

5/9/2023

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Russell H. Conwell Middle Magnet School
1849 East Clearfield Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19134
Tuesday, May 9, 2023
5:43 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILWOMAN SHARON VAUGHN

RESOLUTION: 230120

1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: This is
3 the Committee on Public Safety to
4 review the Kensington Marshall Plan.

5 Mr. Glass, will you read the
6 title of the resolution.

7 THE CLERK: Yes,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 Resolution No. 230120,
10 authorizing the City Council
11 Committee on Public Safety to hold
12 public hearings to examine the
13 open-drug market and other barriers
14 to clean, safe and crime-free streets
15 in Kensington.

16 And Resolution No. 230121,
17 calling for the establishment of a
18 marshall stabilization and recovery
19 plan to conduct issues facing
20 Kensington and the surrounding areas
21 of Philadelphia.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
23 I note for the record we have a
24 quorum represented by Member Lozada,
25 Member Vaughn, Member Harrity, Member

1 Driscoll and Member Johnson.

2 Before we get started in
3 hearing testimony, I'd like to
4 recognize the author of this
5 resolution, Member Lozada.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Good
7 evening. Thank you all for joining
8 us tonight. I'd like to begin first
9 by thanking Principal Erica Green and
10 the entire Conwell family for opening
11 the doors to your school for us to
12 come together this evening to have
13 this incredibly important
14 conversation.

15 For decades the Kensington
16 community has faced an ongoing health
17 crisis along with the loss of this
18 neighborhood identity. Every single
19 day residents of Kensington face the
20 daily quality-of-life issues as
21 hundreds of homeless individuals have
22 occupied the neighborhood in what has
23 become a public health emergency due
24 to the open-air consumption of
25 opioids, leading to thousands of

1 thefts in this very same community
2 where we are here today fueled by a
3 toxic illegal drug (inaudible).

4 This crisis is devastating
5 and it is one that has taken a
6 devastating toll on those families
7 who have loved ones who are lost
8 battling addiction along with
9 residents of this community who want
10 solutions.

11 Since arriving on Council in
12 November of 2022, I have been working
13 closely with several community-based
14 organizations here in Kensington and
15 the Committee on Public Safety and my
16 colleagues to create a plan that
17 would help us find solutions to this
18 shared challenge, which we believe
19 will not only save lives but finally
20 address and improve the quality of
21 life in this community and across our
22 City.

23 There are billions of dollars
24 in services being poured into this
25 community every day. But as a

1 community and as a district, we can't
2 see them. This hearing is an
3 opportunity to hear from those who
4 provide services and to hear from our
5 community directly on how the
6 on-the-ground services impact their
7 everyday lives.

8 It will also provide this
9 Committee with the ability to
10 evaluate and determine what services
11 overlap, who's receiving the
12 services, how the data is collected
13 as well as how the services are
14 measured, what is working and what is
15 not. As a government, we will set
16 priorities for the year ahead to
17 disrupt and dismantle the trafficking
18 of opioids, including illegal
19 fentanyl and tranq and expand access
20 to public strategies for everyone who
21 needs them. We are here to listen.
22 We don't have the answers, but we are
23 here to work together with the
24 residents to find concrete
25 resolutions.

1 I'd like to thank Chairman
2 Curtis Jones for allowing us to have
3 this important discussion, and I look
4 forward to today's testimony. Thank
5 you.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Next we
7 will hear from Member Harrity who is
8 a proud resident of Kensington.

9 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Hello,
10 everyone. How are you doing. As
11 Councilman Jones said, I am a proud
12 resident of Kensington. Just so we
13 have everybody on the same page here,
14 this is for us to get questions and
15 answers. This is for us to come to
16 you and see how you believe your
17 neighborhood needs to be changed and
18 what effects this is having on you.

19 And as a resident here, I can
20 tell you we're all fully aware of
21 what's going on in this neighborhood.
22 This is not a session to place blame.
23 This is not to call anybody out.
24 This here is to get to the bottom of
25 what we believe we can change and

1 what we believe has to change. For
2 me it's all about the kids in this
3 neighborhood. I live here. I talk
4 to these kids.

5 They're good kids. They're
6 not asking for anything extra.
7 They're just asking for the same as
8 other communities have, and that's to
9 be able to go to school without
10 seeing what they have to see on a
11 daily basis walking through our
12 neighborhoods. So I'm here to get to
13 the bottom of this, to come up with
14 some results that we can actually
15 implement to make some significant
16 changes here in our community.

