2 African American Chamber of
3 Commerce helps.

4 MS. ROBERTS: I have a
5 question. I look at two very
6 polished and distinguished business
7 leaders in Philadelphia. And
8 between the two of you, I think you
9 probably 20, 30 years, maybe a
10 little more of business experience.
11 I'm being generous, I know, because
12 I'm sitting here because we're all
13 part of the same cohort, right.

14 And this is more of a
15 question and it might dovetail into
16 a statement. When you started off
17 your company's 20 or 30 years ago,
18 there were programs. So when I
19 hear you speak, I hear you speak
20 about your trajectory to your
21 success. I hear you mentioned
22 MBEC, Councilman Curtis Jones,
23 Ernie. I hear you speak about
24 leaders who were available, who

1 were sort of guides.

2 My question, and it's a
3 statement in a way, because it
4 leads into how do young people who
5 are starting off today, because
6 it's a very different ecosystem,
7 it's a very different marketplace,
8 where do they go to for guidance?
9 And I'm saying this because when I
10 started off, there was MBEC. And
11 there were -- it may be a foul word
12 to say some set-asides, right,
13 there were percentages of contracts
14 that were earmarked for women,
15 minority and disabled individuals.

16 If that doesn't exist
17 today, let me -- I'm going to ask
18 you ladies, because you're a lot of
19 wisdom, how does this generation
20 tap into that? How do they tap
21 into the marketplace? We had
22 guidance. I hear you say go to
23 meetings, but somebody taught you
24 that, right. Somebody explained

1 that to you.

2 Many of these young
3 people didn't come out of homes
4 where their parents were business
5 owners or executives. Many of
6 these people were just like us. We
7 came from an average middle income,
8 some lower-income homes. Let me
9 ask you for your wisdom and
10 guidance. I want to keep talking,
11 but I want your vision for what the
12 future holds and how can they be as
13 successful as you?

14 MS. ALLIE: Well, I
15 would say first of all we need
16 advocacy. We had advocacy back
17 then and we had strong advocates.
18 You heard Pat say, Ernie Jones, who
19 also was advocating for my
20 business. We had Bruce Crawley.
21 We had Rotan Lee, I'm going way
22 back now. You'll probably remember
23 him.

24 And so, we had all of

1 the -- and I apologize if I'm
2 forgetting any, but we had strong
3 advocates. I remember when I was
4 invited to a contract at the
5 Convention Center and I was a
6 subcontractor, but the boys wanted
7 the whole pie. They didn't want to
8 give up a part of the pie. And I
9 recall the board sitting around,
10 you know, the board. And they were
11 asking us, how's things going? And
12 everybody was talking about how
13 things were going.

14 And when they got to
15 me -- because I knew that these
16 boys didn't want me there. They
17 used to do things like lock the
18 door when you walk out of the
19 meeting. When I was there, it was
20 a lot. It was a lot that we went
21 through, right, Pat?

22 MS. SANFORD: (Nodding
23 affirmatively).

24 MS. ALLIE: We went

1 through a lot. So what happened
2 was in this board meeting, they
3 came to me. Everybody else was
4 hunky-dory, everything's going
5 fine. When they got to me, they
6 asked me, and this is a true story.
7 They asked me how things were
8 going. I don't know what possessed
9 me to say that and where the tears
10 came from, but I cried in that
11 meeting -- I'm a cry baby -- but I
12 cried in that meeting and let them
13 know the discrimination and the
14 hardship that I was having being a
15 part of this contract.

16 And after that, we had
17 Amina Young, we had Carl, we had
18 all those advocates, and they
19 weren't having it. They were not
20 having it. And they said, hit the
21 pike, go out the door. And
22 everything after that, things
23 changed there. But we had those
24 advocates who were really, really

1 fighting for us and they didn't
2 take any nonsense.

3 MS. SANFORD: Yeah,
4 100%. I totally agree with that.
5 And sorry I didn't mention Bruce
6 Crawley, but definitely an
7 advocate. And I was there from the
8 beginning of the African American
9 Chamber of Commerce. I would also
10 say, to the pivot on what you're
11 saying is I started out, I went
12 right to Urban League, had a
13 leadership training for young
14 people right from college and
15 leadership. I went right in there.
16 I was always getting into whatever
17 programs were available. But that
18 taught me extreme leadership skills
19 that I think is relevant today for
20 any young person, that they join
21 some kind of program that teaches
22 them leadership skills, business
23 development, things like that.

24 But we also have

1 industries like the Economy League
2 of Philadelphia that has a PAGE
3 department. I think we have
4 everything in place that we need.
5 We just need to -- and also, I'm
6 sorry, I have to say, the Mayor's
7 office, her whole organization is
8 polished, ready to go, ready to
9 support you.

10 I am the recipient of
11 upcoming city contracts because of
12 the Mayor's office, this current
13 Administration. So I feel like we
14 have everything in place to move
15 this agenda forward for the next
16 ten years. We need to really be
17 thinking about -- the one thing I
18 want to say. I want to backtrack a
19 bit.

20 I've been in business
21 three decades, which means I've
22 seen the first decade and what
23 happened the second and the third.
24 Each decade we were promoting a

1 small number of minority-owned
2 businesses. These are the
3 businesses that you do business
4 with the next ten years, it was
5 another group, and this next decade
6 we're in.

7 Now, I would say that
8 because of the way the
9 infrastructure is in the city,
10 there seems to be more diversity
11 spreading out of opportunities.
12 But I really don't think we should
13 think about there's only a tiny
14 pie. I mean, there's trillions of
15 dollars coming into the state of
16 Pennsylvania. So if we don't have
17 100 companies that are 20 million
18 and above, then we have failed.

19 MR. EPPS: Note. Thank
20 you. It's part of my duty to keep
21 it moving so we could be out of
22 here by 12:00 noon. And so, as you
23 close, and I want to thank you, I
24 want to ask you to answer the

1 following question: The basic
2 question is in your business
3 relatively, what percent of it is
4 the public sector and what percent
5 is the private sector? This is not
6 an audit so it doesn't have to be
7 100% accurate. Just give us a
8 range.

9 MS. SANFORD: Yeah. So
10 for me, because I serve a
11 construction industry and an
12 architecture industry, I'm about
13 50/50 on corporate versus
14 state/local government. But I will
15 say for this next trajectory, '26
16 going to '28, it's going to be a
17 little bit more city, state
18 government and federal government.
19 And that's because of the new
20 policies that are in place.

21 So corporations, unless
22 at the top, the corporation is
23 saying, I'm going to do business
24 with somebody that has this

1 expertise and I don't care what
2 their nationality is, it's going to
3 go state. My increase is going to
4 be on the state/local government
5 side.

6 MR. EPPS: So right now
7 you're about 50/50. Thank you.

8 MS. ALLIE: And I would
9 say I'm 80/20. And 80/20 meaning
10 that 80% of our business is with
11 the City of Philadelphia. 20% is
12 the private sector. The City of
13 Philadelphia, I must say
14 Procurement and Public Property
15 over the years. Because remember,
16 I've been here 29 years, 30 years.
17 And they have truly partnered with
18 us and have been good partners.

19 The challenge is the
20 private sector. You know, I don't
21 golf with them. I don't eat at the
22 same restaurants. I ain't from the
23 same neighborhood. So, you know,
24 it's a challenge. I look at the

1 Bellwether District. I was just
2 talking to Kenyatta about that. I
3 look at Hanwha. My office is
4 across the street from Hanwha. I
5 look at Rhoads. My office again is
6 down the street from Rhoads. And
7 so, I think that if the city or the
8 committee could do a little bit
9 more to encourage them, that it
10 makes good sense to do business
11 with local firms, you know, we're
12 right here. We care, right. So
13 there it is.

14 MR. EPPS: Thank you. I
15 think at this point we'll need to
16 put a pin in it. But that was
17 outstanding. We appreciate that.
18 And thank you for showing up on a
19 rainy Monday morning.

20 Ms. Hairston, I think
21 you now have the baton.

22 MS. HAIRSTON: Yes.
23 Thank you. We now turn to Panel 2.
24 Mr. Groomes, will you please call

1 the witnesses for this panel.

2 MR. EPPS: Before
3 calling the witnesses, would you
4 describe the focus of this panel
5 please?

6 THE CLERK: Yes. So
7 Panel 2, this panel examines the
8 obstacles businesses face in
9 municipal contracting processes and
10 what allows some to expand and
11 build capacities while others
12 stall. Topics include access to
13 capital, insurance and bonding,
14 contract unbundling and other
15 policy barriers.

16 For this panel, we have
17 Victoria Hosendorf, Craig Williams,
18 Nadir Jones and Deborah Lawton.

19 (Witnesses approached
20 witness table.)

21 MR. EPPS: And as they
22 come forward, Ms. Hosendorf is
23 Executive Vice-President of the
24 Enterprise Center of New Jersey,

1 and she also is co-lead at the
2 Enterprise Center with Ms. Della
3 Clerk; Craig Williams is founder of
4 Pride Enterprises; Nadir Jones, new
5 to Philadelphia, Director of Office
6 of Business Impact and Economic
7 Advancement, and Deborah Lawton,
8 Director of Insurance and Contracts
9 of Finance Risk Management.

10 MS. HAIRSTON: Good
11 morning. Please state your name
12 and organization for the record and
13 proceed with your testimony.

14 MR. WILLIAMS: First,
15 Craig Williams, owner and President
16 of Pride Enterprises as well as
17 American Power Electrical Supply.

18 MR. JONES: Nadir Jones,
19 Director of the Office of Business
20 Impact and Economic Advancement.

21 MS. LAWTON: Debbie
22 Lawton, City of Philadelphia Risk
23 Management Service Director.

24 MS. HOSENDORF: Victoria

1 Hosendorf. I'm at the Enterprise
2 Center.

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Good
4 morning. Again, my name is Craig
5 Williams. I am the owner and CEO
6 of Pride Enterprises, Inc., a
7 general contractor and construction
8 manager operating primarily in
9 Philadelphia and the Greater
10 Delaware Valley, as well as
11 American Power Electrical Supply
12 Company, a full-service electrical
13 supplier with operations in
14 Philadelphia and New York.

15 In November of 2025,
16 Mayor Parker announced a major
17 shift in Philadelphia's contracting
18 approach, moving away from race and
19 gender-based participation goals
20 toward a local and small business
21 framework. This change reflects
22 broader legal and political
23 pressures, reshaping how cities can
24 structure inclusion policies.

1 While the new
2 terminology is intended to retain
3 support for diverse businesses, it
4 also removes the intentional
5 mechanisms that once created
6 predictable access for them. The
7 shift in terminology will likely
8 result in an increase in
9 opportunities for non-diverse
10 firms, widening the disparity gap.
11 As a result, many capable, diverse
12 and women-owned businesses now face
13 greater uncertainty, not because
14 demand has disappeared, but because
15 continuity is no longer explicitly
16 designed into the system.

17 Pride has been in
18 business for 30 years this year.
19 We emerged from the public sector
20 on a solid footing with capacity
21 and proven track record, which is
22 something of a rarity in this
23 market. American Power is in its
24 eighth year of operation, and it

1 has established a significant
2 presence in Philadelphia, and we
3 expanded into New York two years
4 ago.

5 Both companies represent
6 a positive story within the
7 diversity, equity and inclusion
8 narrative. Pride Enterprises has
9 been a celebrated organization
10 participating in several high-
11 profile projects, for example, the
12 Live Casino and Hotel, the Morgan
13 Center, 30th Street Station, to
14 name a few. We have worked with
15 major builders like Gilbane
16 Building Company, Turner
17 Construction, LF Driscoll and
18 Whiting-Turner.

19 We have also continued
20 to perform work independently for
21 clients like the University of
22 Pennsylvania, Temple University,
23 PECO, Exelon, Children's Hospital
24 and Jefferson Hospital. We are the

1 contractor who renovated the
2 facility that is now known as
3 Philadelphia Youth Basketball Sixth
4 Man Center, a \$25 million, 100,000
5 square-foot basketball-focused
6 community center that has become a
7 focal point for the City of
8 Philadelphia. We did that project
9 entirely on our own, with no
10 partner or backer of any kind.

11 American Power has
12 provided electrical equipment and
13 materials for a host of projects in
14 the region and was a central
15 participant in Philadelphia's
16 streetlighting upgrades project,
17 converting the old halogen lights
18 to energy-efficient LED lights
19 throughout the city, improving the
20 quality of life in Philadelphia and
21 creating jobs for at risk youth.

22 Shift in policy as it
23 relates to diversity, equity and
24 inclusion has had a significant

1 impact on both businesses. Pride
2 has seen a sharp decline in the
3 kinds of opportunities that helped
4 us grow over the last several
5 years. Partnering with large firms
6 have all but dried up. Consistent
7 opportunities with the city's
8 institutions has always been
9 elusive, and that is now more the
10 case than ever. American Power has
11 seen a local decline, the
12 Philadelphia market in revenue year
13 over year of about 40%.

14 In contrast, American
15 Power has seen the revenue of our
16 New York warehouse double over the
17 last year. New York State remains
18 a DEI stronghold in spite of the
19 national policies of the current
20 administration. Both of my
21 companies have benefited
22 tremendously from affirmative
23 action and diversity, equity and
24 inclusion policies and initiatives.

1 As Donna Allie of Team
2 Clean expressed earlier, my concern
3 is primarily focused on the
4 emerging businesses that need that
5 support to scale and the
6 generations that are coming behind
7 us that may not have the resources
8 available to them that were so
9 critical to the development of my
10 businesses. Thank you.

11 MS. HAIRSTON:
12 Mr. Williams, thank you for your
13 testimony. We will now hear the
14 testimony for the entire panel and
15 then we'll have questions.

16 Mr. Jones, please state
17 your name for the record and
18 proceed.

19 THE CLERK: Excuse me,
20 Chair Hairston. Just one second.
21 Just for the witnesses, when you
22 guys have one minute left, I will
23 raise my hand just to notify you
24 that you have a minute left in your

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 testimony.

2 MR. JONES: Nadir Jones,
3 Director of Business Impact and
4 Economic Advancement for the City
5 of Philadelphia. So good morning,
6 members of the Special Committee on
7 City and Private Sector Diversity,
8 Equity and Inclusion Policies. My
9 name is Nadir Jones. I'm the
10 Director of Business Impact and
11 Economic Advancement for the City
12 of Philadelphia. I'm here today to
13 provide testimony on Resolution No.
14 240107, which allows the special
15 committee to examine the impact of
16 such policies and to provide
17 evidence-based recommendations to
18 enhance policy effectiveness in the
19 promotion of economic opportunity
20 for all businesses in the City of
21 Philadelphia. I want to thank you
22 for this opportunity to testify
23 today.

24 The Office of Business

1 Impact and Economic Advancement is
2 proud to be working closely with
3 the Special Committee and City
4 Council, and we welcome your report
5 and continued attention as it
6 brings to the barriers affecting
7 small, local and diverse,
8 underrepresented businesses across
9 the City of Philadelphia.

10 First, I would like to
11 provide an overview of my office
12 and hundreds of small, local and
13 diverse businesses we support. The
14 Office of Business Impact and
15 Economic Advancement develops
16 policies and programs that support
17 access to contracting opportunities
18 and promote business growth across
19 all sectors. This office works to
20 strengthen business capacity,
21 connect businesses to resources,
22 and support their participation in
23 city opportunities.

24 Through these efforts,

1 BIEA helps foster a strong and
2 competitive business environment
3 across Philadelphia. BIEA oversees
4 both the Office of Business Growth
5 and the Office of Economic
6 Opportunity, allowing us to
7 integrate business development
8 opportunities and capacity building
9 with contracting access. This work
10 is embodied in the Philadelphia
11 Small and Local Business Program,
12 established through Executive Order
13 0625, which provides a broader
14 framework for expanding access to
15 contracting opportunities for small
16 and specialty local businesses.

17 I would like to point
18 out some of the critical barriers
19 to entry and growth for our small,
20 local and diverse businesses, which
21 historically have included limited
22 access to capital, inadequate back
23 office support, bond requirements,
24 and contract bundling. Small,

1 local and diverse businesses often
2 face significant challenges
3 accessing working capital needed to
4 grow and could compete for larger
5 opportunities.

6 As a result,
7 entrepreneurs are more likely to be
8 denied traditional financing from
9 lenders regardless of income level,
10 indicating systemic exclusion.

11 Surety bonding requirements act as
12 a major barrier to entry, demanding
13 financial track records, working
14 capital and project experience.

15 The Office of Business
16 Impact and Economic Advancement, in
17 collaboration with the
18 Infrastructure Solutions Team, has
19 developed a capital access fund and
20 bonding program aimed to position
21 businesses with limited access to
22 contracting opportunities to
23 successfully compete for and
24 complete public works projects in

1 Philadelphia by providing targeted,
2 project-specific support and
3 resources. The program will
4 combine financial education and
5 funds management control with
6 access to bonding, lines of credit
7 and other project-specific
8 financial resources needed to
9 successfully perform city work.

10 The Office of Business
11 Impact and Economic Advancement,
12 along with our public-private
13 partners, have set forth
14 initiatives to equip small,
15 economically emerging businesses
16 with the tools, knowledge and
17 resources needed to grow and thrive
18 through these strategic
19 partnerships. Local and small
20 businesses are receiving the
21 technical assistance, resources and
22 support needed to strengthen their
23 operations, improve contracting
24 readiness, and position themselves

1 for growth.

2 This work is grounded in
3 equity for small businesses,
4 economic inclusion for all, and
5 measurable outcomes that drive real
6 impact in underserved communities.

7 Bundled contracts historically have
8 locked out small and local
9 businesses. Locked out of prime
10 bids, small and local businesses
11 are forced into lower margins,
12 subcontracting opportunities.

13 We support expanding
14 contracting tools that create more
15 opportunities for small, local
16 businesses, including the use of
17 small business set-asides or
18 sheltered market contracts or
19 professional service contracts to
20 allow greater flexibility around
21 certain requirements for
22 construction projects.

23 We understand that
24 vendor payment can also present a

1 challenge for small and local
2 businesses and in some cases affect
3 their ability for that business to
4 work with the city. However, we
5 are working in partnership with
6 relevant city agencies to create
7 achievable solutions regarding
8 payment delays and process
9 improvement. We have appreciated
10 the feedback and recommendations
11 from the members of the business
12 community, some of which are on
13 this committee. We want to make it
14 clear that the City of Philadelphia
15 is open for business and that we
16 are being more intentional and
17 serious about how we support our
18 small, local and diverse business
19 community.

20 We are working towards a
21 more business-friendly ecosystem
22 that strengthens Philadelphia
23 businesses and workers, while
24 helping the city deliver goods and

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 services more effectively to our
2 residents. Thank you.

3 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
4 for your testimony.

5 Ms. Lawton, if you can
6 state your name for the record and
7 proceed.

8 MS. LAWTON: Good
9 morning. I'm Debbie Lawton from
10 the Office of Risk Management,
11 Division of Finance, City of
12 Philadelphia. I'm going to submit
13 my testimony. Good morning, City
14 Councilmembers and members of the
15 Special Committee on City and
16 Private Sector Diversity, Equity
17 and Inclusion Policies. I am
18 providing testimony regarding
19 barriers to entry and growth as it
20 relates to contracting with the
21 city.

22 Specifically, I will
23 address the role of government
24 agencies, particularly risk

1 management, in helping small and
2 local business enhance their
3 footprint in municipal contracting
4 area. As your report findings
5 indicate, since the pandemic there
6 has been participation by
7 underrepresented businesses in the
8 city's procurement process.

9 Risk management has
10 continued to help small businesses
11 navigate insurance requirements and
12 to reduce any disparities across
13 our business community. To enhance
14 small and local participation, Risk
15 Management has maintained minimum
16 insurance requirements for more
17 than a decade, probably more than
18 two decades, which are more lower
19 than industry standards, by which
20 the city provides adequate
21 protection.

22 Unlike traditional rigid
23 insurance mandates, which often
24 create additional barriers, Risk

1 Management's minimum insurance
2 requirements level the playing
3 field by reducing those barriers.
4 Risk Management has also scaled
5 insurance requirements based on the
6 nature and level of contract risk
7 and contract value, rather than
8 applying a high blanket limit for
9 all contracts.

10 Risk has structured
11 various Owner-Controlled Insurance
12 Programs, OCIPS, also known as
13 wrap-ups, which eliminate insurance
14 barriers. Because the wrap-up
15 insurance covers the city, it
16 covers the contractors, it covers
17 subcontractors at lower rates than
18 individually obtained. Risk has
19 waived specific high-cost insurance
20 lines like cyber liability and
21 professional liability for smaller
22 contractors whose specific scope of
23 work does not involve those risks.

24 Over the years, Risk has

1 mentored small businesses within
2 the brokerage sector by providing
3 hands-on operational oversight and
4 strategic industry insights to
5 drive their growth. Importantly,
6 Risk is committed to even greater
7 partnerships with insurance brokers
8 to provide risk management training
9 for small businesses, thereby
10 enabling small businesses to build
11 portfolios that qualify for
12 preferred commercial insurance
13 rates and increase the pool of
14 small businesses able to
15 participate in city contracting.

16 In conclusion, in
17 conjunction with programs managed
18 by the Office of Business Impact
19 and Economic Advancement, Risk will
20 sustain and enhance its efforts to
21 widen the scale of participation
22 among small and local businesses.

23 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
24 for your testimony.

1 Ms. Hosendorf, would you
2 please state your name for the
3 record and proceed with your
4 testimony.

5 MS. HOSENDORF: Good
6 morning. I am Victoria Hosendorf
7 at the Enterprise Center. We've
8 all heard a lot about DEI and many
9 ways that Philadelphia is a
10 beautiful, diverse city; race,
11 gender, ethnicity, age and ability.
12 However, on one area where
13 Philadelphia is not diverse is in
14 its economic class diversity. We
15 are the second, poorest, largest
16 city. And over 90% of the city's
17 Black- and Latino-owned firms are
18 solopreneurs with no W-2 employees.

19 If we are ever to
20 achieve the economic equality and
21 inclusion side of DEI, then we have
22 to think differently about
23 achieving economic mobility in our
24 city and recognize that access to

1 capital is the key to the missing
2 ingredient. This is the part that
3 gets lost when capital access falls
4 under small business support
5 alongside workshops, mentorship and
6 ribbon-cuttings.