17 You know, drugs are just one
18 thing in this community. We're
19 losing everything that made us a
20 community. We have no stores left.
21 We have buses being canceled.
22 Everybody here who has to ride the El
23 I feel for you because that's a whole
24 other thing together. So please just
25 bear with each other so we can learn

1 what you want, not what we want, not
2 what the elected officials want, but
3 what you want for your community
4 because this is where we live. So
5 thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: And we
7 have another resident of Kensington.
8 Member Vaughn.

9 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: Good
10 evening. Hello. Can you all hear me
11 on this?

12 (Yes.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: Good
14 evening, everyone. What a great show
15 of the community. I'm so excited to
16 see so many people here to give us
17 feedback on what's happening in our
18 area. As you all know, three of us
19 are in Council now. We live in the
20 7th Councilmanic District and we are
21 here to hear your issues, to hear the
22 problems so that we can begin to
23 strategize and work on ways to make
24 this a better place to live.

25 Thank you all for being here.

1 Please the next time tell your
2 neighbors so that this room can be
3 packed and we can begin the healing
4 process that is necessary to deal
5 with what's been happening in this
6 community for so many years. We look
7 forward to starting the process.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
10 Member Vaughn.

11 I will now recognize Member
12 Kenyatta Johnson.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
14 you, Mr. Chairman.

15 I'm Councilman Kenyatta
16 Johnson representing the 2nd
17 Councilmanic District here in support
18 of this hearing most importantly not
19 to only to listen to you, but most
20 importantly to work together with
21 this Council body to make sure that
22 we make it a priority to addressing
23 the issues that are impacting
24 Kensington.

25 What impacts the neighborhood

1 of Kensington impacts all of us here
2 in the City of Philadelphia and it's
3 about time that we all work together
4 collectively as a City and as a body
5 to address the issues. And so, I
6 want to thank our Chairman for
7 hosting this hearing but also
8 Councilwoman Quetcy Lozada to making
9 sure this is the number one priority
10 that she's addressing in City
11 Council. Thank you very much.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
13 Member Johnson.

14 Member Driscoll.

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Thank
16 you, Mr. Chairman.

17 And thank you, Councilwoman
18 Lozada, for this resolution. This is
19 a wonderful showing here. I see the
20 leadership of the Philadelphia Police
21 Department. My daily gratitude goes
22 out to you for everything you do to
23 make us safe and the challenges you
24 have. Help is on the way.

25 This budget we're going to

1 get more police. Everybody on this
2 stage -- well, Harrington and Vaughn
3 were not there, but I'm sure they
4 would have voted with us. But
5 everyone on this stage voted for 300
6 more police officers. I know we're
7 having trouble recruiting, but help
8 is on the way.

9 District Attorney Krasner,
10 thanks for being here and
11 Commissioner Deeley and
12 Representative Gallagher. I just
13 want to let you know that I am new to
14 City Council. I was a State
15 Representative for many years. I was
16 sworn in June 10, 2022. Every 10
17 years the Districts change.
18 Effective this year I will be
19 representing the area from the river
20 along Allegheny Avenue to K&A and
21 I'll make a right on Allegheny Avenue
22 and go all the way up to Northeast
23 Philadelphia. So this is really
24 important to me.

25 I know my colleague

1 Councilman Harrity lives here and I'm
2 here to listen, I'm here to learn and
3 I'm here to support.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
6 Member Driscoll.

7 Before we hear from the first
8 panel, Member Lozada, Member Harrity,
9 Member Vaughn insisted that this
10 hearing be done here today, not
11 downtown, not in City Hall, but right
12 up close and personal to the
13 Kensington people. All you have to
14 do is ride around that avenue and
15 it'll touch your heart.

16 I've wondered why every week
17 these two are so emotionally
18 high-pitched, but all you have to do
19 is to ride down that street and see
20 the tragedy that all of the people of
21 Kensington have to deal with every
22 single day. And the reason that
23 we're here is not just to show
24 support for our colleagues, but to
25 show support for you. And we're not

1 going to allow this to continue, not
2 under our watch and we will task the
3 next Mayor to make sure that
4 Kensington has a marshall plan.