7 Low economic mobility is
8 not a training program. Most small
9 businesses start by running out of
10 their home. So what's missing when
11 they're ready to grow is capital;
12 capital on terms that match
13 reality, not a bank's risk model.

14 A city that wants its
15 residents to move up doesn't just
16 need more entrepreneurs. It needs
17 entrepreneurs who can get finance.
18 Every business that gets the loan
19 becomes an employer. So if a
20 business can't get finance, no one
21 gets a paycheck, including the
22 owner. Eventually, that owner
23 begins to take owner's withdrawal,
24 and any employees of theirs or

1 anyone that works for them really
2 becomes a 1099.

3 This isn't about a job
4 program. It isn't about another
5 round of the same old technical
6 assistance that has failed to
7 improve entrepreneurs' balance
8 sheet. Capital pushed deliberately
9 to the people and the places it
10 does not ordinarily flow is the
11 fastest, most durable path this
12 city has to move its residents from
13 surviving to owning.

14 Fund the pipeline that
15 gets capital to homegrown
16 businesses so that our next Urban
17 Outfitters or Comcast can come
18 outside of Parkside, Grays Ferry or
19 even Kensington. Do that and you
20 are not just funding one business.
21 You are funding every job, every
22 tax dollar and every family that
23 business will carry with it for the
24 next ten years.

1 This is the bet that the
2 Enterprise Center is asking the
3 city to make. It is the one we
4 only already -- the one we have
5 already made. We just need
6 partners with the reach that City
7 Hall has. Thank you.

8 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 Are there any questions
11 or comments from the committee?
12 Ms. Rodriguez.

13 MS. RODRIGUEZ: So I
14 have a question for Craig. Craig,
15 today given the description of the
16 situation and the state of your
17 business, what do you need more?
18 If you had to prioritize resources
19 for your business in this current
20 environment, would you prioritize
21 relationships over capital or
22 capital over relationships?

23 MR. WILLIAMS: For me,
24 it's relationships over capital.

1 We are a mature business so we do
2 have significant resources, could
3 always use more capital. But in
4 this environment, the most critical
5 thing is access to opportunity.
6 And I think that's a direct
7 derivative of relationships.

8 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Would
9 you say that an emerging business
10 might say that relationships are
11 more important to capital or
12 capital more important than
13 relationships?

14 MR. WILLIAMS: I would
15 say all of the above, because a
16 startup company or a young company
17 needs everything, you know, needs
18 that next project, needs that next
19 loan to be able to do that project.
20 So it's all of the above when
21 you're in the beginning stages.

22 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank
23 you.

24 MR. EPPS: Mr. Jones,

1 foundational questions for you.
2 We're talking about capital. One
3 of the elements of capital that's
4 always a challenge is proper pay
5 and accounts receivable. So can
6 you share with us two foundational
7 questions. One is what is the
8 current position of the
9 Administration on prompt pay in
10 accounts receivable?

11 And secondly, currently
12 in the state of flux, what's the
13 language that's currently in RFPs
14 as it relates to local and diverse
15 sourcing?

16 MR. JONES: So for the
17 first question, I'm going to bring
18 in Commissioner Ron Hovey who's
19 going to answer the prompt payment
20 issue. To your second question,
21 Mr. Epps, we do have small local
22 business participation plan
23 language in our contractual
24 provisions that does set targeted

1 ranges for small and local
2 businesses.

3 MR. EPPS: Thank you.

4 (Witnesses approached
5 witness table.)

6 MS. HAIRSTON:

7 Mr. Jones, while he's coming
8 forward, for the record can you
9 explain to us what small is
10 considered?

11 MR. JONES: So how the
12 city defines small business is
13 actually a four-tiered approach.
14 So we actually have four different
15 levels of small business based upon
16 the firm's revenues. The first
17 tier is called a micro small
18 business who gross revenues do not
19 exceed 1 million. The second tier
20 is called an emerging small
21 business, where your gross revenues
22 do not exceed 5 million.

23 And then you have what
24 we call macro and legacy small

1 businesses whose gross revenues are
2 not to exceed 23.5, and 47 million
3 over a three-year grace period.

4 The reason why we took this
5 approach was because as we engage
6 the small business community, we
7 understand that one size does not
8 fit all. We want to meet
9 businesses where they are to give
10 them the proper support that they
11 need.

12 MR. EPPS: I have a
13 follow-up. What I did not hear --
14 that third category, the cap was
15 what?

16 MR. JONES: For macro --
17 sorry. Midsize is 23.5. Macro was
18 47 at the cap.

19 MR. EPPS: All right.
20 I'm not sure how we have this
21 conversation, but I'd like to at
22 least have it on the record that
23 those caps put significant,
24 significant impediments on

1 businesses having a potential to
2 scale and the system led by the
3 federal government, followed by the
4 state. And now, it seems the city
5 has also fallen into the same trap
6 of predetermining how large a
7 business that has any elements of
8 diversity can be. And I know I'm
9 Co-Chair, but I would raise that as
10 something for the record that needs
11 to be addressed so that we are not
12 predetermining when people cap out
13 of progress.

14 I'll just say one other
15 thing. I was expecting to hear
16 something about a middle market
17 program. And if you can make
18 reference to that, I would
19 appreciate it.

20 MR. JONES: Yes. So the
21 Administration has been having
22 conversations on developing a
23 middle market program. For once, a
24 legacy small business does graduate

1 out of the small business program.
2 We do have a set-aside program for
3 middle market. We're not there
4 yet. We're still going through
5 some market data and data research,
6 but it is something that's on the
7 book that we're taking a very
8 close, intentional, serious look
9 at.

10 COMMISSIONER HOVEY:
11 Good morning. My name is Ronald
12 Hovey and I'm the Procurement
13 Commissioner. And I forgot the
14 question. Could you repeat the
15 question please?

16 MR. EPPS: I'm sorry?

17 COMMISSIONER HOVEY:
18 Could you repeat the question
19 please?

20 MR. EPPS: With what?

21 MS. HAIRSTON: It's the
22 prompt payment question.

23 MR. EPPS: Yes. The
24 question was what is the current

1 policy as it relates to prompt pay?

2 How fast should small and local

3 businesses expect to get paid?

4 COMMISSIONER HOVEY: So

5 ideally, it should be no longer

6 than 60 days. And that's what

7 we're heading to in our new

8 implementation of our ERP system,

9 with a plan to reduce that once

10 that's implemented down to 45 and

11 with an ultimate goal of 30. Right

12 now there are hurdles to prompt

13 payment that are structural in

14 nature that we're working on to

15 resolve, primarily getting

16 contracts conformed in a timely

17 manner.

18 We have both a working

19 group on that, that is sort of

20 focusing through heavy lifting to

21 resolve that matter. And we've

22 reduced it significantly. But

23 we're also drafting changes both in

24 our systems, our business processes

1 and our rules to address this, to
2 get contract conformance basically
3 off of the critical path of
4 payment.

5 In parallel with that,
6 that hides a lot of the day-to-day
7 delays in payment because of the
8 large number of contracts that get
9 lost there. So we're working in
10 parallel with that. So as we
11 resolve that bigger issue that
12 exists today, we don't bump up
13 against the more transactional
14 impediments to quick payment.

15 And I know the accounts
16 payable team is looking at their
17 business processes so that we embed
18 new processes in the new systems
19 that will go live next July. And I
20 think that kind of sums up where it
21 is today.

22 MS. ROBERTS: I have a
23 question. First of all, thank you,
24 Commissioner, for coming and --

1 COMMISSIONER HOVEY: My
2 pleasure.

3 MS. ROBERTS: -- letting
4 us understand the process. My
5 question is around subcontractor
6 reimbursement. That always seems
7 to be an impediment as a prime
8 vendor. You're certainly able to
9 submit your invoices and have a
10 contact with the department. But
11 as a sub, they frequently are not
12 permitted to do so. They have to
13 go through their prime.

14 Is there some sort of
15 legislation or mandate about
16 payment from primes to subs? And
17 if so, what does that look like
18 today?

19 COMMISSIONER HOVEY: So
20 today in our -- it's more of a
21 contractual issue. Generally, we
22 try to restrain ourselves
23 from really -- it's called privity
24 of contract. So a direct

1 relationship between ourselves and
2 the subcontractors. However, in
3 the DEI space with regard to
4 subcontractors, we want to be more
5 articulate in what we require. So
6 we have pay-when-paid requirements
7 in our contracts, first of all.

8 I will say that today
9 because of this, the impediments to
10 vendors getting paid, a lot of that
11 gets lost in the unclarity of the
12 situation. So that is something we
13 are working to resolve. In
14 parallel to this, the Procurement
15 Department, in conjunction with the
16 Law Department, just embarked on a
17 contract with a firm to assist us
18 in rewriting all of our contract
19 templates. And that's a topic that
20 we're building into the pay-when-
21 paid requirements and looking at
22 how we build our teeth into that
23 clause going forward. So we're
24 broadly looking at the content of

1 the contracts across the board.

2 But I know that's one of the topics
3 included.

4 MS. ROBERTS: The reason
5 why I'm saying this is that when
6 you have a prime/sub, I want to say
7 a prime and a sub relationship,
8 frequently when the proposal is
9 presented, its presented obviously
10 as work. But it's also the whole
11 financial package, the work that's
12 being done, the delivery.

13 And I'm speaking from
14 experience here, if I may, where
15 the work is being done -- for
16 example, if a prime submits a
17 proposal of \$100,000 and the sub
18 completed its work, if the prime
19 does not submit invoicing to cover
20 the sub's work, then the
21 subcontractor does not get paid for
22 an extended period of time.

23 What I'm asking is, as
24 you look at legislation, as you

1 look at this new view of how this
2 policy is going to be written, I'm
3 just asking if there could be some
4 sort of language focused at the
5 prime's relationship to pay the sub
6 for work completed and not wait for
7 them to decide when to submit the
8 invoice. Having some controls put
9 in place would protect the
10 subcontractor. And many of them
11 work on small margins and they also
12 don't have the sort of cash
13 reserves that the prime does to
14 sort of protect it. So I'm just
15 asking you to look at those. And
16 there's a few others and I'm happy
17 to have those conversations with
18 you because I know we're caught for
19 time. Thank you, Commissioner.
20 Again, thank you for coming.

21 COMMISSIONER HOVEY: We
22 are open to that.

23 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
24 you. Is there any further

1 questions from the committee?

2 MS. RODRIGUEZ: A very
3 quick question. You mentioned that
4 currently the goal is to pay
5 contracts in 60 days?

6 COMMISSIONER HOVEY: So
7 right now because of the current
8 systems, the detailed visibility
9 isn't in our systems to drive that
10 rigorously. But it will be going
11 live with a new system in July.
12 And we are building it around an
13 initial start-of-pay within 60
14 days.

15 MS. RODRIGUEZ: So you
16 don't know how long it's taking?

17 COMMISSIONER HOVEY:
18 It's not my area. I would have to
19 get back to you because Procurement
20 doesn't handle payments. Accounts
21 Payable does. So I couldn't give
22 you an answer, but we'd be happy to
23 get an answer for you, what our
24 average is.

1 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank
2 you.

3 COMMISSIONER HOVEY:
4 You're very welcome.

5 MR. EPPS: We talked
6 earlier about, and that is,
7 capital. I want to tie it back to
8 receivables. So what we are saying
9 is that a business has to have 60
10 days of cash flow in order to
11 finance the period in which they're
12 going to get paid. And those of
13 us -- I have a business but I also
14 get a paycheck. So I understand
15 both sides of the equation.

16 But imagine those of you
17 who get a paycheck, you work in
18 January, you get your money in
19 March. That's fundamentally what
20 we're saying. We would encourage
21 those in the Administration to do
22 whatever you can to speed up that
23 process, because those small
24 businesses cannot afford to carry

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 60 days of receivables.

2 MS. HAIRSTON: We have
3 one last question.

4 MS. IRELAND: My
5 question is for Craig.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

7 MS. IRELAND: Craig, I
8 found your testimony compelling in
9 a variety of different ways. But
10 you talked very specifically around
11 resources not being available today
12 as you had experienced in the past.
13 So we're government and we are used
14 to incremental progress. If
15 resources were not a barrier, what
16 would you suggest we do to provide
17 significant advancement in support
18 of businesses?

19 MR. WILLIAMS: So as I
20 mentioned earlier, my company is 30
21 years old. So there are programs
22 and initiatives at a variety of
23 levels that we have participated in
24 that may or may not still exist.

1 We were an 8(a) certified company
2 under the Small Business
3 Administration. We participated in
4 the HUBZone initiative, again under
5 the Small Business Administration.
6 And that was critical to laying the
7 foundation for our company.

8 As I mentioned, we
9 emerged in the private market and
10 the local city market with bonding,
11 insurance, track record, financing
12 and key relationships that were
13 critical to our ability to
14 transition into the private sector.

15 To your question -- most
16 recently, I neglected to mention in
17 my testimony, we have been a prime
18 contractor on several Rebuild
19 projects. At its inception, it was
20 targeted at minority- and women-
21 owned businesses for specific
22 support. And I don't know that
23 that's an ongoing initiative in the
24 city as well. And as much as

1 focused efforts to support the
2 growth and development of minority-
3 and women-owned businesses is under
4 fire from the current
5 administration in Washington and
6 the shift in language has been made
7 locally and it's difficult to
8 direct opportunities to companies
9 like ours in the current
10 environment.

11 But the simple answer to
12 your question is finding a way to
13 continue to do that. You know, we
14 are currently awarded a public
15 works project for PGW thankfully.
16 It's a sizable job, down and
17 adjacent to the Bellwether
18 District. So we continue to find a
19 way forward, but we're a seasoned
20 firm.

21 There are a lot of
22 companies that don't have the
23 experience, know-how and resources
24 to be able to secure opportunities

1 as readily as a company like mine
2 or companies like mine. And it's
3 challenging for us. I don't want
4 to make it sound like it's easy.
5 So to the extent that the city can
6 continue to target opportunities
7 for the other firms, that's what's
8 needed.

9 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
10 you. Thank you for your testimony.

11 Mr. Epps, if you will
12 take us to Panel 3.

13 MR. EPPS: Again, thank
14 you very much. And we look forward
15 to hearing about the progress that
16 some of these subjects need to have
17 to continue to make progress. We
18 will now move on to Panel No. 3,
19 which is focused on private sector
20 participation.

21 Mr. Groomes, you will
22 now call the witness to the panel.
23 But this panel will have discussion
24 on the private sector, how it

1 develops its incentives, practices,
2 procedures and models for
3 implementing diverse participation
4 goals. Witnesses may speak to how
5 these industries develop baselines
6 and benchmarks that may be
7 replicated at best practices.

8 Mr. Groomes, please call
9 the witnesses of the panel.

10 THE CLERK: Mia
11 Fioravanti, Senior Vice-President
12 of Corporate Affairs at HRP Group.

13 (Witness approached
14 witness table.)

15 MR. EPPS: Good morning,
16 Ms. Fioravanti. How are you?

17 MS. FIORAVANTI: Good.
18 How are you?

19 MR. EPPS: Good to see
20 you.

21 MS. FIORAVANTI: Good to
22 see you too.

23 MR. EPPS: And just for
24 the record, if you would state your

1 name and your organization and then
2 proceed.

3 MS. FIORAVANTI: Sure.

4 Mia Fioravanti, Senior Vice-
5 President of Corporate Affairs for
6 HRP Group.

7 MR. EPPS: The floor is
8 yours.

9 MS. FIORAVANTI: Good
10 morning, Chairperson and members of
11 the committee. Thank you for the
12 opportunity to speak today. My
13 name is Mia Fioravanti and I serve
14 as Senior Vice-President of
15 Corporate Affairs for HRP Group, a
16 vertically integrated redevelopment
17 firm focused on transforming
18 complex and obsolete industrial
19 sites into modern economic engines.

20 The largest project in
21 our portfolio is here in
22 Philadelphia, where we are
23 transforming what was once a
24 150-year-old oil refinery into a

1 1300-acre sustainable campus for
2 logistics, advanced manufacturing,
3 life sciences and innovation. At
4 the end of its life, the refinery
5 employed just over 1000 people.

6 When fully built out,
7 the Bellwether District is expected
8 to support between 10,000 and
9 19,000 permanent jobs, in addition
10 to more than 20,000 construction
11 jobs. However, our impact extends
12 beyond job creation. We are
13 investing significantly in onsite
14 and offsite infrastructure,
15 improving transportation access and
16 reconnecting a site that was once
17 walled off from surrounding
18 communities back into the fabric of
19 the city.

20 We have contributed more
21 than \$3 million to date to
22 community and workforce development
23 initiatives, primarily focused on
24 South and Southwest Philadelphia.

1 We are developing the site to LEED-
2 certifiable standards,
3 incorporating solar rooftops and
4 planting more than 10,000 trees.
5 And as a result of the refinery's
6 closure and demolition, the city's
7 Office of Sustainability reported a
8 16% reduction in citywide carbon
9 emissions.

10 Most importantly, we are
11 focused on ensuring that the
12 benefits of this investment are
13 shared broadly by Philadelphians,
14 particularly our neighbors in South
15 and Southwest Philadelphia. At
16 HRP, we view inclusive procurement
17 as both a business imperative and a
18 community responsibility. A
19 project of this scale requires a
20 diverse network of contractors,
21 suppliers, consultants and
22 professional services firms, and
23 expanding access to opportunity
24 ultimately strengthens the project

1 itself.

2 Our work is guided by
3 ambitious economic inclusion goals
4 for both contracting and workforce
5 participation. Progress towards
6 our goals is tracked monthly by
7 Talsen Solutions, a local minority-
8 owned firm with outreach and
9 engagement supported by Maven,
10 Inc., a woman and minority-owned
11 firm.

12 Results are reviewed
13 regularly by an oversight committee
14 that includes representatives from
15 the City of Philadelphia, the
16 School District of Philadelphia and
17 local elected officials offices.
18 We also meet routinely with our
19 contractor partners to review
20 performance, identify opportunities
21 and ensure best efforts are being
22 made towards our project goals.
23 This emphasis on transparency,
24 accountability and measurable

1 outcomes helps ensure inclusion
2 remains a priority throughout the
3 life of the project.

4 Equally important is
5 outreach and engagement. We work
6 closely with our general
7 contractors, the Diverse Chambers
8 Coalition, community organizations
9 and industry groups to ensure
10 local, minority-owned and women-
11 owned businesses are aware of and
12 connected to project opportunities.
13 At the same time, we recognize that
14 access alone is not enough.

15 On projects of this size
16 and complexity, some firms may not
17 yet have the capacity, bonding or
18 experience required for certain
19 scopes of work, and that is why we
20 partner with organizations like
21 Maven, the Economy League of
22 Philadelphia and Everybody Builds
23 to help businesses strengthen their
24 capabilities and compete

1 successfully for opportunities over
2 time as the project progresses.

3 Workforce development is
4 an equally important focus.

5 Through our career-connected
6 learning commitment with the School
7 District of Philadelphia, students
8 are gaining hands-on exposure to
9 careers through internships, site
10 visits and career exploration
11 opportunities both on our campus
12 and in the classroom. We've
13 engaged thousands of students to
14 date and provided paid internship
15 opportunities to 220 middle and
16 high school students.

17 We are also investing in
18 construction workforce development
19 programs like CARP and Rosie's
20 Girls, which are helping create
21 pathways into high-earning, family-
22 sustaining careers in the trades,
23 particularly for women and people
24 of color. And we are connecting

1 future employers like our first
2 tenant DrinkPAK with workforce
3 development organizations, training
4 partners and other resources to
5 help them access Philadelphia's
6 incredible talent pool.

7 Ultimately, we believe
8 the success of the Bellwether
9 District will be measured not
10 simply by what we build, but by the
11 opportunities we create for local
12 businesses, residents and
13 surrounding communities. We look
14 forward to continuing our
15 partnership with the City of
16 Philadelphia, the business
17 community, workforce development
18 partners and our neighbors in South
19 and Southwest Philadelphia to
20 ensure this investment creates
21 lasting opportunity for generations
22 to come. Thank you.

23 MS. ROBERTS: Thank you,
24 Mia, and welcome. This is another

1 statement, I guess. I think that,
2 you know, I did chair this
3 committee and I think it speaks to
4 the challenges of having true
5 private sector participation. When
6 I hear your testimony, I hear a lot
7 about construction. What I don't
8 see and I don't hear are the other
9 important industries that make up
10 our private sector, manufacturing,
11 the biopharm, hospitality,
12 technology. And I'd love to see
13 those players sitting in this room
14 talking about how they're actively
15 participating in ensuring that
16 everyone has a seat at the table.
17 And this is one of the issues.

18 I see Jeff Hornstein
19 here and we have a conference
20 coming up called GPLEX. And one of
21 the things that we are going to
22 focus on and talk about is the
23 whole focus on private industry and
24 the entrepreneurial industry, the

1 entrepreneurial focus in this
2 region because it is sorely
3 lacking.

4 And I am praising you
5 for all that you're doing. But I
6 think there should be five of you
7 sitting up here talking about that.
8 So I want to go on record that this
9 city, this region has got to do
10 better in supporting its women,
11 minorities and all of its citizens
12 in making sure that everyone is
13 sitting and has equal
14 participation, an equal opportunity
15 to participate in not just the
16 government sectors, which I see the
17 government is doing the best it
18 can, but private industry has got
19 to put its hand in the ring and be
20 an active participant in this too.

21 And I'm a little
22 disquieted not to have seen a few
23 others participate. But, Mia,
24 thank you for being a champion and

1 thank your organization for being a
2 champion.

3 MS. FIORAVANTI: Thank
4 you.

5 MR. EPPS: Question:
6 Against the plan, what percent of
7 completion has been achieved thus
8 far?

9 MS. FIORAVANTI: Are you
10 asking completion of the project?

11 MR. EPPS: Yes.

12 MS. FIORAVANTI: The
13 project is anticipated to take 10
14 to 15 years to develop. And we're
15 in roughly Year 5 or 6 of that
16 process. So we have another decade
17 to go.

18 MR. EPPS: Thank you.

19 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
20 you.

21 MS. FIORAVANTI: Thank
22 you.

23 MS. HAIRSTON: We now
24 turn to Panel 4. Mr. Groomes, will

1 you please call the witnesses for
2 the panel.

3 This panel examines
4 whether large-scale, public-private
5 developments in the city have
6 created contracting and growth
7 opportunities for small and diverse
8 businesses. Witnesses will speak
9 to whether prime and subcontract
10 work reach diverse firms, whether
11 firms moved from subcontractor to
12 prime, and what capital bonding or
13 mentorship support was available to
14 help firms compete.

15 THE CLERK: Calling
16 Kenyatta James, Deputy Executive
17 Director at the Economy League;
18 Mike Herbstman, Chief Financial
19 Officer, Philadelphia School
20 District.

21 (Witnesses approached
22 witness table.)

23 MS. HAIRSTON: Good
24 morning. Please state your name

1 and organization for the record and
2 proceed with your testimony.

3 MR. JAMES: Kenyatta
4 James. I'm the Deputy Executive
5 Director at the Economy League for
6 Greater Philadelphia.

7 MR. HERBSTMAN: Mike
8 Herbstman, Chief Financial Officer
9 for the School District of
10 Philadelphia.

11 MR. JAMES: Co-Chairs
12 Epps and Hairston as well as
13 Council President and his
14 representatives and members of the
15 Special Committee, thank you for
16 the opportunity to offer testimony
17 today. My name is Kenyatta James.
18 I serve as the Deputy Executive
19 Director at the Economy League of
20 Greater Philadelphia.

21 In that role, I lead and
22 support our PAGE and SupplyPHL
23 work, which helps small, local and
24 diverse businesses navigate

1 institutional supply chains and
2 connect to contracting
3 opportunities with anchor
4 institutions, public sector
5 partners and major private sector
6 buyers.

7 Over the past several
8 years, that work has given me a
9 ground level view of what helps
10 firms grow and what keeps capable
11 firms from reaching scale. I am
12 not here as a developer or a
13 contractor on one specific project.
14 I'm here from the perspective of an
15 intermediary that sees the
16 ecosystem, the small firms trying
17 to understand where they fit, the
18 institutions trying to find
19 qualified vendors and the gaps in
20 between.

21 From that perspective, I
22 would like to offer three main
23 points: First, Philadelphia should
24 judge public-private partnerships

1 not only by whether they include
2 diverse firms once, but whether
3 they help those firms grow over
4 time. A small or diverse firm's
5 participation in a major project
6 should be a step towards larger
7 business trajectory; more revenue,
8 more employees, larger contract
9 values, repeat work, stronger back-
10 office systems and, where
11 appropriate, movement from
12 subcontractor to prime.

13 If we only measure
14 aggregated participation
15 percentages, we can miss whether
16 opportunity is broadly distributed
17 or concentrated among a small
18 number of firms and we can miss
19 whether firms are actually building
20 capacity.

21 Second, public leverage
22 should be used earlier and more
23 intentionally when projects benefit
24 from public land subsidy approvals,

1 infrastructure or public convening
2 power. The city has a legitimate
3 interest in ensuring that the
4 economic benefits are shared, but
5 that has to happen before scopes
6 are finalized, before primes are
7 selected and before small firms are
8 asked to fit into opportunities
9 that were not designed with them in
10 mind.

11 Public-private projects
12 should have a clear, inclusive
13 procurement plan from the
14 beginning; early outreach,
15 unbundled scopes where appropriate,
16 prompt payment expectations,
17 bonding and insurance support and
18 transparent progress and close-out
19 reporting.

20 Third, procurement
21 access has to be paired with
22 business capacity-building. Many
23 firms do not fail to compete
24 because they lack talent or

1 ambition. They struggle because
2 they lack working capital, bonding
3 capacity, are legal and/or
4 accounting support, HR systems,
5 technology, certifications or the
6 ability to carry payroll while
7 waiting for payment.

8 A serious strategy
9 should include capacity-building
10 grants, discounted shared services,
11 bid coaching, bonding assistance
12 and capital tied to actual
13 opportunities. Mentorship is
14 useful when it leads to work,
15 feedback and measurable growth, not
16 when it's disconnected from
17 procurement.

18 I would also encourage
19 the committee to think about
20 public-private partnerships as part
21 of a broader, place-based economic
22 development strategy. Major
23 projects should not only produce
24 project-level compliance. They

1 should help build business
2 districts, local hiring pipelines,
3 employee wealth and neighborhood
4 economic capacity, especially in
5 communities that have historically
6 been excluded from major
7 investment.

8 So the questions I would
9 encourage the city to ask after
10 every publicly supported
11 development is not simply did we
12 meet a percentage goal. It should
13 be which firms participated, who
14 got paid, how long did it take them
15 to get paid, who grew, who moved
16 from subcontractor to prime, were
17 workers paid family-sustaining
18 wages and did the project leave
19 behind a stronger local business
20 ecosystem than existed before?
21 Thank you.

22 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
23 for your testimony.

24 Mr. Herbstman, if you

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 could restate your name and
2 organization for the record and
3 proceed.

4 MR. HERBSTMAN: Yes.

5 Good morning. My name is Mike
6 Herbstman and I'm the Chief
7 Financial Officer for the School
8 District of Philadelphia. I'm
9 joined today by my colleague Throne
10 Cropper, our Deputy CFO for the
11 Office of Procurement Services,
12 School District of Philadelphia.
13 Appreciate the opportunity to
14 testify today. Thank you for the
15 work the Special Committee has done
16 to support small, local and diverse
17 group of businesses in our city.

18 I'm happy to share some
19 information about district
20 procurement efforts with you all
21 today. The district is committed
22 to removing unnecessary barriers
23 that can make it difficult for
24 businesses to compete for and

1 successfully do business with us.
2 While we must maintain the
3 processes and controls necessary to
4 comply fully with state procurement
5 law and safeguard public resources,
6 we have taken deliberate steps to
7 make these processes easier to
8 understand and navigate for both
9 current and prospective vendors.

10 As I'll outline, we are
11 achieving this through both
12 improvements to our outreach
13 strategy and providing ongoing
14 support to current and potential
15 vendors. As you know, the school
16 district is required to operate
17 within all applicable legal
18 requirements pertaining to school
19 district procurements, including
20 the Pennsylvania Public School Law.

21 The school district also
22 strives to be good stewards of
23 public dollars, including those
24 raised from hard-working

1 Philadelphia residents and
2 businesses who effectively pay a
3 significant portion of the taxes
4 that fund the district. When local
5 businesses and their employees
6 thrive, we all benefit. We are
7 pleased to share that local
8 participation has increased over
9 the past several years.

10 In FY24, local
11 participation dollars were
12 approximately 25% of the district's
13 contracted dollars from FY24
14 through the present. This
15 percentage moved to 31%. This is
16 driven in part by higher-value
17 contract awards to vendors
18 including Perryman Shoemaker for
19 construction of Lewis Cassidy
20 Academic Plus School; Mosaic
21 Development Partners for work on
22 AMY 5 at James Martin; SUPRA, Inc.
23 for office supplies; and US
24 Facilities, Inc. for building

1 management services and cleaning
2 services. We strive for continuing
3 growth and our team is heavily-
4 focused on developing strategies to
5 help local businesses grow and
6 successfully participate in school
7 district procurements.

8 The Office of
9 Procurement Services has
10 established procedures for
11 identifying and connecting with
12 external suppliers within the
13 Philadelphia region. The school
14 district contracts with supplier IO
15 and B2Gnow platforms. These
16 platforms allow for targeted
17 outreach on available bidding and
18 requests for proposal
19 opportunities.

20 They also help identify
21 external suppliers through keyword
22 searches and filtering by
23 commodities or services offered,
24 location, business size and types

1 of business certifications. SDP's
2 procurement team also includes
3 partner agencies during the Bid or
4 RFP posting phase for district
5 contracts.

6 All opportunities are
7 shared through a Google group
8 email, includes contracts from a
9 range of groups such as the African
10 American Chamber of Commerce,
11 Eastern Minority Council and
12 SupplyPHL. This process allows for
13 expanded awareness outside of the
14 district's established vendor
15 network and access to external
16 companies that may not be familiar
17 with contracting opportunities
18 within the district.

19 The Office of
20 Procurement Services includes this
21 email group on all initially
22 (inaudible) once bids or RFPs have
23 been posted for vendor responses.
24 The district has also hosted large

1 vendor fairs designed to connect
2 businesses directly with the school
3 district and help them better
4 understand opportunities to work
5 with us.

6 It also creates spaces
7 for businesses to connect with one
8 another, build relationships and
9 explore opportunities to partner on
10 future district work. Greater
11 awareness among vendors supports a
12 deeper, qualified pool and those
13 interested in school district work.

14 The Office of
15 Procurement Services has
16 established inperson and virtual
17 strategies to better connect,
18 support and inform both existing
19 and potential suppliers virtual
20 office hours, during which vendors
21 can join live sessions for support
22 in the general supply registration
23 process, bid and RFP response
24 support and general procurement

1 information sessions. These
2 virtual office hours are held
3 weekly and vendors can join at any
4 time during the posted hours.

5 In addition, the
6 district hosts inperson knowledge
7 sessions and informational sessions
8 within a designated roundtable
9 format. These are conducted in a
10 classroom-like setting for current
11 vendor pool, and newer or potential
12 vendors for the district knowledge
13 sessions are hosted quarterly and
14 provide vendors with an opportunity
15 to learn about general district
16 procurement processes, types of
17 business certifications and
18 navigating the district's systems,
19 including the vendor portal.

20 Information sessions are
21 bid- or RFP-specific. These
22 sessions are meant to provide a
23 space for vendors to engage
24 directly with the lead program

1 office and learn more about the
2 scope of work, current needs,
3 challenges and other key aspects of
4 the procurement. These sessions
5 also allow vendors a method to
6 provide their capability statements
7 and support businesses in
8 developing their proposal response.
9 The city and the School District of
10 Philadelphia benefit from the
11 growth, sustained success and
12 diversity of local businesses and
13 the school district will continue
14 to support that goal. And we're
15 happy to answer any questions at
16 this time.

17 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 Now, we'll have
20 questions and comments from the
21 panel. Ms. Roberts.

22 MS. ROBERTS: Thank you
23 very much. Kenyatta, thank you
24 very much.

1 Mike, how long have you
2 been CFO?

3 MR. HERBSTMAN: About
4 three and a half years now.

5 MS. ROBERTS: Well,
6 welcome. And what kind of systems
7 or controls do you have in place
8 for reimbursement of your
9 contractors to making sure that
10 invoices get processed promptly?
11 And there's a follow-up.

12 MR. HERBSTMAN: Sure.
13 So in general, we have a 30-day net
14 pay for almost all of our
15 contracts. Exception to that is
16 our construction contracts, where
17 there's additional controls and
18 steps that need to take place. And
19 that is typically 60 days net. We
20 work through various processes in
21 our accounts payable side to ensure
22 that the three main matches are in
23 place. But once items are received
24 and invoiced, we pay promptly.

1 And we do have -- as I
2 know you mentioned in earlier
3 testimony, we do have individual
4 relationships also with some of our
5 subcontractors and have taken extra
6 steps when subcontractor payments
7 from the prime were slower. We're
8 able to slow down -- or able to
9 withhold payments from the prime
10 until they make that up.

11 MS. ROBERTS: And I
12 appreciate that. And I will tell
13 you that, I'm going to say this, I
14 have an invoice sitting on
15 someone's desk since March.

16 MR. HERBSTMAN: If
17 you're able to share the details,
18 tell me --

19 MS. ROBERTS: And I'm
20 not saying that to put anybody in
21 the hot seat or you. But when I
22 asked those questions, it's because
23 we get these pat answers that come
24 through about the great programs or

1 the processes that are in place.
2 And there are many vendors -- and
3 I'm a prime, I'm not a sub, I'm a
4 prime -- where this has happened
5 to. And there is no one to connect
6 to for the next steps. They go
7 sort of in a black hole.

8 And that black hole in a
9 company like mine that's been in
10 existence for 30 years, has a chief
11 financial officer, has all the
12 systems in place, back office in
13 place, is unable to get any answers
14 on processing and invoices. So I
15 would love to have somebody do an
16 audit or at least, maybe not, or
17 some sort of looking at doing some
18 data analysis to seeing how well
19 the school district is doing with
20 processing its invoices. I hear
21 what you're saying. But if it's
22 affected me, I'm sure it's affected
23 many others out there too.

24 MR. HERBSTMAN: Yes, I

1 appreciate that. And we welcome
2 any discussions on this. And of
3 course, we'd like to directly
4 connect with you to ensure that
5 both for your specific case and any
6 others that you know of that they
7 get promptly through the system.

8 MS. ROBERTS: Yeah.
9 That was kind of self-serving, but
10 I'll move on.

11 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
12 you. Mr. Epps.

13 MS. ROBERTS: But I just
14 have one other question for you. I
15 know that when RFPs come out from
16 the school district, the contracts
17 awarded, and it may take quite a
18 long time for those contracts to
19 get amended or to get processed
20 because they have to go before the
21 school district, the school board;
22 is that correct?

23 MR. HERBSTMAN: Yes.
24 Prior to us negotiating contracts

1 with vendors, we need authorization
2 at a school board meeting to begin
3 those contract negotiations.

4 MS. ROBERTS: Okay.

5 Thank you very much.

6 MS. HAIRSTON: Mr. Epps.

7 MR. EPPS: Talking about
8 the school board, so let's say
9 within the last half decade or so
10 we've taken back the school
11 district under local control. And
12 with that being a fact, has it
13 changed the policies under which
14 the school district sourcing
15 strategy operates. You talked
16 about the state. So my question,
17 is policies driven by the state
18 versus the city and how do you
19 respond to that?

20 MR. HERBSTMAN: Sure.

21 So in general, we have to of course
22 comply with all of the state and
23 city laws. Primarily on this side,
24 it is the state procurement law for

1 schools. The control under the
2 School Reform Commission is well
3 before my time here so I can't
4 speak specifically to how things
5 have changed.

6 But within those laws,
7 there is fairly broad ability for
8 the school district itself to set
9 our procedures and we have done
10 that. In particular, our focus has
11 been in breaking down barriers
12 wherever possible to make it easier
13 for businesses to really understand
14 our processes. We recognize that
15 we are a larger bureaucracy and it
16 can be difficult to manage
17 sometimes.

18 So we are working -- and
19 especially under the leadership of
20 our Deputy Chief Mr. Cropper, who's
21 here today, we've been working
22 towards breaking down some of those
23 barriers to make it easier for
24 businesses to work with us, both as

1 prospects and once they are
2 selected as our vendors.

3 MR. EPPS: Madam Chair,
4 if I could ask this to be recorded
5 for the record, I would ask that
6 the school district's office work
7 with Mr. Jones' office to ensure
8 that we have as much flexibility in
9 the school system's policies that
10 adhere to local sourcing and not be
11 overridden by the state given that
12 the school district is now under
13 local control.

14 I hear, I know just
15 enough to be dangerous, that there
16 are impediments to flexibility
17 within the school district because
18 they lean on the fact that these
19 are state law. And I would like to
20 see that evaluated to see is there
21 any flexibility in that to bring it
22 more under local control? Thank
23 you.

24 MR. HERBSTMAN: Yes, we

1 are open to those conversations and
2 improvements.

3 MS. HAIRSTON:

4 Ms. Rodriguez.

5 MS. RODRIGUEZ: So in
6 your testimony, you talked a lot
7 about facilitating the outreach and
8 the information flow so that you
9 can attract more bidders to your
10 contracts. I did not hear a lot
11 about process. I did not -- but
12 you did mention that you're working
13 in improving those, but you have
14 not provided any details. So what
15 are the priorities in improving the
16 participation of locally-owned and
17 perhaps minority-owned businesses
18 in school district contracts?

19 MR. HERBSTMAN: Yes.

20 And I'll ask our Deputy Chief
21 Mr. Cropper to talk a little more
22 about those procedures.

23 MR. CROPPER: Good
24 morning. Throne Cropper, Deputy

1 Chief CFO for Procurement, School
2 District of Philadelphia. So a lot
3 of the awareness and our outreach
4 strategies kind of tie back into
5 our process. We're fully aware
6 that our processes can be quite
7 complex, mainly because we're a
8 large government entity. So our
9 goal is to build that awareness and
10 knowledge of how to navigate
11 through those processes to
12 hopefully make it simpler and a bit
13 more easier for both to access that
14 information, to understand how to
15 navigate through our processes.

16 So the idea of our
17 process is changing. We've
18 simplified them as best we can,
19 right, to a certain extent to
20 ensure that we're obviously audit-
21 ready and not really skipping over
22 any processes. But the idea is
23 that we tie back into the awareness
24 and outreach and information on a

1 consistent basis to not just our
2 current pool of vendors, but
3 vendors who may not have done
4 business with the school district
5 before, making them aware of what
6 those processes are, giving them a
7 point of contact, consistent weekly
8 office hours that are open for
9 anyone to join as well as those
10 quarterly knowledge sessions that
11 we mentioned that break down
12 different phases of the procurement
13 process to kind of help those
14 better understand how to navigate
15 through our process, which can be
16 complex at times.

17 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I think
18 I hear the word process a lot and I
19 don't know what that process looks
20 like. I think what I want to say
21 is there's a lot in those processes
22 and just communicating them may not
23 be sufficient in order to obtain
24 the kinds of success stories that

1 we want to see out of the school
2 district. So we would like to hear
3 more details around bonding
4 practices, decoupling contracts.
5 What are you affirmatively doing in
6 order to improve the participation?

7 In fact, I have not
8 heard anything around whether you
9 attract participation, whether you
10 have goals for participation. So
11 these are essential and
12 foundational concepts that the
13 school district should have and
14 should be able to comment on.

15 MR. CROPPER: Sure. So
16 we do have participation goals. We
17 don't have any set goals towards
18 local participation necessarily.
19 But within our bids and our RFP
20 processes there are typically,
21 depending on the services or the
22 commodities being requested, set
23 goals for participation that a
24 prime contractor would be required

1 to follow and adhere to. And if
2 for some reason they're not a prime
3 contractor themselves, right, a
4 percentage will be subcontracted
5 out to MWBEs. Nothing that
6 currently exists for local, again
7 at this point in time.

8 But within those same
9 bids and RFPs, there is what we
10 call a vendor compliance form that
11 ensures that the prime contractors,
12 if they are subbing out to an MWBE,
13 that they're paying them on time
14 and promptly providing quarterly
15 reports for status of payment and
16 understanding that we have the
17 right to withhold payment if we are
18 notified that a subcontractor is
19 not being paid on time. So we do
20 have that built into our bid and
21 our RFP processes for
22 participation.

23 MR. EPPS: I encourage
24 you not to miss the moment. As I

1 read and hear, and that is starting
2 in January, the school district
3 will begin to spend significant
4 dollars on its massive
5 restructuring and repair plan. And
6 I don't see a better opportunity
7 for local and diverse sourcing than
8 that one.

9 And we would highly
10 encourage Mr. Jones that we be
11 proactive, aggressive and
12 intentional to ensure that those
13 dollars stay in our local
14 community. And what I'm concerned
15 about, again knowing just enough to
16 be dangerous, is we will allow
17 policy and bureaucracy and slowness
18 to affect our progress while POs
19 are being cut every day and every
20 week under old policies that do not
21 advantage those that are in
22 desperate need to participate in
23 the best dollars that I can see
24 that can be sourced locally.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MS. ROBERTS: I just
2 want to echo our Co-Chair Mr. Epps.
3 I don't think -- that was very well
4 said. Thank you.

5 MR. EPPS: As we move
6 toward 11:45 --

7 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
8 you. Thank you for your testimony.

9 MR. EPPS: Thank you. I
10 hope the record gets these action
11 items because I can guarantee you
12 some of us will be circling back to
13 ensure that there is movement.

14 MS. HAIRSTON: Yes.
15 Having concluded our invited
16 panels, we will now take public
17 testimony. Before proceeding, we
18 must lay out a few ground rules.
19 Your testimony should be pertinent
20 to the subject of today's hearing.

21 Once your name is
22 called, you will have up to two
23 minutes to speak. To be fair to
24 all of those wishing to speak, we

1 intend to hold you to the
2 two-minute limit. Once your time
3 has passed, you will be asked to
4 conclude.

5 Mr. Groomes, please read
6 the names of our first speakers for
7 public testimony.

8 THE CLERK: We have
9 Charlie Goehl and Michelle Flamer.

10 (Witnesses approached
11 witness table.)

12 MR. GOEHL: Good
13 morning, committee members. My
14 name is Charlie Goehl and I am the
15 Government and Labor Relations
16 Coordinator at the General Building
17 Contractors Association. And I'm
18 here to express support for the
19 Special Committee on City and
20 Private Sector Diversity, Equity
21 and Inclusion Policies.

22 GBCA believes that
23 increasing participation among
24 minority, women and disabled-owned

1 businesses in Philadelphia is not
2 only the right thing to do, but it
3 is an economic imperative. A
4 strong and growing business
5 community requires that all of
6 Philadelphia's entrepreneurs and
7 businesses have meaningful
8 opportunities to compete, grow and
9 contribute to the city's economy.

10 Philadelphia's economic
11 future is directly tied to the
12 success of its diverse residents
13 and businesses. When these
14 businesses grow, they create jobs,
15 expand the tax base, reinvest in
16 their communities and help
17 strengthen the city's overall
18 economy. In short, the growth of
19 Philadelphians will directly
20 translate to the growth of
21 Philadelphia.

22 We commend City Council
23 for creating a forum to examine
24 existing diversity, equity and

1 inclusion policies and importantly,
2 identify practical, evidence-based
3 recommendations for making those
4 policies more effective. A
5 thoughtful examination of current
6 programs can help ensure that the
7 city's resources and policies are
8 producing meaningful opportunities
9 for businesses, while supporting a
10 competitive and healthy local
11 economy.

12 As an organization
13 representing signatory contractors,
14 construction industry leaders and
15 construction service providers
16 throughout the Philadelphia region,
17 GBCA understands the importance of
18 creating pathways for businesses of
19 all sizes and backgrounds to
20 participate in Philadelphia's
21 economic growth. We believe that
22 expanding opportunities for
23 minority, women and disabled-owned
24 businesses can strengthen the

1 city's contracting community,
2 support workforce development and
3 create opportunities for the next
4 generation of Philadelphia
5 businesses.