5 And we're going to fight and
6 we're going to stand with you guys
7 and be a part of your struggle,
8 because we're only six degrees of
9 separation, and I'm going to close on
10 this. It's academic until it
11 touches -- it's somebody else's
12 problem until it touches you.

13 And one of my staffers lost a
14 kid to addiction down here, and we
15 were up and down that avenue looking
16 for her teenager daughter. And it
17 will change your life, change your
18 perspective to see how it impacts a
19 mother, impacts a father. The
20 child's mother and father couldn't
21 agree on much, but they agreed they
22 had to go find her. And to deal with
23 that reality every day is something
24 that we have to change, and that's
25 why we're here.

1 And it's not a one-time hit
2 or quit. We're going to come back
3 and we're going to move this plan
4 until Kensington is safe. And until
5 Kensington is safe, none of our
6 Districts are safe. And that's our
7 commitment to you.

8 Mr. Glass, can you please
9 read the first panel to testify.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
11 just want to be recognized as
12 present.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. I'm
14 sorry. She's from West Philly and
15 she's here too. Jamie Gauthier, who
16 has been passionate about Kensington
17 throughout her stay here and
18 continues. She's here today as well.
19 She borders my District, and we have
20 a secret addiction that spills out to
21 our Districts too. And if we don't
22 address it here, we will feel it
23 everywhere.

24 Would you like to speak?

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I

1 just wanted to say good evening to
2 everyone. I'm Councilmember Jamie
3 Gauthier. I represent the 3rd
4 District, which is West and Southwest
5 Philly. I'm grateful to be here
6 tonight to listen to how this issue
7 is impacting the community. And
8 thank you for taking time out of your
9 evening to be here with us. Thank
10 you.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
12 Member.

13 Mr. Glass, who do we have.

14 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman,
15 before that may I recognize members
16 from the Administration and other
17 organizations before the listening
18 session for the record?

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: I can't --

20 THE CLERK: Before we begin,
21 may I recognize members from the
22 Administration and departments before
23 we hear from the listening session
24 for the record?

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you,

1 please?

2 THE CLERK: Yes,

3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Associate Superintendent

5 Evelyn Nunez and Associate

6 Superintendent Tomas Hanna of the

7 School District of Philadelphia;

8 Judge Patrick Dugan, President Judge

9 of the Municipal Court, First

10 Judicial District of Pennsylvania;

11 Commissioner Cheryl Bettigole,

12 Department of Public Health;

13 Commissioner Carlton Williams,

14 Department of Streets; David

15 Holloman, Chief of Staff, Office of

16 Homeless Services; Keisha Hudson,

17 Chief Defender of the Defender

18 Association of Philadelphia; Wendy

19 Green-Harvey in representation from

20 the Southeastern Pennsylvania

21 Transportation Authority; Lisa

22 Deeley, Chairwoman of the

23 Philadelphia City Commissioners;

24 Larry Krasner, District Attorney of

25 Philadelphia; Mary Horstmann, Deputy

1 Managing Director for Health and
2 Human Services; Noelle Foizen,
3 Director of the Opioid Response Unit;
4 Danielle Outlaw, Commissioner of the
5 Philadelphia Police Department; Tom
6 Conway, Director of CLIP; and Ralph
7 DiPietro, Commissioner of the
8 Department of Licenses & Inspections.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
10 Well represented by the
11 Administration.

12 I note for the record that
13 Councilman Squilla is here. Would
14 you like to be recognized, sir?

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
16 you, Mr. Chair. Is that on?

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I really
19 appreciate having the hearing in the
20 community today. Thank you to
21 Councilmember Lozada and everybody
22 for bringing it to the community.
23 It's so important to be here where
24 the people are dealing day-in and
25 day-out with the challenges that they

1 are facing.

2 It's important for us as
3 elected officials to come to the
4 community and see and not just hear
5 what those concerns are. And I
6 really appreciate the opportunity to
7 listen today, to hopefully work on
8 solutions and find ways that we could
9 address the main concerns of the
10 community and make sure their voice
11 is heard and carry that voice on
12 through the Administration. Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
15 Member Squilla.

16 Mr. Glass.

17 THE CLERK: Yes,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 Our first panel to testify is
20 Principal Erica Green of Conwell
21 Middle School, Principal Diana Garcia
22 of Willard Elementary School, Jamilah
23 Hannibal, parent for student at
24 Willard Elementary School and a
25 student at Willard Elementary School.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.