6 GBCA looks forward to
7 supporting the committee's work and
8 contributing to the perspective of
9 the Philadelphia construction
10 industry. As the city evaluates
11 ways to promote greater minority,
12 women and disabled-owned business
13 participation and economic
14 opportunity, we welcome any chance
15 to be a source of information or a
16 collaborative partner in this
17 effort. Thank you.

18 MR. EPPS: Ms. Flamer.
19 Good morning.

20 MS. FLAMER: Good
21 morning, everyone. My name is
22 Michelle Flamer. I am a
23 Philadelphia native and a retired
24 city attorney. I have really two

1 points that I wanted to underscore
2 this morning having heard all of
3 the testimony and also having
4 participated in this esteemed
5 committee.

6 Two things: We have to
7 keep laser-focused on the
8 Procurement Department. They will
9 be charged with implementing these
10 policies, these rules, these
11 regulations, whatever City Council
12 puts into ordinance, whatever the
13 electors vote on, on that ballot
14 question, on the Procurement
15 Department, it will ultimately
16 remain the responsibility of the
17 Procurement Department to implement
18 many of these rules.

19 Unbundling is necessary.
20 You cannot have a set-aside for
21 small and local businesses, which
22 to me is critical to the
23 advancement of minority and women-
24 owned businesses in the City of

1 Philadelphia. Unless you have
2 departments that are willing to
3 unbundle contracts, and that
4 requires a very strong Procurement
5 Commissioner, to make sure that
6 those departments, those middle
7 management people in those
8 departments are unbundling the
9 contracts, because it won't happen.

10 We've had a set-aside
11 available for local businesses on
12 the books for about maybe four
13 years. And I defy the city to tell
14 me that it's ever actually been
15 implemented. Now, we're going
16 forward with a set-aside for small
17 and local paired together, which is
18 the brilliant work in part of this
19 committee, and hopefully everyone
20 will vote yes to that when it's on,
21 you know, the ballot. However,
22 it's not going to do anything
23 unless it's actually implemented.
24 So I'm just saying again stay

1 laser-focused on the Procurement
2 Department. They certify local
3 businesses and they also implement
4 these rules.

5 The second thing, and
6 even more important, is data, data,
7 data, data. We have to continue to
8 have data collected. My
9 understanding is the City Solicitor
10 has opined that city departments
11 cannot keep information on who is
12 bidding on a contract. They will
13 only look at the data, the
14 demographic information at the time
15 of award. That's too late. It's
16 too late.

17 We need to know not just
18 who's participating in the city
19 contracts. As a colleague from the
20 Economy League stated, it's not a
21 matter of just who participates,
22 but it's a matter of who knocked on
23 the door and who didn't get in. We
24 need to have this information.

1 We're in a period, a time period in
2 this country of great distress, of
3 really unbridled racist behavior.
4 But this will not last forever.
5 And we have to continue to collect
6 this data.

7 So we will be prepared
8 for a new day. But if we don't
9 have it, we won't be able to hold
10 anyone accountable. Data holds
11 those responsible for soliciting
12 bids and awarding contracts
13 accountable. Without the data, we
14 have only memories and good
15 intentions that are rarely
16 documented.

17 And lastly, we did hear
18 testimony about scaling growth and
19 capacity. How could you ever
20 assess that unless you have the
21 data. You won't know if somebody
22 went from \$100,000 capacity to
23 \$1 million capacity unless you
24 actually have the data. So again,

1 I'm just saying that we have a new
2 city solicitor coming in.
3 Hopefully, she will be confirmed by
4 this esteemed body, Monique
5 Galloway. And I am hopeful that
6 the solicitor will look at some of
7 these decisions and agree that it
8 is necessary, particularly on
9 sealed procurement bids that are
10 awarded to the lowest responsive
11 bidder, that we know who these
12 bidders are at the time of bid, not
13 just at the time of award. Thank
14 you very much.

15 MR. EPPS: Thank you.
16 Are there any other witnesses
17 present who wish to testify?

18 THE CLERK: Yes. We
19 have Sabrina Tate, Dean Robateau,
20 Michael Brown and Billy McCann.

21 (Witnesses approached
22 witness table.)

23 MR. EPPS: Okay.

24 THE CLERK: Again, we

1 ask that you honor the two-minute
2 limit please. Thank you.

3 MS. TATE: Good morning,
4 Special Committee. My name is
5 Sabrina Tate. I'm the Executive
6 Director of Everybody Builds. I've
7 been in my position for all of
8 seven weeks, and these are my
9 observations. At Everybody Builds,
10 we believe that people who live in
11 Philadelphia should have the fair
12 chance to help Philadelphia and
13 benefit from its growth.

14 Philadelphia has made a
15 commitment, a commitment to
16 creating opportunities for
17 minority, women and disabled-owned
18 businesses. But having a goal is
19 only the first step. We also have
20 to look at what happens after the
21 goal is set. Can a small
22 contractor get the money needed to
23 take on large projects? Can they
24 get the bonding and insurance? Do

1 they know about opportunities early
2 enough to compete? Can they build
3 relationships with larger
4 contractors? And when they do good
5 work, are they given the chance to
6 grow from a small subcontractor
7 into a large contractor that can
8 compete for bigger projects?

9 These are real issues
10 for small businesses. A business
11 may have the skill and expertise to
12 do the work, but still not have the
13 cash needed to carry payroll while
14 waiting to be paid. Another
15 business may be ready to grow but
16 need help with estimating,
17 building, insurance bonding or
18 back-office support. When we
19 remove those barriers, the impact
20 becomes greater.

21 Large organizations, you
22 know, building relationships with
23 smaller organizations can help them
24 increase their capacity.

1 Businesses can hire one worker and
2 grow from five employees to ten. A
3 small subcontractor can become a
4 prime contractor. More money can
5 stay in our neighborhoods and help
6 families build generational wealth.
7 This is also about workforce.

8 As Philadelphia
9 continues to build, we have an
10 opportunity to connect more
11 residents to apprenticeships,
12 training, good-paying construction
13 careers, and we must make sure that
14 people from our communities often
15 have the opportunity that they need
16 in order to obtain this goal.

17 At Everybody Builds, we
18 see diversity and inclusion as more
19 than just numbers on a report. The
20 real question is who's getting the
21 opportunity, who's growing, who's
22 getting the jobs and contracts and
23 are we helping businesses become
24 strong enough to compete without

1 needing special assistance forever.

2 That is the impact I
3 hope this committee will continue
4 to examine. We support looking
5 closely at what is working, where
6 the barriers still exist and how
7 the city and private sector can
8 work together to create real and
9 lasting opportunities.

10 Everybody Builds is
11 ready to partner with you all in
12 this work and because we like to
13 help small businesses grow, not
14 just in building businesses, but
15 building jobs, families, these
16 neighborhoods and a stronger
17 Philadelphia. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to share my
19 perspective.

20 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
21 you.

22 Please state your name
23 for the record and proceed with
24 your testimony.

1 MR. BROWN: Michael
2 Brown, CEO and founder of The 360
3 Group. Honorable members of City
4 Council and committee members,
5 thank you for the opportunity to
6 address you today. I'm here
7 representing minority businesses in
8 the construction industry,
9 specifically in the union trades,
10 specialty trades such as
11 mechanical, HVAC, plumbing and
12 electrical.

13 Today, minority
14 businesses across Philadelphia are
15 witnessing a catastrophic erosion
16 of market share, pushing
17 foundational enterprises to the
18 brink of collapse. This crisis has
19 amplified nationally by the
20 dismantling of the federal
21 diversity programs, such as the ADA
22 program and locally by
23 institutional indifference across
24 agencies such as the School

1 District of Philadelphia.
2 Firms face a hostile
3 procurement maze. Change orders
4 are stalled, task orders are
5 inadequate and equitably
6 distributed, and agencies turn a
7 blind eye to predatory business and
8 discriminatory practices. More
9 destructive is the manipulation of
10 the usage of the term DEI. It is
11 now being used to erode the core
12 competencies of Black and Hispanic
13 businesses.

14 Ms. Flamer spoke of
15 data. The Commonwealth Disparity
16 Study done by Secretary Kerry
17 Kirkland exposed a grim reality:
18 Baseline state contracting
19 utilization for African American
20 and Hispanic firms languishes at
21 razor thin percentages 1% Black, 2%
22 with Hispanic. Philadelphia's
23 slowly sleepwalking down the same
24 exact destructive path if we do not

1 change our practices with
2 diversity.

3 We know that
4 distribution of resources is
5 central to governance. Our 10
6 Council Districts each represent
7 roughly equal communities of
8 160,000 constituents. If
9 Philadelphia is entering another
10 era of major infrastructure
11 investment, we must build durable
12 architecture of shared prosperity,
13 moving beyond the check-the-box
14 metrics towards a strict economic
15 distribution framework backed by
16 heat maps showing precisely where
17 the capital flows.

18 Union Black and Hispanic
19 businesses create Black and
20 Hispanic Union jobs. We don't have
21 pre-apprenticeship programs. We
22 have apprenticeship programs that
23 take you to journeyman positions.
24 You are in danger of losing all of

1 your minority union self-performing
2 contracting firms. I make up one
3 of the largest ones in the city and
4 we will probably close that
5 business down by the end of next
6 year. So thank you all and I
7 appreciate your time.

8 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 MR. ROBATEAU: Good
11 afternoon.

12 MS. HAIRSTON: Good
13 afternoon. Please state your name
14 for the record.

15 MR. ROBATEAU: Yes. My
16 name is Dean Robateau. I'm the
17 Chief Development Officer for
18 McKissack & McKissack. I reserve
19 my statements only because I really
20 wanted to participate and hear what
21 was being discussed and I took down
22 some notes. There were four bullet
23 points that really jumped out at
24 me.

1 We talked about capacity
2 building, workforce development,
3 timely payments and contracts or
4 capital. And I'll begin with the
5 last. What would you prefer, a
6 contract or a capital infusion? I
7 think they go hand-in-hand at this
8 point, because quite frankly, if
9 you're in the room, and I think
10 Donna Allie said it best where she
11 noted that she doesn't play golf or
12 live in those communities, but if
13 we can have continued outreach with
14 respect to some of the larger
15 companies and partner them, mentor
16 protege relationships, that would
17 go a long way because access to
18 capital is only through those
19 relationships when you're on a golf
20 course, living next door, at the
21 shore or wherever it may be, just
22 by observation.

23 The second one is
24 capacity building. We have mega

1 projects and we don't have that
2 capacity with respect to M, W or
3 local business enterprises. And
4 that's something we should continue
5 pushing because there are very
6 talented firms out here. And
7 you've heard from several of them,
8 but there are a lot more than that.
9 So I think a continued push on this
10 committee as far as DE&I to let
11 those smaller companies, emerging
12 companies, have access to us, and
13 vice versa, would go a long way.

14 Thirdly, workforce
15 development. This is very near and
16 dear to my heart. I've been in
17 Philadelphia 20 years. I
18 originally came from New York. My
19 first project was The School of The
20 Future, which was a carve-out of
21 approximately 7 or 8 acres in
22 Fairmount Park. And what I saw was
23 a very successful relationship with
24 regard to that workforce

1 development to assure that those
2 percentages were met. Not just the
3 minimum, but exceeding the minimum.

4 We really need to get
5 back to that. Because as a prime
6 example, we had a 36% share at the
7 Terminal D and E connection-
8 building over 18 to 20 years ago.
9 That's eroded. That's eroded now
10 to the point where a lot of these
11 larger companies, because there's
12 not a push from the federal
13 agencies or the federal government,
14 they don't see the need for it.
15 Several of them, to their credit,
16 have said, we will continue because
17 we're private companies.

18 And finally, timely
19 payments. This is the lifeblood of
20 any company, large or small. And I
21 don't have to tell the business
22 owners here, but anything over 90
23 days, you turn into a pumpkin
24 because that goes against your

1 borrowing base. But there's also a
2 ripple effect. Because as prime
3 contractors on a lot of the
4 projects we have, if we don't get
5 timely payment, we're often between
6 a rock and a hard place. Do we try
7 to advance payment to these smaller
8 companies or just let them know
9 it's a contractual obligation.

10 We try to go with the
11 first and try to see how we can pay
12 them and take the hit ourselves,
13 but it's a bottom-line business
14 that we're in. So I appreciate
15 your time. I welcome further
16 meetings with this committee, but
17 this is an excellent first, second
18 and third start. Thank you.

19 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
20 you.

21 THE CLERK: Did we hear
22 from Billy McCann?

23 (Witnesses approached
24 witness table.)

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MR. McCANN: Good

2 morning.

3 MS. HAIRSTON: Good

4 afternoon. Please state your name.

5 MR. McCANN: My name is

6 Billy McCann. I am currently a

7 committee person with the 45th

8 Ward, 5th Division serving there.

9 I'm currently running for City

10 Council At-Large. I wanted to

11 share a little bit of my story

12 about my own disability and how a

13 lot of times we find it hard to

14 come out of the shadows.

15 About ten years ago, I

16 was serving at Universal Charter

17 School as principal and I came down

18 with bipolar disorder, a federally-

19 recognized disability covered under

20 the American Disabilities Act.

21 Before that, I served as assistant

22 principal at Universal Audenried in

23 Grays Ferry. For me, coming down

24 with a disability like that meant I

1 needed to step out of the classroom
2 and step out of a school because I
3 needed to take care of myself
4 before I can take care of kids,
5 other people's kids. So I stepped
6 into the construction world. I
7 stepped into real estate. And I
8 found myself having a hard time
9 getting ahead, getting information,
10 access to capital and really being
11 discriminated against.

12 To be honest with you,
13 we are often a historically
14 marginalized voice. That's not
15 part of the conversation. I find
16 it interesting. This morning I was
17 watching Channel 6 News, and there
18 was a segment on about the National
19 Alliance on Mental Illness and
20 streaming at The Marquee. At the
21 bottom of the segment was
22 information about this hearing
23 today. So I came here with a
24 wondering how often are our voices

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 included in the conversation.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank
4 you.

5 MR. EPPS: Are there any
6 other witnesses to come before this
7 body?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. EPPS: Going once.
10 Well, the esteemed Chairperson and
11 President of City Council just
12 arrived. So, Councilman Johnson,
13 you can't come into the room
14 without having something to say.
15 Please take the mic.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: I see my good friend
18 Nadir back there, who I have
19 supreme confidence who will make
20 sure that we continue to address
21 the issue of inclusion when it
22 comes to small and local businesses
23 as it relates to providing an
24 opportunity for all businesses to

1 have an opportunity to have a seat
2 at the table.

3 I just want to
4 personally just thank my Co-Chairs
5 of this task force, Mr. Harold Epps
6 and Regina Hairston and all of the
7 members who took time out of their
8 schedule to address a very
9 critically important issue.

10 We're the second
11 poorest, largest city in America.
12 In order for us to address the
13 issue of poverty, we have to make
14 sure that we're making
15 opportunities available for
16 everyone here in the city of
17 Philadelphia, regardless of their
18 demographics, regardless of their
19 zip code, regardless of their
20 background. And so, I just want to
21 thank all the members for your hard
22 work. It's definitely a step in
23 the right direction.

24 Michelle, thank you for

1 your legal expertise that you
2 brought to the table. And like you
3 reassured me early on, we've been
4 here before. We know that there
5 have been significant attacks from
6 Washington, D.C. on Black and Brown
7 people, to be quite frank with you,
8 and also women and other
9 individuals who have been
10 marginalized in our society.

11 And so, I remain
12 committed to make sure we're
13 leveling the playing field for
14 everyone here in this great City of
15 Philadelphia when it comes to
16 making sure everybody has a seat at
17 the table. And we have to be
18 intentional about the changes that
19 we want to see and this is why we
20 are here. I'm a firm believer that
21 power concedes nothing without a
22 demand. It never has and it never
23 will. And that's why we remain
24 committed here.

1 And to all the
2 stakeholders who have participated
3 in this process, I see the Economy
4 League over there. Thank you, Jeff
5 Hornstein, for stepping up to the
6 plate, you and Kenyatta early on
7 and saying we want to be a part of
8 this conversation, but most
9 importantly, not just a
10 conversation and not just policy
11 that sits on the shelf, but
12 actually the action behind it to
13 make sure we're addressing the
14 issue.

15 And so, with that being
16 said, to everyone who took time out
17 of your schedule on a very, very
18 complex and I call it not-sexy
19 issue, thank you for your
20 dedication and making sure this is
21 a priority. Thank you very much.

22 MR. EPPS: Council
23 President Johnson, let me say this
24 as the chronological senior person

1 in the room, it's my experience
2 that no system, no system is no
3 stronger than how it treats and
4 deals with the least of us. And
5 there is no demographic out there
6 that will not suggest that the
7 least of us in America are its
8 disabled and Black and Brown
9 citizens. Okay. That's just the
10 facts.

11 And so, the question is
12 where does Philadelphia want to be
13 going forward? What we just
14 witnessed this summer shows what we
15 can do when we work together.
16 Philadelphia elevated its platform
17 and got a positive reputation
18 around the world. I can guarantee
19 you that I was out of the country
20 and people raved about their
21 experiences and interactions with
22 Philadelphia. But this issue right
23 here is critical to the current and
24 future determination, will we

1 continue to evolve.

2 Council President

3 Johnson talked about the second
4 lowest, poorest, what used to be
5 the first. All right. So we've
6 gotten ourselves one step above the
7 bottom. Let's keep going. But if
8 we don't deal with this, we won't
9 get there.

10 So we want to thank all
11 of the witnesses for their
12 participation today. Your
13 testimony will help shape the
14 committee's findings and the record
15 supporting its final report. And
16 absolutely know that we value your
17 time and your insight.

18 So, Councilman Johnson,
19 I see you sitting down again. Is
20 there anything else you want to say
21 before we begin to wrap up?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: I also just wanted to
24 take a moment to acknowledge my

1 staffer who has this particular
2 issue in his portfolio. And he has
3 stayed on this issue from day one.
4 He has steadied the ship regarding
5 this particular issue. And I work
6 on a lot of issues in City Hall,
7 right. And this is only near and
8 dear to me because it's an
9 opportunity for us to change
10 people's lives.

11 And the City of
12 Philadelphia has always been a tale
13 of two cities, where some folks are
14 doing great and some folks aren't
15 doing so great. And if we're not
16 focusing on building generational
17 wealth as a way to address the
18 issue of poverty, institutional
19 poverty that we have seen time and
20 time again, then what's the purpose
21 of us being here.

22 So I just want to
23 acknowledge Mr. Kareem Groomes for
24 just taking time --

1 (Applause.)

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: -- staying on top of this
4 issue. As my mentor Hardy Williams
5 used to say, he stayed on the case
6 consistently. And I just want to
7 thank you, Kareem. It wasn't easy.
8 This is not one of these issues
9 where when you start working on it,
10 people start coming out and just
11 clapping and giving you kudos.
12 Because we recognize part of it is
13 us just addressing systemic and
14 institutional racism and economic
15 barriers for people of color and
16 other marginalized people to have a
17 seat at the table.

18 But you stepped up to
19 the plate and continuously stayed
20 focused on making sure we got not
21 only the report done, but also some
22 legislation passed as well. And
23 this is just the beginning. So
24 thank you, Kareem. Continue to

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 keep up the good work. And that's
2 all I have.

3 Thank you very much,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 MR. EPPS: Thank you.
6 Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. EPPS: Well, you
9 always give your boss, in this case
10 Councilman Johnson, the last word.
11 And so, with that this concludes
12 the public hearing portion of
13 today's proceedings.

14 We will now go into the
15 public meeting of the Special
16 Committee to consider adoption of
17 the committee's final report. So,
18 Mr. Groomes, will you please call
19 the roll to take attendance for the
20 public meeting.

21 THE CLERK: Regina
22 Hairston.

23 MS. HAIRSTON: Present.

24 THE CLERK: Harold Epps.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 MR. EPPS: I am present.
2 THE CLERK: Brian
3 Ansari.
4 (Inaudible.)
5 THE CLERK: Michelle
6 Flamer.
7 MS. FLAMER: Present.
8 THE CLERK: Della
9 Clark -- excuse me. We have
10 Victoria Hosendorf for Della Clark.
11 MS. HOSENDORF: Present.
12 THE CLERK: Jodie
13 Harris.
14 (Inaudible.)
15 THE CLERK: Khine Zhaw
16 Arthur.
17 (Inaudible.)
18 THE CLERK: Tom Webster.
19 (Inaudible.)
20 THE CLERK: Macy Brooks
21 for Member Robert Bright.
22 (Inaudible.)
23 THE CLERK: Angelo
24 Perryman.

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 (Inaudible.)
2 THE CLERK: Carol
3 Zachary Smith.
4 (Inaudible.)
5 THE CLERK: Dean
6 Robateau.
7 MR. ROBATEAU: Present.
8 THE CLERK: Lynn
9 Newsome.
10 MS. NEWSOME: Present.
11 THE CLERK: Craig
12 Williams.
13 MR. WILLIAMS: Present.
14 THE CLERK: Maria
15 Roberts.
16 MS. ROBERTS: Present.
17 THE CLERK: Jeff
18 Hornstein.
19 MR. HORNSTEIN: Present.
20 THE CLERK: Blane
21 Stoddart.
22 (Inaudible.)
23 THE CLERK: Glenn Bryan.
24 (Inaudible.)

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 THE CLERK: Brian
2 Oglesby.
3 (Inaudible.)
4 THE CLERK: Jennifer
5 Rodriguez.
6 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Present.
7 THE CLERK: John Thomas.
8 (Inaudible.)
9 THE CLERK: Melissa
10 Robbins.
11 (Inaudible.)
12 THE CLERK: Zachary
13 Wilcha.
14 (Inaudible.)
15 THE CLERK: Nicole
16 Stokes.
17 (Inaudible.)
18 THE CLERK: Janira
19 Barroso.
20 (Inaudible.)
21 THE CLERK: Sheila
22 Ireland.
23 MS. IRELAND: Present.
24 THE CLERK: Nico

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 Meyering.

2 (No response.)

3 THE CLERK: Gianna

4 Grossman.

5 (Inaudible.)

6 THE CLERK: Michael

7 O'Bryan.

8 (Inaudible.)

9 MR. EPPS: Mr. Chair,
10 thank you for recognizing the
11 presence of the -- no, I'm the
12 Chair. Sorry about that. I want
13 to thank you for recognizing the
14 presence of a quorum.

15 The Chair now recognizes
16 Co-Chair Hairston for a portion of
17 the final report of the Special
18 Committee.

19 MS. HAIRSTON: I move
20 that the Special Committee adopt
21 its final report on the City's
22 private sector diversity, equity
23 and inclusion policies, that the
24 Co-Chairs and Committee staff be

1 authorized to make technical and
2 editorial corrections to the
3 report, including corrections to
4 citations, figures and formatting,
5 without further action of the
6 committee and that the report, as
7 corrected, be transmitted to
8 Council President Johnson and the
9 members of Council.

10 MR. EPPS: Is there a
11 second?

12 (Duly seconded.)

13 MR. EPPS: We have a
14 first and a second. Ready for the
15 question? So it has been moved and
16 properly seconded that the Special
17 Committee adopt its final report to
18 authorize the Co-Chairs and staff
19 to make technical and editorial
20 corrections and to transmit the
21 report as corrected to Council
22 President Johnson and the members
23 of Council.

24 All those in favor of

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 this motion will signify by saying
2 aye.

3 (Aye.)

4 MR. EPPS: Any
5 opposition?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. EPPS: Hearing none,
8 the ayes have it. The final report
9 is adopted. Technical corrections
10 are authorized and the report will
11 be transferred to Council President
12 Johnson and the members of Council.

13 Ms. Hairston, you have
14 the final word.

15 MS. HAIRSTON: This
16 concludes the business before the
17 Special Committee for today. On
18 behalf of both Co-Chairs, thank
19 you. And thank you to our
20 witnesses, to the members of the
21 Committee and to the public for
22 your attendance. This hearing and
23 public meeting are adjourned to
24 reconvene at the call of the

Special Committee on City & Private Spector Policies

1 Chairs.

2 MR. EPPS: Amen.

3 MS. ROBERTS: Amen.

4 MR. EPPS: May you have
5 a great Monday and not need your
6 umbrellas.

7 - - -

8 (Special Committee on
9 City and Private Sector Diversity
10 Equity and Inclusion Policies
11 adjourned at 12:15 p.m.)

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

2 I, hereby certify that the proceedings
3 and evidence noted are contained fully and
4 accurately in the stenographic notes taken
5 by me in the foregoing matter, and that
6 this is a correct transcript of the same.
7

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TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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---	--	---

Special Committee on City & Private Inspector Policing approvals

accessing 47:3 accountability 81:24 accountable 124:10,13 accounting 93:4 accounts 60:5,10 66:15 71:20 103:21 accurate 33:7 achievable 50:7 achieve 55:20 achieved 87:7 achieving 55:23 96:11 acknowledge 145:24 146:23 acres 135:21 act 19:3,8 47:11 138:20 action 42:23 116:10 143:12 153:5 active 86:20 actively 85:14 actual 93:12 ADA 17:7 130:21 add 24:9 addition 22:12 79:9 101:5 additional 52:24 103:17 address 51:23 66:1 130:6 140:20 141:8,12 146:17 addressed 63:11 addressing 143:13 147:13 adequate 52:20 adhere 109:10 114:1 adjacent 75:17 adjourned 154:23 administration 19:3 31:13 42:20 60:9 63:21 72:21 74:3,5 75:5 adopt 152:20 153:17 adopted 154:9 adoption 148:16	advance 17:7 137:7 advanced 79:2 advancement 37:7,20 44:4, 11 45:1,15 47:16 48:11 54:19 73:17 121:23 advantage 115:21 advocacy 27:16 advocate 30:7 advocates 27:17 28:3 29:18, 24 advocating 27:19 Affairs 77:12 78:5,15 affect 50:2 115:18 affected 105:22 affecting 45:6 affirmative 42:22 affirmatively 28:23 113:5 afford 72:24 African 23:11 25:2 30:8 99:9 131:19 afternoon 133:11,13 138:4 age 55:11 agencies 22:1 50:6 51:24 99:3 130:24 131:6 136:13 agenda 31:15 aggregated 91:14 aggressive 115:11 agree 30:4 125:7 ahead 139:9 aimed 47:20 airport 24:3 Alain 16:18 Alexander 9:8 15:13 16:2 19:10 Alliance 139:19 Allie 8:21 9:3,4,23 10:1 14:8, 18,23 21:8 22:7 24:8 27:14 28:24 34:8 43:1 134:10	allowed 19:1 allowing 10:3 20:6 46:6 alongside 56:5 ambition 93:1 ambitious 81:3 amended 106:19 America 141:11 144:7 American 23:11 25:2 30:8 37:17 38:11 39:23 41:11 42:10,14 99:10 131:19 138:20 Amina 29:17 amplified 130:19 AMY 97:22 analysis 105:18 anchor 90:3 ancillary 10:6 and/or 93:3 Anderson 5:15 Angelo 4:17 149:23 announced 38:16 Ansari 4:3 149:3 answers 104:23 105:13 anticipated 87:13 anymore 21:14 apologize 28:1 Applause 147:1 148:7 applicable 96:17 applying 53:8 appointed 17:16 appreciated 50:9 apprenticeship 132:22 apprenticeships 128:11 approach 38:18 61:13 62:5 approached 9:1 36:19 61:4 77:13 88:21 117:10 125:21 137:23 approvals 91:24
--	---	--

approximately 97:12 135:21 architectural 9:10 18:21 architecture 33:12 132:12 area 52:4 55:12 71:18 arrived 140:12 Art 11:10 17:15 Arthur 4:12 149:16 articulate 68:5 aspects 102:3 assess 124:20 assist 68:17 assistance 48:21 57:6 93:11 129:1 assistant 138:21 Association 117:17 Associations 23:9 assume 14:21 assure 136:1 At-large 138:10 Atlanta 24:2 attacks 142:5 attendance 3:2 148:19 154:22 attended 16:20 attention 45:5 attorney 120:24 attract 110:9 113:9 Audenried 138:22 audit 33:6 105:16 audit- 111:20 authorization 107:1 authorize 153:18 authorized 153:1 154:10 authorizing 2:24 3:5 average 27:7 71:24 award 123:15 125:13 awarded 75:14 106:17 125:10	awarding 18:9 124:12 awards 97:17 aware 21:15 82:11 111:5 112:5 awareness 99:13 100:11 111:3,9,23 aye 154:2,3 ayes 154:8 B B2gnow 98:15 baby 29:11 back 18:24 20:2 27:16,22 46:22 71:19 72:7 79:18 105:12 107:10 111:4,23 116:12 136:5 140:18 back- 91:9 back-office 127:18 backed 132:15 backer 41:10 background 141:20 backgrounds 119:19 backtrack 31:18 balance 57:7 ballot 121:13 122:21 Baltimore 11:10 bank's 56:13 barrier 47:12 73:15 barriers 8:6 36:15 45:6 46:18 51:19 52:24 53:3,14 95:22 108:11,23 127:19 129:6 147:15 Barroso 6:16 151:19 base 118:15 137:1 based 53:5 61:15 Baseline 131:18 baselines 77:5 basic 33:1	basically 21:9 66:2 basis 112:1 Basketball 41:3 basketball-focused 41:5 baton 35:21 beautiful 55:10 began 10:9 begin 7:21 9:12 107:2 115:3 134:4 145:21 beginning 30:8 59:21 92:14 147:23 begins 56:23 behalf 154:18 behavior 124:3 believer 142:20 believes 117:22 Bellwether 35:1 75:17 79:7 84:8 benchmarks 77:6 benefit 91:23 97:6 102:10 126:13 benefited 42:21 benefits 9:21 80:12 92:4 Bennett 7:11 bet 58:1 bid 93:11 99:3 100:23 114:20 125:12 bid- 101:21 bidder 125:11 bidders 110:9 125:12 bidding 98:17 123:12 bids 49:10 99:22 113:19 114:9 124:12 125:9 BIEA 46:1,3 big 11:20 bigger 66:11 127:8 Billy 125:20 137:22 138:6 biopharm 85:11
--	---	--

bipolar 138:18 bit 24:19 31:19 33:17 35:8 111:12 138:11 black 105:7,8 131:12,21 132:18,19 142:6 144:8 Black- 55:17 Blane 5:17 150:20 blanket 53:8 blind 131:7 board 28:9,10 29:2 69:1 106:21 107:2,8 body 125:4 140:7 bond 46:23 bonding 36:13 47:11,20 48:6 74:10 82:17 88:12 92:17 93:2, 11 113:3 126:24 127:17 book 64:7 books 122:12 borrowing 137:1 boss 148:9 bottom 139:21 145:7 bottom-line 137:13 boys 28:6,16 break 112:11 breaking 108:11,22 Brian 4:2 5:22 149:2 151:1 Bright 4:15 149:21 brilliant 122:18 bring 60:17 109:21 brings 45:6 brink 130:18 broad 108:7 broader 38:22 46:13 93:21 broadly 68:24 80:13 91:16 brokerage 54:2 brokers 54:7 Brooks 4:14 149:20	brought 142:2 Brown 23:19 125:20 130:1,2 142:6 144:8 Bruce 27:20 30:5 Bryan 5:20 150:23 build 18:4,12 24:2 36:11 54:10 68:22 84:10 94:1 100:8 111:9 127:2 128:6,9 132:11 builders 40:15 building 9:6 21:21 40:16 46:8 68:20 71:12 91:19 97:24 117:16 127:17,22 129:14,15 134:2,24 136:8 146:16 Builds 82:22 126:6,9 128:17 129:10 built 11:16,19 21:22 79:6 114:20 bullet 133:22 bump 66:12 Bundled 49:7 bundling 46:24 bureaucracy 108:15 115:17 business 10:19 13:17,18 17:1,13 20:9 21:17 24:1,12,15 25:6,10 27:4,20 30:22 31:20 32:3 33:2,23 34:10 35:10 37:6, 19 38:20 39:18 44:3,10,24 45:14,18,20 46:2,4,7,11 47:15 48:10 49:17 50:3,11,15,18 52:2,13 54:18 56:4,18,20 57:20,23 58:17,19 59:1,9 60:22 61:12,15,18,21 62:6 63:7,24 64:1 65:24 66:17 72:9, 13 74:2,5 80:17 84:16 91:7 92:22 94:1,19 96:1 98:24 99:1 101:17 112:4 118:4 120:12 127:10,15 131:7 133:5 135:3 136:21 137:13 154:16 business-friendly 50:21 businesses 2:17 3:14 8:4 12:19,20,24 13:15,19,24 14:1 15:23 18:11 20:1,20 25:1 32:2, 3 36:8 39:3,12 42:1 43:4,10 44:20 45:8,13,21 46:16,20 47:1,21 48:15,20 49:3,9,10,16 50:2,23 52:7,10 54:1,9,10,14,	22 56:9 57:16 61:2 62:1,9 63:1 65:3 72:24 73:18 74:21 75:3 82:11,23 84:12 88:8 89:24 95:17,24 97:2,5 98:5 100:2,7 102:7,12 108:13,24 110:17 118:1,7,13,14 119:9,18,24 120:5 121:21,24 122:11 123:3 126:18 127:10 128:1,23 129:13,14 130:7,14 131:13 132:19 140:22,24 Butch 7:10 buyers 90:6 C call 3:16 8:20 24:16,17,18 35:24 61:24 76:22 77:8 88:1 114:10 143:18 148:18 154:24 called 7:19 61:17,20 67:23 85:20 116:22 calling 36:3 88:15 campus 79:1 83:11 cap 62:14,18 63:12 capabilities 12:3 82:24 capability 102:6 capable 39:11 90:10 capacities 36:11 capacity 18:4 39:20 45:20 46:8 82:17 91:20 93:3 94:4 124:19,22,23 127:24 134:1,24 135:2 capacity-building 92:22 93:9 capital 36:13 46:22 47:3,14,19 56:1,3,11,12 57:8,15 58:21,22, 24 59:3,11,12 60:2,3 72:7 88:12 93:2,12 132:17 134:4,6, 18 139:10 caps 62:23 carbon 80:8 care 13:20 34:1 35:12 139:3,4 career 15:18 83:10 career-connected 83:5 careers 83:9,22 128:13
---	--	---

Carl 29:17 Carol 4:20 150:2 CARP 83:19 carry 57:23 72:24 93:6 127:13 carve-out 135:20 case 42:10 106:5 147:5 148:9 cases 50:2 cash 70:12 72:10 127:13 Casino 40:12 Cassidy 97:19 catastrophic 130:15 category 62:14 Catherine 7:13 caught 70:18 caused 19:8 celebrated 40:9 center 11:9,11 28:5 36:24 37:2 38:2 40:13 41:4,6 55:7 58:2 central 41:14 132:5 CEO 9:5,8 15:13 18:18 38:5 130:2 certifiable 80:2 certifications 93:5 99:1 101:17 certified 74:1 certify 123:2 CFO 95:10 103:2 111:1 chains 90:1 chair 43:20 85:2 109:3 152:9, 12,15 Chairman 148:4 Chairperson 78:10 140:10 challenge 34:19,24 50:1 60:4 challenges 47:2 85:4 102:3 challenging 76:3 Chamber 23:10,11 25:2 30:9 99:10	Chambers 19:4 82:7 champion 86:24 87:2 chance 120:14 126:12 127:5 change 38:21 131:3 132:1 146:9 changed 10:17,18 29:23 107:13 108:5 changing 20:23 111:17 Channel 139:17 charge 22:2 charged 121:9 Charlie 117:9,14 Charter 138:16 check-the-box 132:13 chief 88:18 89:8 95:6 105:10 108:20 110:20 111:1 133:17 Children's 40:23 chronological 143:24 circle 16:24 circling 116:12 citations 153:4 cities 38:23 146:13 citizens 86:11 144:9 city 2:5,13 3:6,14 7:24 10:7 11:3,9 16:13 17:5,9,21 19:4 31:11 32:9 33:17 34:11,12 35:7 37:22 41:7,19 44:4,7,11, 20 45:3,9,23 48:9 50:4,6,14,24 51:11,13,15,21 52:20 53:15 54:15 55:10,16,24 56:14 57:12 58:3,6 61:12 63:4 74:10,24 76:5 79:19 81:15 84:15 86:9 88:5 92:2 94:9 95:17 102:9 107:18,23 117:19 118:22 120:10,24 121:11,24 122:13 123:9,10,18 125:2 129:7 130:3 133:3 138:9 140:11 141:11,16 142:14 146:6,11 city's 42:7 52:8 55:16 80:6 118:9,17 119:7 120:1 152:21 citywide 80:8 clapping 147:11	clarify 9:15 Clark 4:6 149:9,10 class 55:14 classroom 83:12 139:1 classroom-like 101:10 clause 68:23 Clean 9:5 10:5 43:2 cleaning 10:10,13 98:1 clear 22:22 50:14 92:12 Clerk 3:3,20,23 4:2,5,8,11,14, 17,20,23 5:2,5,8,11,14,17,20, 22 6:1,4,6,9,12,15,18,20,23 7:2,5,8,10,13 8:19 9:11 36:6 37:3 43:19 77:10 88:15 117:8 125:18,24 137:21 148:21,24 149:2,5,8,12,15,18,20,23 150:2,5,8,11,14,17,20,23 151:1,4,7,9,12,15,18,21,24 152:3,6 clients 19:11 40:21 close 13:10 32:23 64:8 133:4 close-out 92:18 closely 45:2 82:6 129:5 closest 8:11 closure 80:6 Co-chair 2:9,10,19,20 8:13 63:9 116:2 152:16 Co-chairs 15:10 89:11 141:4 152:24 153:18 154:18 co-lead 37:1 coaching 93:11 Coalition 82:8 code 141:19 cohort 16:4 25:13 collaboration 47:17 collaborative 120:16 collapse 130:18 colleague 95:9 123:19 collect 124:5
---	---	---

Special Committee on City & Private Sector Policies

collected 123:8 college 10:9 30:14 color 83:24 147:15 comb 21:23 combine 48:4 combing 24:14 Comcast 16:12 57:17 commend 118:22 comment 113:14 comments 58:11 102:20 Commerce 23:12 25:3 30:9 99:10 Commerces 23:10 commercial 54:12 Commission 108:2 Commissioner 17:15 60:18 64:10,13,17 65:4 66:24 67:1, 19 70:19,21 71:6,17 72:3 122:5 commitment 20:5 83:6 126:15 committed 54:6 95:21 142:12,24 committee 2:5,9,12 3:1,6 7:17,23 10:3 15:10 35:8 44:6, 15 45:3 50:13 51:15 58:11 71:1 78:11 81:13 85:3 89:15 93:19 95:15 117:13,19 121:5 122:19 126:4 129:3 130:4 135:10 137:16 138:7 148:16 152:18,20,24 153:6,17 154:17, 21 committee's 8:10 120:7 145:14 148:17 commodities 98:23 113:22 Commonwealth 131:15 communicate 23:20 communicating 112:22 communities 15:18 19:17 20:3 49:6 79:18 84:13 94:5 118:16 128:14 132:7 134:12	community 17:19 41:6 50:12, 19 52:13 62:6 79:22 80:18 82:8 84:17 115:14 118:5 120:1 companies 13:9 16:12 32:17 40:5 42:21 75:8,22 76:2 99:16 134:15 135:11,12 136:11,17 137:8 company 9:10 15:17 23:8 38:12 40:16 59:16 73:20 74:1, 7 76:1 105:9 136:20 company's 25:17 compelling 73:8 compete 15:24 18:6 47:4,23 82:24 88:14 92:23 95:24 118:8 127:2,8 128:24 competencies 131:12 competition 19:24 competitive 46:2 119:10 complete 47:24 completed 69:18 70:6 completion 87:7,10 complex 18:7 78:18 111:7 112:16 143:18 complexity 82:16 compliance 17:8 93:24 114:10 comply 96:4 107:22 concedes 142:21 concentrated 91:17 concepts 113:12 concern 43:2 concerned 12:8,10 115:14 conclude 117:4 concluded 116:15 concludes 148:11 154:16 conclusion 54:16 conducted 101:9 conference 85:19 confidence 140:19	confirmed 125:3 conformance 66:2 conformed 65:16 conjunction 54:17 68:15 connect 45:21 90:2 100:1,7, 17 105:5 106:4 128:10 connected 82:12 connecting 83:24 98:11 connection- 136:7 connections 23:13 considered 61:10 consistent 42:6 112:1,7 consistently 147:6 constituents 132:8 construction 9:9 16:17 18:22 33:11 38:7 40:17 49:22 79:10 83:18 85:7 97:19 103:16 119:14,15 120:9 128:12 130:8 139:6 consultants 80:21 contact 67:10 112:7 content 68:24 continue 13:13 75:13,18 76:6, 17 102:13 123:7 124:5 129:3 135:4 136:16 140:20 145:1 147:24 continued 40:19 45:5 52:10 134:13 135:9 continues 128:9 continuing 84:14 98:2 continuity 39:15 continuously 147:19 contract 16:22 28:4 29:15 36:14 46:24 53:6,7 66:2 67:24 68:17,18 91:8 97:17 107:3 123:12 134:6 contracted 97:13 contracting 9:18 36:9 38:17 45:17 46:9,15 47:22 48:23 49:14 51:20 52:3 54:15 81:4 88:6 90:2 99:17 120:1 131:18
---	---	--

133:2 contractor 38:7 41:1 74:18 81:19 90:13 113:24 114:3 126:22 127:7 128:4 contractors 53:16,22 80:20 82:7 103:9 114:11 117:17 119:13 127:4 137:3 contracts 18:9 26:13 31:11 37:8 49:7,18,19 53:9 65:16 66:8 68:7 69:1 71:5 98:14 99:5,8 103:15,16 106:16,18,24 110:10,18 113:4 122:3,9 123:19 124:12 128:22 134:3 contractual 60:23 67:21 137:9 contrast 42:14 contribute 15:24 118:9 contributed 79:20 contributing 120:8 contributors 18:14 control 48:5 107:11 108:1 109:13,22 controls 70:8 96:3 103:7,17 convening 92:1 Convention 11:9,11 28:5 conversation 62:21 139:15 140:1 143:8,10 conversations 63:22 70:17 110:1 converting 41:17 Coordinator 117:16 core 131:11 corporate 13:3 33:13 77:12 78:5,15 corporation 18:19 33:22 corporations 33:21 correct 24:11 106:22 corrected 153:7,21 corrections 153:2,3,20 154:9 Council 15:9 45:4 89:13 99:11 118:22 121:11 130:4 132:6	138:10 140:11,16 143:22 145:2,22 147:2 153:8,9,21,23 154:11,12 Councilman 25:22 140:12 145:18 148:10 Councilmember 10:21 Councilmembers 51:14 country 124:2 144:19 cover 69:19 covered 138:19 covers 53:15,16 Craig 5:5 36:17 37:3,15 38:4 58:14 73:5,7 150:11 Crawley 27:20 30:6 create 13:13 16:22 18:12 19:24 49:14 50:6 52:24 83:20 84:11 118:14 120:3 129:8 132:19 created 2:13 7:23 15:23 16:23 39:5 88:6 creates 84:20 100:6 creating 18:10 41:21 118:23 119:18 126:16 creation 3:5 79:12 credit 48:6 136:15 cried 29:10,12 crisis 130:18 critical 43:9 46:18 59:4 66:3 74:6,13 121:22 144:23 critically 141:9 Cropper 95:10 108:20 110:21, 23,24 113:15 cry 29:11 current 19:3 21:6 31:12 42:19 58:19 60:8 64:24 71:7 75:4,9 96:9,14 101:10 102:2 112:2 119:5 144:23 Curtis 25:22 cut 115:19 Cutler 6:18	cyber 53:20 D D.C. 12:24 142:6 Dan 7:8 danger 132:24 dangerous 109:15 115:16 data 64:5 105:18 123:6,7,8,13 124:6,10,13,21,24 131:15 date 79:21 83:14 day 12:6 115:19 124:8 146:3 day-to-day 66:6 days 65:6 71:5,14 72:10 73:1 103:19 136:23 DE&I 135:10 deal 145:8 deals 144:4 Dean 4:23 125:19 133:16 150:5 dear 14:4 135:16 146:8 Debbie 37:21 51:9 Deborah 36:18 37:7 decade 31:22,24 32:5 52:17 87:16 107:9 decades 18:17 20:22 31:21 52:18 decide 70:7 decision 19:2,7 22:24 decisions 125:7 decline 42:2,11 decoupling 113:4 dedication 143:20 deeper 100:12 defines 61:12 defy 122:13 DEI 7:24 16:21 18:8 42:18 55:8,21 68:3 131:10 Delaware 38:10
--	---	---

delays 50:8 66:7 deliberate 96:6 deliberately 57:8 deliver 19:16 50:24 delivered 16:9 delivery 69:12 Della 4:6 37:2 149:8,10 demand 39:14 142:22 demanding 47:12 demographic 123:14 144:5 demographics 141:18 demolition 80:6 demonstrates 19:18 denied 47:8 department 31:3 67:10 68:15, 16 121:8,15,17 123:2 departments 122:2,6,8 123:10 depend 24:23 depending 113:21 Deputy 88:16 89:4,18 95:10 108:20 110:20,24 derivative 59:7 describe 36:4 description 58:15 design 9:10 designated 101:8 designed 39:16 92:9 100:1 desk 104:15 desperate 115:22 destructive 131:9,24 detail 8:9 detailed 71:8 details 104:17 110:14 113:3 determination 144:24 develop 77:5 87:14 developed 11:23 23:2 47:19	developer 90:12 developing 22:17 63:22 80:1 98:4 102:8 development 18:19 30:23 43:9 46:7 75:2 79:22 83:3,18 84:3,17 93:22 94:11 97:21 120:2 133:17 134:2 135:15 136:1 developments 88:5 develops 45:15 77:1 DIE 21:13 difference 19:7 differently 55:22 difficult 24:6,7 75:7 95:23 108:16 direct 59:6 67:24 75:8 direction 141:23 directly 100:2 101:24 106:3 118:11,19 Director 37:5,8,19,23 44:3,10 88:17 89:5,19 126:6 Disabilities 17:7 138:20 disability 138:12,19,24 disabled 26:15 144:8 disabled-owned 2:16 3:13 8:3 117:24 119:23 120:12 126:17 disappeared 39:14 disclose 8:8 disconnected 93:16 discounted 93:10 discriminated 139:11 discrimination 29:13 discriminatory 131:8 discuss 9:16 discussed 133:21 discussion 76:23 discussions 106:2 dismantling 130:20	disorder 138:18 disparities 52:12 disparity 39:10 131:15 disquieted 86:22 distinguished 15:11 25:6 distress 124:2 distributed 91:16 131:6 distribution 132:4,15 district 16:10 35:1 75:18 79:7 81:16 83:7 84:9 88:20 89:9 95:8,12,19,21 96:16,19,21 97:4 98:7,14 99:4,18,24 100:3, 10,13 101:6,12,15 102:9,13 105:19 106:16,21 107:11,14 108:8 109:12,17 110:18 111:2 112:4 113:2,13 115:2 131:1 district's 97:12 99:14 101:18 109:6 districts 94:2 132:6 diverse 9:22 15:23 19:15 39:3, 11 45:7,13 46:20 47:1 50:18 55:10,13 60:14 77:3 80:20 82:7 88:7,10 89:24 91:2,4 95:16 115:7 118:12 diversity 2:6 3:7 12:22 15:16 16:4 17:24 32:10 40:7 41:23 42:23 44:7 51:16 55:14 63:8 102:12 117:20 118:24 128:18 130:21 132:2 152:22 Division 51:11 138:8 documented 124:16 dollar 57:22 dollars 32:15 96:23 97:11,13 115:4,13,23 Donna 8:21 9:4 22:7 43:1 134:10 door 28:18 29:21 123:23 134:20 doors 16:5 double 42:16 dovetail 25:15 drafting 65:23
--	---	---

dried 42:6 Drinkpak 84:2 Driscoll 16:13 40:17 drive 49:5 54:5 71:9 driven 97:16 107:17 duly 153:12 durable 57:11 132:11 duty 32:20 E earlier 43:2 72:6 73:20 91:22 104:2 early 92:14 127:1 142:3 143:6 earmarked 26:14 easier 96:7 108:12,23 111:13 Eastern 99:11 easy 76:4 147:7 eat 34:21 echo 22:6 116:2 economic 19:24 37:6,20 44:4, 11,19 45:1,15 46:5 47:16 48:11 49:4 54:19 55:14,20,23 56:7 78:19 81:3 92:4 93:21 94:4 118:3,10 119:21 120:13 132:14 147:14 economically 48:15 economy 18:15 31:1 82:21 88:17 89:5,19 118:9,18 119:11 123:20 143:3 ecosystem 26:6 50:21 90:16 94:20 editorial 153:2,19 educate 13:20 education 19:11 48:4 effect 137:2 effective 119:4 effectively 51:1 97:2 effectiveness 3:12 44:18 effort 120:17	efforts 17:10 45:24 54:20 75:1 81:21 95:20 eighth 39:24 elected 81:17 electors 121:13 electrical 37:17 38:11,12 41:12 130:12 Elementary 16:18 elements 60:3 63:7 elevated 144:16 eliminate 53:13 Elliott-lewis 11:21 elusive 42:9 email 99:8,21 embarked 68:16 embed 66:17 embodied 46:10 emerged 39:19 74:9 emerging 21:1 23:8 43:4 48:15 59:9 61:20 135:11 emissions 80:9 emphasis 81:23 emphasizing 13:11 employed 79:5 employee 94:3 employees 14:16 55:18 56:24 91:8 97:5 128:2 employer 56:19 employers 84:1 emulate 22:12 enabling 54:10 encourage 35:9 72:20 93:18 94:9 114:23 115:10 end 79:4 133:5 energy 16:11 19:12 energy-efficient 41:18 engage 62:5 101:23	engaged 83:13 engagement 81:9 82:5 engines 78:19 enhance 3:11 44:18 52:2,13 54:20 ensure 12:11 13:7 17:11 81:21 82:1,9 84:20 103:21 106:4 109:7 111:20 115:12 116:13 119:6 ensures 114:11 ensuring 17:19 80:11 85:15 92:3 entered 10:24 entering 132:9 Enterprise 36:24 37:2 38:1 55:7 58:2 enterprises 37:4,16 38:6 40:8 130:17 135:3 entire 17:9 22:9 43:14 entities 18:3 entity 111:8 entrepreneurial 85:24 86:1 entrepreneurs 13:14 47:7 56:16,17 118:6 entrepreneurs' 57:7 entry 46:19 47:12 51:19 environment 17:3 20:22 21:7 46:2 58:20 59:4 75:10 Epps 2:1,8,21 3:18,19 7:20 8:13 9:14 14:6,10,20 15:1,6 20:11 32:19 34:6 35:14 36:2, 21 59:24 60:21 61:3 62:12,19 64:16,20,23 72:5 76:11,13 77:15,19,23 78:7 87:5,11,18 89:12 106:12 107:6,7 109:3 114:23 116:2,5,9 120:18 125:15,23 140:5,9 141:5 143:22 148:5,8,24 149:1 152:9 153:10,13 154:4,7 equal 86:13,14 132:7 equality 55:20 equally 18:16 82:4 83:4
---	---	---

equation 72:15 equip 48:14 equipment 41:12 equitably 131:5 equity 2:6 3:7 15:16 40:7 41:23 42:23 44:8 49:3 51:16 117:20 118:24 152:22 era 132:10 Ernest 18:17 Ernie 23:2 25:23 27:18 erode 131:11 eroded 136:9 erosion 130:15 ERP 65:8 essential 113:11 established 20:21 40:1 46:12 98:10 99:14 100:16 estate 139:7 esteemed 121:4 125:4 140:10 estimating 127:16 ethnicity 55:11 evaluated 109:20 evaluates 120:10 Eventually 56:22 everything's 29:4 evidence-based 3:10 44:17 119:2 evolve 12:14 145:1 exact 131:24 examination 119:5 examine 2:13 3:8 7:23 44:15 118:23 129:4 examines 36:7 88:3 exceed 61:19,22 62:2 exceeding 136:3 excellent 137:17 Exception 103:15	excluded 94:6 exclusion 47:10 excuse 43:19 149:9 Executive 36:23 46:12 88:16 89:4,18 126:5 executives 27:5 Exelon 16:12 40:23 exist 26:16 73:24 129:6 existed 94:20 existence 105:10 existing 100:18 118:24 exists 66:12 114:6 expand 19:22 36:10 118:15 expanded 40:3 99:13 expanding 46:14 49:13 80:23 119:22 expect 65:3 expectations 92:16 expected 79:7 expecting 63:15 experience 17:16,17 18:11 25:10 47:14 69:14 75:23 82:18 144:1 experienced 73:12 experiences 144:21 expertise 34:1 127:11 142:1 explain 61:9 explained 26:24 explicitly 39:15 exploration 83:10 explore 100:9 exposed 131:17 exposure 83:8 express 117:18 expressed 43:2 extended 69:22 extends 79:11	extent 76:5 111:19 external 98:12,21 99:15 extra 104:5 extreme 30:18 eye 131:7 F fabric 79:18 face 36:8 39:12 47:2 131:2 facilitate 23:14 facilitating 110:7 facilities 11:22 17:12 97:24 facility 41:2 fact 23:19 107:12 109:18 113:7 facts 144:10 fail 92:23 failed 32:18 57:6 fair 116:23 126:11 fairly 108:7 Fairmount 135:22 fairs 100:1 fallen 63:5 falls 56:3 familiar 99:16 families 128:6 129:15 family 57:22 family- 83:21 family-sustaining 94:17 fast 65:2 fastest 57:11 favor 153:24 federal 33:18 63:3 130:20 136:12,13 federally- 138:18 feedback 50:10 93:15 feel 31:13
--	--	---

fellow 2:10 Ferry 57:18 138:23 field 53:3 142:13 fighting 30:1 figures 153:4 filtering 98:22 final 145:15 148:17 152:17,21 153:17 154:8,14 finalized 92:6 finally 136:18 finance 37:9 51:11 56:17,20 72:11 financial 18:12 47:13 48:4,8 69:11 88:18 89:8 95:7 105:11 financing 47:8 74:11 find 12:6 75:18 90:18 138:13 139:15 finding 75:12 findings 8:9 52:4 145:14 fine 29:5 Fioravanti 77:11,16,17,21 78:3,4,9,13 87:3,9,12,21 fire 75:4 firm 9:6 18:20 19:1 24:18 68:17 75:20 78:17 81:8,11 142:20 firm's 61:16 91:4 firms 11:20 19:15 21:1 35:11 39:10 42:5 55:17 76:7 80:22 82:16 88:10,11,14 90:10,11,16 91:2,3,18,19 92:7,23 94:13 131:2,20 133:2 135:6 fit 62:8 90:17 92:8 Flamer 3:24 4:1 117:9 120:18, 20,22 131:14 149:6,7 flat 13:2 flexibility 49:20 109:8,16,21 floor 78:7 flow 57:10 72:10 110:8 flows 132:17	flux 60:12 focal 41:7 focus 36:4 83:4 85:22,23 86:1 108:10 focused 43:3 70:4 75:1 76:19 78:17 79:23 80:11 98:4 147:20 focusing 65:20 146:16 folks 146:13,14 follow 8:16 12:11 114:1 follow-up 62:13 103:11 footing 39:20 footprint 52:3 force 141:5 forced 49:11 forever 124:4 129:1 forgetting 28:2 forgot 64:13 form 114:10 format 101:9 formatting 153:4 forum 118:23 forward 31:15 36:22 61:8 68:23 75:19 76:14 84:14 120:6 122:16 144:13 foster 46:1 foul 26:11 found 8:5 73:8 139:8 foundation 74:7 foundational 60:1,6 113:12 130:17 founder 15:13 37:3 130:2 four-tiered 61:13 frame 7:21 framework 38:21 46:14 132:15 frank 142:7 frankly 134:8 frequently 67:11 69:8	friend 14:3,5 22:7 140:17 full 16:23 full-service 38:12 fully 79:6 96:4 111:5 fund 47:19 57:14 97:4 fundamentally 72:19 funding 57:20,21 funds 48:5 future 17:3 27:12 84:1 100:10 118:11 135:20 144:24 FY24 97:10,13 G gain 18:11 gained 11:7 gaining 83:8 Galloway 125:5 gap 39:10 gaps 90:19 garnering 18:23 gave 11:1 GBCA 117:22 119:17 120:6 gender 55:11 gender-based 38:19 general 38:7 82:6 100:22,24 101:15 103:13 107:21 117:16 Generally 67:21 generation 12:8 13:12 26:19 120:4 generational 128:6 146:16 generations 17:3 43:6 84:21 generous 25:11 Gianna 7:2 152:3 Gilbane 40:15 Girls 83:20 give 20:2 28:8 33:7 62:9 71:21 148:9
---	--	--

giving 112:6 147:11 Glenn 5:20 150:23 go-getter 22:9 goal 8:1 65:11 71:4 94:12 102:14 111:9 126:18,21 128:16 goals 38:19 77:4 81:3,6,22 113:10,16,17,23 Goehl 117:9,12,14 golf 34:21 134:11,19 good 2:1,2,18 3:3 15:8 20:17 34:18 35:10 37:10 38:3 44:5 51:8,13 55:5 64:11 77:15,17, 19,21 78:9 88:23 95:5 96:22 110:23 117:12 120:19,20 124:14 126:3 127:4 133:10,12 138:1,3 140:17 148:1 good-paying 128:12 goods 50:24 Google 99:7 governance 132:5 government 33:14,18 34:4 51:23 63:3 73:13 86:16,17 111:8 117:15 136:13 GPLEX 85:20 grace 62:3 graduate 63:24 grants 93:10 Grays 57:18 138:23 great 104:24 124:2 142:14 146:14,15 greater 8:8 38:9 39:13 49:20 54:6 89:6,20 100:10 120:11 127:20 grew 94:15 grim 131:17 Groomes 2:22 35:24 76:21 77:8 87:24 117:5 146:23 148:18 gross 61:18,21 62:1 Grossman 7:3 152:4	ground 90:9 116:18 grounded 49:2 group 32:5 65:19 77:12 78:6, 15 95:17 99:7,21 130:3 groups 18:2 82:9 99:9 grow 15:24 19:1 20:9 21:11 42:4 47:4 48:17 56:11 90:10 91:3 98:5 118:8,14 127:6,15 128:2 129:13 growing 118:4 128:21 growth 17:22 45:18 46:4,19 49:1 51:19 54:5 75:2 88:6 93:15 98:3 102:11 118:18,20 119:21 124:18 126:13 guarantee 116:11 144:18 guess 85:1 guests 15:11 guidance 26:8,22 27:10 guided 81:2 guides 26:1 guys 43:22 H Hairston 2:11,18,20 3:21,22 7:16 8:12 35:20,22 37:10 43:11,20 51:3 54:23 58:8 61:6 64:21 70:23 73:2 76:9 87:19, 23 88:23 89:12 94:22 102:17 106:11 107:6 110:3 116:7,14 129:20 133:8,12 137:19 138:3 140:3 141:6 148:22,23 152:16, 19 154:13,15 half 103:4 107:9 Hall 11:10 58:7 146:6 halogen 41:17 Hamilton 10:23 hand 43:23 86:19 hand-in-hand 134:7 handle 71:20 hands-on 54:3 83:8 Hanwha 35:3,4	happen 92:5 122:9 happened 29:1 31:23 105:4 happy 70:16 71:22 95:18 102:15 hard 137:6 138:13 139:8 141:21 hard-working 96:24 hardship 29:14 Hardy 147:4 Harold 2:8 3:18 141:5 148:24 Harris 4:9 149:13 heading 65:7 healthcare 19:12 healthy 119:10 hear 8:10 25:19,21,23 26:22 43:13 62:13 63:15 85:6,8 105:20 109:14 110:10 112:18 113:2 115:1 124:17 133:20 137:21 heard 8:15 27:18 55:8 113:8 121:2 135:7 hearing 2:4 7:18,22 76:15 116:20 139:22 148:12 154:7, 22 heart 135:16 heat 132:16 heavily- 98:3 heavy 65:20 held 101:2 helped 18:4 20:3 42:3 helping 17:2,7 50:24 52:1 83:20 128:23 helps 25:3 46:1 82:1 89:23 90:9 Herbstman 88:18 89:7,8 94:24 95:4,6 103:3,12 104:16 105:24 106:23 107:20 109:24 110:19 Hicks 7:14 hides 66:6
--	---	--

high 53:8 83:16 high- 40:10 high-cost 53:19 high-earning 83:21 higher-value 97:16 highest 16:1 highly 115:9 hire 128:1 hiring 94:2 Hispanic 131:12,20,22 132:18,20 historically 46:21 49:7 94:5 139:13 hit 29:20 137:12 hold 117:1 124:9 holds 27:12 124:10 hole 105:7,8 home 56:10 homegrown 57:15 homes 10:10,13 27:3,8 honest 139:12 honestly 23:23 honor 16:19 126:1 Honorable 130:3 honored 15:14 hope 116:10 129:3 hopeful 125:5 Hornstein 5:12,13 85:18 143:5 150:18,19 Hosendorf 4:6,7 36:17,22 37:24 38:1 55:1,5,6 149:10,11 Hospital 40:23,24 hospitality 19:13 85:11 host 41:13 hosted 99:24 101:13 hostile 131:2 hosts 101:6	hot 104:21 Hotel 40:12 hours 100:20 101:2,4 112:8 houses 10:14 Hovey 60:18 64:10,12,17 65:4 67:1,19 70:21 71:6,17 72:3 how's 28:11 HR 93:4 HRP 77:12 78:6,15 80:16 HUBZONE 74:4 hundreds 45:12 hunky-dory 29:4 hurdles 65:12 HVAC 23:18 130:11 I idea 111:16,22 ideally 65:5 identify 81:20 98:20 119:2 identifying 98:11 Illness 139:19 illustrate 9:21 imagine 72:16 impact 3:9 15:15 20:1 37:6,20 42:1 44:3,10,15 45:1,14 47:16 48:11 49:6 54:18 79:11 127:19 129:2 impediment 67:7 impediments 62:24 66:14 68:9 109:16 imperative 80:17 118:3 implement 121:17 123:3 implementation 65:8 implemented 19:20 65:10 122:15,23 implementing 77:3 121:9 importance 17:18 119:17 important 18:16 22:13 24:21	59:11,12 82:4 83:4 85:9 123:6 141:9 importantly 54:5 80:10 119:1 143:9 improve 16:19 17:2 19:17 48:23 57:7 113:6 improvement 50:9 improvements 96:12 110:2 improving 41:19 79:15 110:13,15 inadequate 46:22 131:5 inaudible 3:1 4:4,10,16,19,22 5:16,19,21 6:8,11,14,17,19 7:1,4,7,9,12,15 99:22 149:4, 14,17,19,22 150:1,4,22,24 151:3,8,11,14,17,20 152:5,8 incentives 77:1 inception 74:19 include 36:12 91:1 93:9 included 46:21 69:3 140:1 includes 81:14 99:2,8,20 including 49:16 56:21 96:19, 23 97:18 101:19 153:3 inclusion 2:7 3:8 15:16 16:5 38:24 40:7 41:24 42:24 44:8 49:4 51:17 55:21 81:3 82:1 117:21 119:1 128:18 140:21 152:23 inclusive 9:17 80:16 92:12 income 27:7 47:9 incorporating 80:3 increase 34:3 39:8 54:13 127:24 increased 97:8 increasing 117:23 increasingly 18:6 incredible 84:6 incremental 73:14 independently 40:20 indicating 47:10
--	--	---

indication 22:22 indifference 130:23 individual 104:3 individually 53:18 individuals 26:15 142:9 industrial 78:18 industries 31:1 77:5 85:9 industry 23:17,21 33:11,12 52:19 54:4 82:9 85:23,24 86:18 119:14 120:10 130:8 influence 19:5 inform 100:18 information 95:19 101:1,20 110:8 111:14,24 120:15 123:11,14,24 139:9,22 informational 101:7 infrastructure 19:14 32:9 47:18 79:14 92:1 132:10 infusion 134:6 ingredient 56:2 initial 71:13 initially 99:21 initiative 74:4,23 initiatives 17:24 42:24 48:14 73:22 79:23 innovation 79:3 inperson 100:16 101:6 Inquirer 21:19 insight 145:17 insights 54:4 institutional 90:1 130:23 146:18 147:14 institutions 42:8 90:4,18 insurance 36:13 37:8 52:11, 16,23 53:1,5,11,13,15,19 54:7, 12 74:11 92:17 126:24 127:17 integrate 46:7 integrated 78:16 intend 117:1	intended 39:2 intentional 39:4 50:16 64:8 115:12 142:18 intentionally 15:22 91:23 intentions 124:15 interactions 144:21 interest 92:3 interested 100:13 interesting 139:16 intermediary 90:15 internship 83:14 internships 83:9 introduced 10:15 11:13 investing 79:13 83:17 investment 80:12 84:20 94:7 132:11 invited 28:4 116:15 invoice 70:8 104:14 invoiced 103:24 invoices 67:9 103:10 105:14, 20 invoicing 69:19 involve 53:23 IO 98:14 Ireland 6:21,22 73:4,7 151:22, 23 issue 60:20 66:11 67:21 140:21 141:9,13 143:14,19 144:22 146:2,3,5,18 147:4 issues 85:17 127:9 146:6 147:8 items 103:23 116:11	January 72:18 115:2 Jeff 5:11 85:18 143:4 150:17 Jefferson 40:24 Jennifer 6:1 151:4 Jersey 36:24 Jim 10:23 job 10:11 57:3,21 75:16 79:12 jobs 18:13 41:21 79:9,11 118:14 128:22 129:15 132:20 Jodie 4:8 149:12 John 6:4 151:7 Johnson 140:12,17 143:23 145:3,18,23 147:3 148:10 153:8,22 154:12 join 30:20 100:21 101:3 112:9 joined 95:9 joining 23:9 Jones 10:21 18:18 23:3 25:22 27:18 36:18 37:4,18 43:16 44:2,9 59:24 60:16 61:7,11 62:16 63:20 115:10 Jones' 109:7 Journal 21:17 24:15 journeyman 132:23 judge 90:24 July 66:19 71:11 jumped 133:23
K		
		Kareem 146:23 147:7,24 Ken 5:14 Kensington 57:19 Kenyatta 35:2 88:16 89:3,17 102:23 143:6 Kerry 131:16 key 56:1 74:12 102:3 keyword 98:21 Khine 4:11 149:15

kids 13:20 139:4,5 kind 30:21 41:10 66:20 103:6 106:9 111:4 112:13 kindergarten 16:21 kinds 42:3 112:24 Kirkland 131:17 knew 28:15 knocked 123:22 know-how 75:23 knowing 24:24 115:15 knowledge 11:5 48:16 101:6, 12 111:10 112:10 kudos 147:11 L Labor 117:15 lack 92:24 93:2 lacking 86:3 ladies 26:18 land 91:24 language 60:13,23 70:4 75:6 languishes 131:20 large 42:5 63:6 66:8 99:24 111:8 126:23 127:7,21 136:20 large-scale 88:4 larger 11:2 18:6 47:4 91:6,8 108:15 127:3 134:14 136:11 largest 55:15 78:20 133:3 141:11 laser-focused 121:7 123:1 lasting 84:21 129:9 lastly 124:17 late 123:15,16 Latino-owned 55:17 laurels 12:1 law 68:16 96:5,20 107:24 109:19 laws 107:23 108:6	Lawton 36:18 37:7,21,22 51:5, 8,9 lay 116:18 laying 74:6 lead 89:21 101:24 leaders 10:22 25:7,24 119:14 leadership 10:20 20:5 30:13, 15,18,22 108:19 leads 26:4 93:14 League 30:12 31:1 82:21 88:17 89:5,19 123:20 143:4 lean 109:18 learn 101:15 102:1 learning 17:2 83:6 leave 94:18 led 41:18 63:2 Lee 27:21 LEED- 80:1 left 43:22,24 legacy 61:24 63:24 legal 38:22 93:3 96:17 142:1 legislation 67:15 69:24 147:22 legitimate 92:2 lenders 47:9 letters 22:2 letting 67:3 level 47:9 53:2,6 90:9 leveling 142:13 levels 16:1 61:15 73:23 leverage 91:21 Lewis 97:19 LF 16:12 40:17 liability 53:20,21 life 10:17,19 41:20 79:3,4 82:3 lifeblood 136:19 lifting 65:20	lights 41:17,18 limit 8:16 53:8 117:2 126:2 limited 46:21 47:21 lines 48:6 53:20 live 13:19 14:16 40:12 66:19 71:11 100:21 126:10 134:12 lives 146:10 living 134:20 loan 56:18 59:19 local 11:20 12:19,20,23 13:8,9, 19,24 16:24 35:11 38:20 42:11 45:7,12 46:11,16,20 47:1 48:19 49:8,10,15 50:1,18 52:2, 14 54:22 60:14,21 61:1 65:2 74:10 81:7,17 82:10 84:11 89:23 94:2,19 95:16 97:4,7,10 98:5 102:12 107:11 109:10,13, 22 113:18 114:6 115:7,13 119:10 121:21 122:11,17 123:2 135:3 140:22 locally 75:7 115:24 130:22 locally-owned 110:16 location 98:24 lock 28:17 Locke 16:18 locked 49:8,9 logistics 79:2 long 71:16 94:14 103:1 106:18 134:17 135:13 long-term 18:13 longer 39:15 65:5 losing 132:24 lost 56:3 66:9 68:11 lot 23:4 26:18 28:20 29:1 55:8 66:6 68:10 75:21 85:6 110:6, 10 111:2 112:18,21 135:8 136:10 137:3 138:13 146:6 love 85:12 105:15 Low 56:7 lower 19:21 49:11 52:18 53:17 lower-income 27:8
--	---	--

lowest 125:10 145:4	maps 132:16	mechanisms 39:5
Lynn 5:2 6:18 150:8	March 72:19 104:15	meet 62:8 81:18 94:12
	marginalized 139:14 142:10	meeting 2:4 28:19 29:2,11,12
M	147:16	107:2 148:15,20 154:23
	margins 49:11 70:11	meetings 26:23 137:16
macro 61:24 62:16,17	Maria 5:8 24:17 150:14	meets 19:19
Macy 4:14 149:20	market 39:23 42:12 49:18	mega 134:24
Madam 109:3	63:16,23 64:3,5 74:9,10	Melissa 6:6 151:9
made 11:23 17:22 58:5 75:6	130:16	Member 4:15 149:21
81:22 126:14	marketplace 21:2 26:7,21	members 15:10 44:6 50:11
main 10:10 90:22 103:22	Marlon 10:22	51:14 78:10 89:14 117:13
maintain 96:2	Marquee 139:20	130:3,4 141:7,21 153:9,22
maintained 52:15	Martin 97:22	154:12,20
maintenance 9:6	massive 115:4	memories 124:14
major 38:16 40:15 47:12 90:5	match 56:12	Mental 139:19
91:5 93:22 94:6 132:10	matches 103:22	mention 30:5 74:16 110:12
make 8:14 12:22 13:22 19:7	materials 41:13	mentioned 25:21 71:3 73:20
21:14 50:13 58:3 63:17 76:4,	matter 65:21 123:21,22	74:8 104:2 112:11
17 85:9 95:23 96:7 104:10	mature 24:12 59:1	mentor 134:15 147:4
108:12,23 111:12 122:5	Maven 81:9 82:21	mentored 54:1
128:13 133:2 140:19 141:13	Mayor 38:16	mentoring 16:4
142:12 143:13 153:1,19	Mayor's 17:6 31:6,12	mentorship 17:23 56:5 88:13
makes 13:18 35:10	mayors 17:17	93:13
making 86:12 103:9 112:5	maze 131:3	merits 9:21
119:3 141:14 142:16 143:20	MBEC 10:16 11:14 25:22	met 136:2
147:20	26:10	method 102:5
Man 41:4	Mccann 125:20 137:22 138:1,	metrics 132:14
manage 108:16	5,6	Meyering 6:24 152:1
managed 54:17	Mckissack 133:18	Mia 77:10 78:4,13 84:24 86:23
management 9:9 16:17 18:22	meaning 34:9	mic 140:15
37:9,23 48:5 51:10 52:1,9,15	meaningful 16:6,16 118:7	Michael 7:5 23:19 125:20
53:4 54:8 98:1 122:7	119:8	130:1 152:6
Management's 53:1	means 31:21	Michelle 3:23 117:9 120:22
manager 38:8	meant 101:22 138:24	141:24 149:5
managers 13:4	measurable 49:5 81:24 93:15	micro 61:17
mandate 67:15	measure 91:13	middle 27:7 63:16,23 64:3
mandates 52:23	measured 84:9	83:15 122:6
manipulation 131:9	mechanical 130:11	Midsized 62:17
manner 65:17		Mike 88:18 89:7 95:5 103:1
manufacturing 79:2 85:10		

million 18:24 32:17 41:4 61:19,22 62:2 79:21 124:23 mind 92:10 mine 20:2 76:1,2 105:9 minimum 52:15 53:1 136:3 minorities 86:11 minority 2:16 3:13 8:3 14:1 26:15 99:11 117:24 119:23 120:11 121:23 126:17 130:7, 13 133:1 minority- 74:20 75:2 81:7 minority-owned 32:1 81:10 82:10 110:17 minute 14:7 43:22,24 minutes 8:17 116:23 missing 56:1,10 mobility 55:23 56:7 model 56:13 models 77:2 modern 78:19 moment 16:24 114:24 145:24 Monday 35:19 money 72:18 126:22 128:4 Monique 125:4 monthly 81:6 Morgan 40:12 morning 2:1,3,19 3:4 15:8 20:18 35:19 37:11 38:4 44:5 51:9,13 55:6 64:11 77:15 78:10 88:24 95:5 110:24 117:13 120:19,21 121:2 126:3 138:2 139:16 Mosaic 97:20 motion 154:1 move 31:14 56:15 57:12 76:18 106:10 116:5 152:19 moved 88:11 94:15 97:15 153:15 movement 91:11 116:13 moving 32:21 38:18 132:13	municipal 9:18 36:9 52:3 Museum 11:10 MWBE 114:12 MWBES 114:5 N Nadir 36:18 37:4,18 44:2,9 140:18 names 117:6 narrative 40:8 national 42:19 139:18 nationality 34:2 nationally 130:19 native 120:23 nature 9:16 53:6 65:14 navigate 24:6 52:11 89:24 96:8 111:10,15 112:14 navigating 101:18 necessarily 113:18 needed 47:3 48:8,17,22 76:8 126:22 127:13 139:1,3 needing 129:1 neglected 74:16 negotiating 106:24 negotiations 107:3 neighborhood 34:23 94:3 neighborhoods 128:5 129:16 neighbors 80:14 84:18 net 103:13,19 network 80:20 99:15 newer 101:11 News 139:17 Newsome 5:3,4 150:9,10 Nico 6:23 151:24 Nicole 6:12 151:15 nodding 28:22	non-diverse 19:15 39:9 nonprofit 23:3 nonsense 30:2 noon 32:22 not-sexy 143:18 Note 32:19 noted 134:11 notes 133:22 notified 114:18 notify 43:23 November 38:15 number 20:21 32:1 66:8 91:18 numbers 128:19 O O'BRIEN 7:6 O'BRYAN 152:7 obligation 137:9 observation 134:22 observations 126:9 obsolete 78:18 obstacles 36:8 obtain 112:23 128:16 obtained 53:18 OCIPS 53:12 OEO 10:17 12:2 offer 89:16 90:22 offered 18:20 98:23 office 17:6 31:7,12 35:3,5 37:5,19 44:24 45:11,14,19 46:4,5,23 47:15 48:10 51:10 54:18 80:7 91:10 95:11 97:23 98:8 99:19 100:14,20 101:2 102:1 105:12 109:6,7 112:8 officer 88:19 89:8 95:7 105:11 133:17 offices 81:17
---	--	---

officials 81:17 offsite 79:14 Oglesby 5:23,24 151:2 oil 78:24 ongoing 74:23 96:13 onsite 79:13 open 16:5 50:15 70:22 110:1 112:8 operate 96:16 operates 107:15 operating 38:8 operation 39:24 operational 54:3 operations 38:13 48:23 opined 123:10 opinion 21:3 opportunities 9:19 11:8 12:2, 12 15:22 16:7,8 18:1 19:19,23 21:13,16 24:13 32:11 39:9 42:3,7 45:17,23 46:8,15 47:5, 22 49:12,15 75:8,24 76:6 81:20 82:12 83:1,11,15 84:11 88:7 90:3 92:8 93:13 98:19 99:6,17 100:4,9 118:8 119:8, 22 120:3 126:16 127:1 129:9 141:15 opportunity 11:1,4,12 13:1 16:23 17:20 18:20 20:6 22:16, 23 44:19,22 46:6 59:5 78:12 80:23 84:21 86:14 89:16 91:16 95:13 101:14 115:6 120:14 128:10,15,21 129:18 130:5 140:24 141:1 146:9 opposition 154:5 order 7:19 46:12 72:10 112:23 113:6 128:16 141:12 orders 131:3,4 ordinance 121:12 ordinarily 57:10 organization 8:23 18:23 31:7 37:12 40:9 78:1 87:1 89:1 95:2 119:12	organizations 19:4 23:4 82:8, 20 84:3 127:21,23 originally 135:18 outcomes 49:5 82:1 Outfitters 57:17 outline 96:10 outreach 81:8 82:5 92:14 96:12 98:17 110:7 111:3,24 134:13 outstanding 35:17 overridden 109:11 oversees 46:3 oversight 54:3 81:13 overview 45:11 owned 74:21 81:8 82:11 121:24 owner 17:1 37:15 38:5 56:22 owner's 56:23 Owner-controlled 53:11 owners 27:5 136:22 owning 57:13 P package 69:11 paid 13:3,4 65:3 68:10,21 69:21 72:12 83:14 94:14,15,17 114:19 127:14 paired 92:21 122:17 pandemic 52:5 panel 8:14,21 9:16 14:8 20:13 35:23 36:1,4,7,16 43:14 76:12, 18,22,23 77:9 87:24 88:2,3 102:21 panels 116:16 parallel 66:5,10 68:14 parents 27:4 Park 135:22 Parker 38:16 Parkside 57:18	part 25:13 28:8 29:15 32:20 56:2 93:20 97:16 122:18 139:15 143:7 147:12 participant 41:15 86:20 participate 17:21 54:15 86:15,23 98:6 115:22 119:20 133:20 participated 16:3 73:23 74:3 94:13 121:4 143:2 participates 123:21 participating 40:10 85:15 123:18 participation 9:17,22 38:19 45:22 52:6,14 54:21 60:22 76:20 77:3 81:5 85:5 86:14 91:5,14 97:8,11 110:16 113:6, 9,10,16,18,23 114:22 117:23 120:13 145:12 partner 19:14 41:10 82:20 99:3 100:9 120:16 129:11 134:15 partnered 34:17 Partnering 42:5 partners 34:18 48:13 58:6 81:19 84:4,18 90:5 97:21 partnership 50:5 84:15 partnerships 11:16,19 18:1 48:19 54:7 90:24 93:20 passed 117:3 147:22 past 73:12 90:7 97:9 pat 24:10,17 27:18 28:21 104:23 path 57:11 66:3 131:24 pathways 13:13 18:10 83:21 119:18 Patricia 8:21 9:7 15:12 pay 60:4,9 65:1 70:5 71:4 97:2 103:14,24 137:11 pay-when- 68:20 pay-when-paid 68:6 payable 66:16 71:21 103:21 paycheck 56:21 72:14,17
--	--	---

paying 114:13 payment 49:24 50:8 60:19 64:22 65:13 66:4,7,14 67:16 92:16 93:7 114:15,17 137:5,7 payments 71:20 104:6,9 134:3 136:19 payroll 93:6 127:13 PECO 40:23 Pennsylvania 32:16 40:22 96:20 people 17:6 23:13,21 26:4 27:3,6 30:14 57:9 63:12 79:5 83:23 122:7 126:10 128:14 142:7 144:20 147:10,15,16 people's 139:5 146:10 percent 14:19 33:3,4 87:6 percentage 14:15 94:12 97:15 114:4 percentages 26:13 91:15 131:21 136:2 perform 40:20 48:9 performance 81:20 period 62:3 69:22 72:11 124:1 permanent 79:9 permitted 67:12 Perry 9:8 15:14 16:2 19:10 Perryman 4:18 97:18 149:24 persistent 8:6 person 22:1 30:20 138:7 143:24 personally 141:4 perspective 20:24 90:14,21 120:8 129:19 pertaining 96:18 pertinent 116:19 PGW 16:12 18:3 75:15 phase 99:4 phases 112:12 Philadelphia 3:15 10:8 13:17 14:17 16:11,14 17:10,15 18:18	21:17,19 24:15 25:7 31:2 34:11,13 37:5,22 38:9,14 40:2 41:3,8,20 42:12 44:5,12,21 45:9 46:3,10 48:1 50:14,22 51:12 55:9,13 78:22 79:24 80:15 81:15,16 82:22 83:7 84:16,19 88:19 89:6,10,20 90:23 95:8,12 97:1 98:13 102:10 111:2 118:1,21 119:16 120:4,9,23 122:1 126:11,12,14 128:8 129:17 130:14 131:1 132:9 135:17 141:17 142:15 144:12,16,22 146:12 Philadelphia's 18:14 38:17 41:15 84:5 118:6,10 119:20 131:22 Philadelphians 80:13 118:19 pie 28:7,8 32:14 pike 29:21 pin 35:16 pipeline 57:14 pipelines 94:2 pivot 12:15 13:8 30:10 place 12:21 24:5 31:4,14 33:20 70:9 103:7,18,23 105:1, 12,13 137:6 place-based 93:21 places 57:9 plan 12:17 60:22 65:9 87:6 92:13 115:5 planting 80:4 plate 143:6 147:19 platform 144:16 platforms 98:15,16 play 134:11 players 85:13 playing 53:2 142:13 pleased 97:7 pleasure 67:2 plumbing 130:11 point 35:15 41:7 46:17 112:7 114:7 134:8 136:10	points 90:23 121:1 133:23 policies 2:7,14 3:8,9 8:1 9:17 12:14 15:17 16:21 19:20 33:20 38:24 42:19,24 44:8,16 45:16 51:17 107:13,17 109:9 115:20 117:21 119:1,4,7 121:10 152:23 policy 3:11 36:15 41:22 44:18 65:1 70:2 115:17 143:10 polished 25:6 31:8 political 38:22 pool 54:13 84:6 100:12 101:11 112:2 poorest 55:15 141:11 145:4 portal 101:19 portfolio 78:21 146:2 portfolios 54:11 portion 97:3 148:12 152:16 POS 115:18 position 47:20 48:24 60:8 126:7 positions 132:23 positive 40:6 144:17 possessed 29:8 posted 99:23 101:4 posting 99:4 potential 63:1 96:14 100:19 101:11 poverty 141:13 146:18,19 power 37:17 38:11 39:23 41:11 42:10,15 92:2 142:21 practical 3:10 119:2 practices 77:1,7 113:4 131:8 132:1 praising 86:4 pre-apprenticeship 132:21 precisely 132:16 predatory 131:7 predetermining 63:6,12
--	---	--

predictable 39:6 prefer 134:5 preferred 54:12 prepared 124:7 presence 40:2 152:11,14 present 3:19,22 4:1,7 5:1,4,7, 10,13,24 6:3,5,22 7:18 49:24 97:14 125:17 148:23 149:1,7, 11 150:7,10,13,16,19 151:6,23 presented 69:9 President 9:4 15:9 37:15 78:5 89:13 140:11,16 143:23 145:2, 22 147:2 153:8,22 154:11 pressures 38:23 Pride 37:4,16 38:6 39:17 40:8 42:1 primarily 38:8 43:3 65:15 79:23 107:23 prime 49:9 67:7,13 69:7,16,18 70:13 74:17 88:9,12 91:12 94:16 104:7,9 105:3,4 113:24 114:2,11 128:4 136:5 137:2 prime's 70:5 prime/sub 69:6 primes 67:16 92:6 principal 138:17,22 Prior 106:24 priorities 12:14 110:15 prioritize 58:18,20 priority 82:2 143:21 private 2:6,13 3:7 7:24 13:16 16:6 33:5 34:12,20 44:7 51:16 74:9,14 76:19,24 85:5,10,23 86:18 90:5 117:20 129:7 136:17 152:22 privity 67:23 proactive 115:11 procedures 77:2 98:10 108:9 110:22 proceed 9:24 37:13 43:18 51:7 55:3 78:2 89:2 95:3 129:23	proceeding 116:17 proceedings 148:13 process 50:8 52:8 67:4 72:23 87:16 99:12 100:23 110:11 111:5,17 112:13,15,18,19 143:3 processed 103:10 106:19 processes 36:9 65:24 66:17, 18 96:3,7 101:16 103:20 105:1 108:14 111:6,11,15,22 112:6, 21 113:20 114:21 processing 105:14,20 procurement 22:1 34:14 52:8 64:12 68:14 71:19 80:16 92:13,20 93:17 95:11,20 96:4 98:9 99:2,20 100:15,24 101:16 102:4 107:24 111:1 112:12 121:8,14,17 122:4 123:1 125:9 131:3 procurements 96:19 98:7 produce 93:23 producing 119:8 professional 49:19 53:21 80:22 profile 40:11 program 10:16 11:1,7,19 30:21 46:11 47:20 48:3 56:8 57:4 63:17,23 64:1,2 101:24 130:22 programming 9:23 programs 16:5 20:8 25:18 30:17 45:16 53:12 54:17 73:21 83:19 104:24 119:6 130:21 132:21,22 progress 63:13 73:14 76:15, 17 81:5 92:18 115:18 progresses 83:2 project 16:15 18:24 24:4 41:8, 16 47:14 59:18,19 75:15 78:20 80:19,24 81:22 82:3,12 83:2 87:10,13 90:13 91:5 94:18 135:19 project-level 93:24 project-specific 48:2,7	projects 11:2 16:9 18:7 19:16 40:11 41:13 47:24 49:22 74:19 82:15 91:23 92:11 93:23 126:23 127:8 135:1 137:4 promote 45:18 120:11 promoting 31:24 promotion 3:12 44:19 prompt 60:9,19 64:22 65:1,12 92:16 promptly 103:10,24 106:7 114:14 proof 15:21 proper 60:4 62:10 properly 153:16 Property 34:14 proposal 69:8,17 98:18 102:8 prospective 96:9 prospects 109:1 prosperity 132:12 protect 70:9,14 protection 52:21 protege 134:16 proud 45:2 proven 39:21 provide 3:10 18:21 19:5 44:13,16 45:11 54:8 73:16 101:14,22 102:6 provided 41:12 83:14 110:14 providers 119:15 providing 10:5 48:1 51:18 54:2 96:13 114:14 140:23 provisions 60:24 PRWT 11:21 public 2:3,4 16:6 17:11 18:3 19:13 33:4 34:14 39:19 47:24 75:14 90:4 91:21,24 92:1 96:5, 20,23 116:16 117:7 148:12,15, 20 154:21,23 public-private 48:12 88:4 90:24 92:11 93:20
--	---	--

publicly 94:10 pumpkin 136:23 purpose 7:21 146:20 pursue 11:8 push 135:9 136:12 pushed 57:8 pushing 130:16 135:5 put 35:16 62:23 70:8 86:19 104:20 puts 121:12 Q qualified 90:19 100:12 qualify 13:6 54:11 quality 41:20 quarterly 101:13 112:10 114:14 question 14:12,13 25:5,15 26:2 33:1,2 58:14 60:17,20 64:14,15,18,22,24 66:23 67:5 71:3 73:3,5 74:15 75:12 87:5 106:14 107:16 121:14 128:20 144:11 153:15 questions 14:7 15:4 20:14 43:15 58:10 60:1,7 71:1 94:8 102:15,20 104:22 quick 66:14 71:3 quickly 20:23 quorum 7:17 152:14 R race 38:18 55:10 racism 147:14 racist 124:3 rainy 35:19 raise 43:23 63:9 raised 96:24 range 14:15 33:8 99:9	ranges 61:1 rarely 124:15 rarity 39:22 rates 53:17 54:13 raved 144:20 razor 131:21 reach 58:6 88:10 reaching 90:11 read 2:23 21:16,18 115:1 117:5 readily 76:1 readiness 48:24 ready 9:13 31:8 56:11 111:21 127:15 129:11 153:14 real 49:5 127:9 128:20 129:8 139:7 reality 56:13 131:17 reason 62:4 69:4 114:2 reasonable 14:15 reassured 142:3 Rebuild 74:18 recall 12:24 28:9 receivable 60:5,10 receivables 72:8 73:1 receive 8:7 received 103:23 receiving 48:20 recently 74:16 recipient 31:10 recognize 55:24 82:13 108:14 147:12 recognized 138:19 recognizes 152:15 recognizing 152:10,13 recommend 2:14 8:1 recommendations 3:11 44:17 50:10 119:3	reconnecting 79:16 reconvene 154:24 record 8:24 37:12 39:21 43:17 51:6 55:3 61:8 62:22 63:10 74:11 77:24 86:8 89:1 95:2 109:5 116:10 129:23 133:14 145:14 recorded 109:4 records 47:13 redevelopment 78:16 reduce 52:12 65:9 reduced 65:22 reducing 53:3 reduction 80:8 reference 63:18 refinery 78:24 79:4 refinery's 80:5 reflecting 12:7 reflects 38:21 Reform 108:2 regard 68:3 135:24 Regina 2:10,19 3:20 141:6 148:21 region 19:18 41:14 86:2,9 98:13 119:16 registration 100:22 regularly 81:13 regulations 121:11 reimbursement 67:6 103:8 reinforced 17:18 reinvest 118:15 relates 41:23 51:20 60:14 65:1 140:23 Relations 117:15 relationship 22:18,20 23:2 68:1 69:7 70:5 135:23 relationships 11:6,22 18:15 22:13 23:6 24:11 58:21,22,24 59:7,10,13 74:12 100:8 104:4 127:3,22 134:16,19
--	--	--

relevant 30:19 50:6 remain 121:16 142:11,23 remains 42:17 82:2 remember 27:22 28:3 34:15 remove 127:19 removes 39:4 removing 95:22 renovated 41:1 repair 115:5 repeat 64:14,18 91:9 replicated 77:7 report 8:10 45:4 52:4 128:19 145:15 147:21 148:17 152:17, 21 153:3,6,17,21 154:8,10 reported 80:7 reporting 92:19 reports 114:15 represent 40:5 132:6 representatives 81:14 89:14 representing 119:13 130:7 reputation 144:17 requested 113:22 requests 98:18 require 68:5 required 82:18 96:16 113:24 requirements 46:23 47:11 49:21 52:11,16 53:2,5 68:6,21 96:18 requires 80:19 118:5 122:4 research 64:5 reserve 133:18 reserves 70:13 reshaping 38:23 residents 17:12 51:2 56:15 57:12 84:12 97:1 118:12 128:11 resolution 2:24 3:4 44:13 resolve 65:15,21 66:11 68:13	resources 43:7 45:21 48:3,8, 17,21 58:18 59:2 73:11,15 75:23 84:4 96:5 119:7 132:4 respect 134:14 135:2 respond 107:19 response 4:13 14:9 15:5 100:23 102:8 140:8 152:2 154:6 responses 99:23 responsibility 13:11 80:18 121:16 responsible 124:11 responsive 125:10 restate 95:1 restaurants 34:22 restrain 67:22 restructuring 115:5 result 39:8,11 47:6 80:5 Results 81:12 retain 39:2 retire 12:6 retired 120:23 returned 17:1 revenue 42:12,15 91:7 revenues 61:16,18,21 62:1 review 8:5 81:19 reviewed 81:12 rewriting 68:18 RFP 99:4 100:23 113:19 114:21 RFP-SPECIFIC 101:21 RFPS 60:13 99:22 106:15 114:9 Rhoads 35:5,6 Rhoton 7:8 ribbon-cuttings 56:6 ride 14:21,24 rigid 52:22	rigorously 71:10 ring 86:19 ripple 137:2 risk 37:9,22 41:21 51:10,24 52:9,14,24 53:4,6,10,18,24 54:6,8,19 56:13 risks 53:23 Robateau 4:24 5:1 125:19 133:10,15,16 150:6,7 Robbins 6:7 151:10 Robert 4:15 149:21 Roberts 5:9,10 24:17 25:4 66:22 67:3 69:4 84:23 102:21, 22 103:5 104:11,19 106:8,13 107:4 116:1 150:15,16 rock 137:6 Rodriguez 6:2,3 20:16,17 24:9 58:12,13 59:8,22 71:2,15 72:1 110:4,5 112:17 151:5,6 role 51:23 89:21 roll 3:17 148:19 Ron 60:18 Ronald 64:11 rooftops 80:3 room 85:13 134:9 140:13 144:1 Rosie's 83:19 Rotan 27:21 roughly 87:15 132:7 round 57:5 roundtable 101:8 Roundtree 10:23 routinely 81:18 rules 66:1 116:18 121:10,18 123:4 running 56:9 138:9 S Sabrina 125:19 126:5
---	--	--

safeguard 96:5 Sanford 8:22 9:7,8 14:4 15:6, 7,12 20:12 22:5 28:22 30:3 33:9 scale 21:5 43:5 54:21 63:2 80:19 90:11 scaled 53:4 scaling 124:18 schedule 141:8 143:17 school 16:10,18,20 81:16 83:6,16 88:19 89:9 95:7,12 96:15,18,20,21 97:20 98:6,13 100:2,13 102:9,13 105:19 106:16,21 107:2,8,10,14 108:2,8 109:6,9,12,17 110:18 111:1 112:4 113:1,13 115:2 130:24 135:19 138:17 139:2 schools 108:1 sciences 79:3 scope 53:22 102:2 scopes 82:19 92:5,15 SDP's 99:1 sealed 125:9 searches 98:22 seasoned 75:19 seat 85:16 104:21 141:1 142:16 147:17 seconded 153:12,16 Secretary 131:16 sector 2:6,14 3:7 7:24 13:16 16:7 33:4,5 34:12,20 39:19 44:7 51:16 54:2 74:14 76:19, 24 85:5,10 90:4,5 117:20 129:7 152:22 sectors 45:19 86:16 secure 75:24 sees 90:15 segment 139:18,21 selected 92:7 109:2 self-performing 133:1 self-serving 106:9	sending 22:2 senior 77:11 78:4,14 143:24 sense 13:18 35:10 SEPTA 14:22,24 serve 2:8 15:19 17:12 33:10 78:13 89:18 served 17:14 138:21 serves 19:11 service 16:11 37:23 49:19 119:15 services 10:6,7 18:22 51:1 80:22 93:10 95:11 98:1,2,9,23 99:20 100:15 113:21 serving 138:8,16 sessions 100:21 101:1,7,13, 20,22 102:4 112:10 set 8:9 22:10 48:13 60:24 108:8 113:17,22 126:21 set-aside 64:2 121:20 122:10, 16 set-asides 26:12 49:17 setting 101:10 shadows 138:14 shape 20:3 145:13 shaping 17:21 share 9:20 14:14 20:7 60:6 95:18 97:7 104:17 129:18 130:16 136:6 138:11 shared 80:13 92:4 93:10 99:7 132:12 sharp 42:2 sheet 57:8 Sheila 6:20 151:21 shelf 143:11 sheltered 49:18 shift 38:17 39:7 41:22 75:6 ship 146:4 Shoemaker 97:18 shore 134:21	short 118:18 show 21:10,12 22:3 showing 35:18 132:16 shows 144:14 side 34:5 55:21 103:21 107:23 sides 72:15 signatory 119:13 significant 40:1 41:24 47:2 59:2 62:23,24 73:17 97:3 115:3 142:5 significantly 65:22 79:13 signify 154:1 simple 75:11 simpler 111:12 simplified 111:18 simply 11:3 18:9 84:10 94:11 sit 11:24 15:21 site 79:16 80:1 83:9 sites 78:19 sits 143:11 sitting 19:9 25:12 28:9 85:13 86:7,13 104:14 145:19 situation 23:24 58:16 68:12 Sixth 41:3 sizable 75:16 size 62:7 82:15 98:24 sizes 119:19 skill 22:10 127:11 skills 11:5,24 12:3 30:18,22 skipping 111:21 sleepwalking 131:23 slow 104:8 slower 104:7 slowly 131:23 slowness 115:17 small 12:20 13:14 14:1 32:1 38:20 45:7,12 46:11,15,19,24 48:14,19 49:3,8,10,15,17 50:1,
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Special Committee on City & Private Spectator Policies structured

18 52:1,10,14 54:1,9,10,14,22 56:4,8 60:21 61:1,9,12,15,17, 20,24 62:6 63:24 64:1 65:2 70:11 72:23 74:2,5 88:7 89:23 90:16 91:4,17 92:7 95:16 121:21 122:16 126:21 127:6, 10 128:3 129:13 136:20 140:22 smaller 24:19 53:21 127:23 135:11 137:7 Smith 4:21 150:3 society 142:10 solar 80:3 sole 22:24 soliciting 124:11 solicitor 123:9 125:2,6 solid 39:20 solopreneurs 55:18 solutions 47:18 50:7 81:7 someone's 104:15 sorely 86:2 sort 26:1 65:19 67:14 70:4,12, 14 105:7,17 sound 76:4 source 120:15 sourced 115:24 sourcing 60:15 107:14 109:10 115:7 South 79:24 80:14 84:18 Southwest 79:24 80:15 84:19 space 68:3 101:23 spaces 17:11 100:6 speak 15:15 25:19,23 77:4 78:12 88:8 108:4 116:23,24 speakers 117:6 speaking 69:13 speaks 85:3 special 2:5 3:6 44:6,14 45:3 51:15 89:15 95:15 117:19 126:4 129:1 148:15 152:17,20 153:16 154:17	specialty 46:16 130:10 specific 53:19,22 74:21 90:13 106:5 specifically 51:22 73:10 108:4 130:9 speed 72:22 spend 115:3 spite 42:18 spoke 131:14 spoken 8:18 spreading 32:11 square-foot 41:5 staff 13:3 152:24 153:18 staffer 146:1 stages 59:21 stakeholders 143:2 stall 36:12 stalled 131:4 stand 15:20 standards 19:22 52:19 80:2 start 22:2 56:9 137:18 147:9, 10 start-of-pay 71:13 started 10:12 25:16 26:10 30:11 starting 26:5 115:1 startup 59:16 state 8:23 32:15 33:17 34:3 37:11 42:17 43:16 51:6 55:2 58:16 60:12 63:4 77:24 88:24 96:4 107:16,17,22,24 109:11, 19 129:22 131:18 133:13 138:4 state/local 33:14 34:4 stated 123:20 statement 25:16 26:3 85:1 statements 102:6 133:19 Station 40:13 status 114:15	stay 115:13 122:24 128:5 stayed 146:3 147:5,19 staying 147:3 steadied 146:4 step 91:6 126:19 139:1,2 141:22 145:6 stepped 139:5,7 147:18 stepping 143:5 steps 96:6 103:18 104:6 105:6 stewards 96:22 Stoddart 5:18 150:21 Stokes 6:13 151:16 stop 15:2 stories 9:20 112:24 story 19:18 20:7 29:6 40:6 138:11 strategic 48:18 54:4 strategies 98:4 100:17 111:4 strategy 93:8,22 96:13 107:15 streaming 139:20 street 35:4,6 40:13 streetlighting 41:16 strength 18:12 strengthen 2:15 8:2 18:5 19:23 45:20 48:22 82:23 118:17 119:24 strengthens 50:22 80:24 strict 132:14 strive 98:2 strives 96:22 strong 9:22 27:17 28:2 46:1 118:4 122:4 128:24 stronger 91:9 94:19 129:16 144:3 stronghold 42:18 structural 8:6 65:13 structure 38:24 structured 53:10
---	--	---

struggle 93:1 student 16:24 students 83:7,13,16 Study 131:16 sub's 69:20 subbing 114:12 subcontract 11:2 88:9 subcontracted 114:4 subcontracting 49:12 subcontractor 28:6 67:5 69:21 70:10 88:11 91:12 94:16 104:6 114:18 127:6 128:3 subcontractors 53:17 68:2,4 104:5 subject 116:20 subjects 76:16 submit 51:12 67:9 69:19 70:7 submits 69:16 subs 67:16 subsidy 91:24 success 9:20 12:9 25:21 84:8 102:11 112:24 118:12 successful 11:16 27:13 135:23 successfully 16:9 47:23 48:9 83:1 96:1 98:6 sufficient 112:23 suggest 73:16 144:6 summer 144:14 sums 66:20 supplier 16:3 17:23 38:13 98:14 suppliers 80:21 98:12,21 100:19 supplies 97:23 supply 37:17 38:11 90:1 100:22 Supplyphl 89:22 99:12 support 12:19 24:22,24 31:9	39:3 43:5 45:13,16,22 46:23 48:2,22 49:13 50:17 56:4 62:10 73:17 74:22 75:1 79:8 88:13 89:22 92:17 93:4 95:16 96:14 100:18,21,24 102:7,14 117:18 120:2 127:18 129:4 supported 10:22 17:4 81:9 94:10 supporting 13:24 86:10 119:9 120:7 145:15 supports 100:11 SUPRA 97:22 supreme 140:19 Surety 47:11 surrounding 79:17 84:13 surviving 57:13 sustain 54:20 Sustainability 80:7 sustainable 19:2 79:1 sustained 102:11 sustaining 83:22 system 39:16 63:2 65:8 71:11 106:7 144:2 system's 109:9 systemic 47:10 147:13 systems 65:24 66:18 71:8,9 91:10 93:4 101:18 103:6 105:12 T table 9:2 36:20 61:5 77:14 85:16 88:22 117:11 125:22 137:24 141:2 142:2,17 147:17 tad 24:19 taking 64:7 71:16 146:24 tale 146:12 talent 84:6 92:24 talented 135:6 talk 22:15 85:22 110:21 talked 72:5 73:10 107:15	110:6 134:1 145:3 talking 27:10 28:12 35:2 60:2 85:14 86:7 107:7 Talson 81:7 tap 26:20 target 76:6 targeted 48:1 60:24 74:20 98:16 task 131:4 141:5 Tate 125:19 126:3,5 taught 26:23 30:18 tax 57:22 118:15 taxes 97:3 teaches 30:21 team 9:5 10:5 43:1 47:18 66:16 98:3 99:2 tears 29:9 technical 48:21 57:5 153:1,19 154:9 technology 85:12 93:5 teeth 68:22 templates 68:19 Temple 40:22 ten 31:16 32:4 57:24 128:2 138:15 tenacious 22:8 tenant 84:2 term 131:10 Terminal 136:7 terminology 12:16 39:2,7 terms 56:12 testify 10:4 44:22 95:14 125:17 testimonies 8:7 testimony 8:18 9:12 37:13 43:13,14 44:1,13 51:4,13,18 54:24 55:4 58:9 73:8 74:17 76:10 85:6 89:2,16 94:23 102:18 104:3 110:6 116:8,17, 19 117:7 121:3 124:18 129:24
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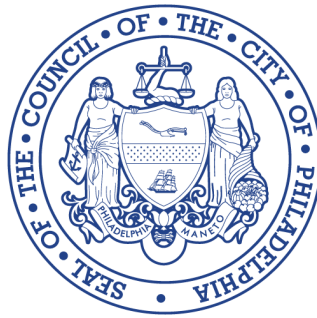
133:9 145:13 thankfully 75:15 thin 131:21 thing 24:10 31:17 59:5 63:15 118:2 123:5 things 11:11 24:4 28:11,13,17 29:7,22 30:23 85:21 108:4 121:6 thinking 12:21 31:17 Thirdly 135:14 Thomas 6:4,5 151:7 thoughtful 119:5 thoughtfully 19:21 thousands 83:13 three-quarters 14:19 three-year 62:3 thrive 48:17 97:6 Throne 95:9 110:24 tie 72:7 111:4,23 tied 93:12 118:11 tier 61:17,19 time 8:16 10:20 13:1 22:9 69:22 70:19 82:13 83:2 91:4 101:4 102:16 106:18 108:3 114:7,13,19 117:2 123:14 124:1 125:12,13 133:7 137:15 139:8 141:7 143:16 145:17 146:19,20,24 timely 65:16 134:3 136:18 137:5 times 112:16 138:13 tiny 32:13 title 2:23 today 8:7,10 10:4 12:5 15:15 19:6,9,10 20:7,23 21:2 26:5,17 30:19 44:12,23 58:15 66:12,21 67:18,20 68:8 73:11 78:12 89:17 95:9,14,21 108:21 130:6,13 139:23 145:12 154:17 today's 7:22 116:20 148:13	told 13:2 Tom 149:18 tools 48:16 49:14 top 33:22 147:3 topic 68:19 topics 36:12 69:2 totally 30:4 track 39:21 47:13 74:11 tracked 81:6 trades 83:22 130:9,10 traditional 47:8 52:22 training 30:13 54:8 56:8 84:3 128:12 trajectory 25:20 33:15 91:7 transactional 66:13 transferred 154:11 transforming 78:17,23 transition 74:14 translate 118:20 transmit 153:20 transmitted 153:7 transparency 81:23 transparent 92:18 transportation 19:12 79:15 trap 63:5 treats 144:3 trees 80:4 tremendously 42:22 trillions 32:14 true 29:6 85:4 turn 8:14 14:2 35:23 87:24 131:6 136:23 Turner 40:16 two-minute 117:2 126:1 types 98:24 101:16 typically 103:19 113:20	U ultimate 65:11 ultimately 80:24 84:7 121:15 unable 105:13 unbridled 124:3 unbundle 122:3 unbundled 92:15 unbundling 36:14 121:19 122:8 uncertainty 39:13 unclarity 68:11 underestimate 22:14 23:17 underrepresented 45:8 52:7 underscore 121:1 underserved 49:6 understand 12:13 49:23 62:7 67:4 72:14 90:17 96:8 100:4 108:13 111:14 112:14 understanding 114:16 123:9 understands 119:17 union 130:9 132:18,20 133:1 Universal 138:16,22 University 40:21,22 Unlike 52:22 unnecessary 95:22 upcoming 31:11 upgrades 41:16 Urban 30:12 57:16 usage 131:10 utilization 131:19 V Valley 38:10 values 91:9 variety 73:9,22
--	--	--

vendor 49:24 67:8 99:14,23 100:1 101:11,19 114:10 vendors 68:10 90:19 96:9,15 97:17 100:11,20 101:3,12,14, 23 102:5 105:2 107:1 109:2 112:2,3 versa 135:13 versus 33:13 107:18 vertically 78:16 vice 135:13 Vice- 78:4 Vice-president 36:23 77:11 78:14 Victoria 4:5 36:17 37:24 55:6 149:10 view 70:1 80:16 90:9 virtual 100:16,19 101:2 visibility 71:8 vision 27:11 visits 83:10 voice 8:15 17:20 139:14 voices 139:24 volunteer 23:5 vote 121:13 122:20 W W-2 55:18 wages 94:18 wait 11:4 12:1 70:6 waiting 93:7 127:14 waived 53:19 walk 28:18 walled 79:17 wanted 28:6 121:1 133:20 138:10 145:23 Ward 138:8 warehouse 42:16 Washington 75:5 142:6	watching 139:17 ways 2:15 8:2 55:9 73:9 120:11 wealth 94:3 128:6 146:17 Webster 149:18 week 10:15 115:20 weekly 101:3 112:7 weeks 126:8 Whiting-turner 40:18 widen 54:21 widening 39:10 Wilcha 6:10 151:13 Williams 5:6,7 36:17 37:3,14, 15 38:3,5 43:12 58:23 59:14 73:6,19 147:4 150:12,13 wisdom 26:19 27:9 wishing 116:24 withdrawal 56:23 withhold 104:9 114:17 witnessed 144:14 witnesses 8:20 9:1,19 36:1,3, 19 43:21 61:4 77:4,9 88:1,8,21 117:10 125:16,21 137:23 140:6 145:11 154:20 witnessing 130:15 woman 81:10 women 2:16 3:13 8:3 26:14 83:23 86:10 117:24 119:23 120:12 126:17 142:8 women- 74:20 82:10 121:23 women-owned 39:12 75:3 wondering 139:24 word 26:11 112:18 148:10 154:14 work 8:11 16:17 17:5 23:1,5 40:20 46:9 48:9 49:2 50:4 53:23 69:10,11,15,18,20 70:6, 11 72:17 81:2 82:5,19 88:10 89:23 90:8 91:9 93:14 95:15 97:21 100:4,10,13 102:2 103:20 108:24 109:6 120:7	122:18 127:5,12 129:8,12 141:22 144:15 146:5 148:1 worked 40:14 worker 128:1 workers 50:23 94:17 workforce 18:5,19 79:22 81:4 83:3,18 84:2,17 120:2 128:7 134:2 135:14,24 working 45:2 47:3,13 50:5,20 65:14,18 66:9 68:13 93:2 108:18,21 110:12 129:5 147:9 works 45:19 47:24 57:1 75:15 workshops 56:5 world 139:6 144:18 Wow 21:8 wrap 145:21 wrap-up 53:14 wrap-ups 53:13 written 70:2 Y year 39:18,24 42:12,13,17 87:15 133:6 years 10:14 11:15 16:1 17:14 25:9,17 31:16 32:4 34:15,16 39:18 40:3 42:5 53:24 57:24 73:21 87:14 90:8 97:9 103:4 105:10 122:13 135:17 136:8 138:15 York 38:14 40:3 42:16,17 135:18 young 26:4 27:2 29:17 30:13, 20 59:16 youth 41:3,21 Z Zachary 4:21 6:9 150:3 151:12 Zaw 4:11 Zhaw 149:15
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City of Philadelphia

*City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107*



Meeting Agenda

Monday, September 28, 2026

10:00 AM

Room 400, City Hall

**Special Committee on City and Private Sector
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies**

The hearing, open to the public, will hear testimony on the following items:

[240107](#)

Resolution Authorizing the creation of a Special Committee on City and Private Sector Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies to examine the impact of such policies and to provide practical, evidence-based recommendations to enhance policy effectiveness in the promotion of minority, women and disabled-owned businesses in the City of Philadelphia.

Copies of the foregoing items are available in the Office of the Chief Clerk of the Council, Room 402, City Hall or at <https://phila.legistar.com/>.