2 Please come forth and state your name
3 for the record and please begin your
4 testimony.

5 THE CLERK: Step forward to
6 the two desks in the front and the
7 microphone. And our first speaker
8 will be Principal Erica Green.

9 (Witnesses approached
10 Witness table.)

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.

12 MS. GREEN: Good evening.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
14 evening.

15 MS. GREEN: Good evening to
16 Councilmember Lozada of the 17th
17 District, Councilmember and Chairman
18 Majority Leader of the 4th Curtis
19 Jones, Jr., all other members of the
20 panel and Councilmembers this
21 evening, community members, parents
22 of Conwell Middle Magnet School,
23 Willard School, Elkin, Gloria
24 Casarez, Mastbaum, my fellow
25 colleagues and the School District of

1 Philadelphia, my neighbors and
2 friends in our community, our School
3 District officials along with
4 District Attorney Krasner, the
5 Philadelphia Police, 24th District as
6 well as our Commissioner Outlaw. On
7 behalf of Russell H. Conwell Middle
8 Magnet School, I would like to
9 welcome all of you to the Public
10 Safety Committee hearing and share a
11 brief history about our school and
12 its legacy.

13 Conwell was the first middle
14 school in the City named after
15 founder of Temple University, who
16 believed that we did not have to look
17 far. Your diamonds are not in a far
18 distance in the mountains, they are
19 in your own backyard. I agree. Our
20 students are gems with so much
21 potential despite the Kensington
22 neighborhood where the school is
23 located in an open-air drug market.

24 The students here are bright,
25 intelligent, compassionate and is

1 fostered by a loving committed team
2 of educators. Conwell Middle Magnet
3 School has been synonymous with
4 producing excellent, stellar
5 students. A few notable alumni,
6 Trang Do, CBS news correspondent;
7 Zyaire Franklin, linebacker for the
8 Indianapolis Colts; Derek Green who
9 was recently running for Mayor,
10 former City Councilmember; Dr. Robin
11 Cooper, CASA President. They're just
12 a few of the leaders in Philly and
13 beyond and they continue to show
14 their support to our young people
15 with their time, their talents and
16 their resources.

17 Our community partners have
18 been valuable with the ongoing
19 support over the years with
20 Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez,
21 Captain now Detective Rosario of the
22 24th, currently Captain Bullick of
23 the 24th, Town Watch, TWIS,
24 Integrated Services; Afterschool All
25 Stars, the Pennsylvania Ballet

1 organizations and more recently
2 ODAAT. However, I would be remiss if
3 I did not highlight the serious
4 public health and safety concerns of
5 our neighborhood.

6 Since 2011 I have observed
7 the neighborhood decline as a result
8 of the crime, the drugs that have
9 infiltrated the immediate areas
10 surrounding the school. There have
11 been alarming increases of people
12 suffering with addiction, lingering
13 in the faculty parking lot across the
14 street from the school, setting up
15 encampments, loitering on the front
16 steps of the school, setting up
17 residence underneath the schoolyard
18 steps, urinating, defecating, eating,
19 drinking, sleeping, shooting up,
20 participating in lewd acts in public,
21 setting things on fire, leaving drug
22 paraphernalia, blood and, yes,
23 overdosing on the school property,
24 the front steps and the perimeter.

25 There are individuals who

1 sell illegal drugs. They have moved
2 closer to the school at Jasper and
3 Clementine Streets. There was a
4 deadly shooting in early October less
5 than two blocks away from our school
6 on Wishart Street. The school was
7 placed on lockdown. There was a
8 second occurrence since that one at
9 the start of the school year, and
10 that was a shooting on or around
11 September 28th.

12 This is an extreme safety and
13 public health issue for the school,
14 our school team, our students and our
15 Conwell community. Last student --
16 last spring, excuse me, a student ran
17 to school as a gunfight erupted. The
18 summer of 2021 I was threatened by an
19 unknown male with a knife in front of
20 the school. Conwell, which was
21 thriving, with over 800 students has
22 now decreased to 180 students. We
23 occupy two buildings, the Annex which
24 is two and a half blocks away. Now,
25 we're all housed in one building.

1 This is a direct correlation
2 to the drugs and the violence in our
3 community. Often the school office
4 receives calls from concerned parents
5 that are rescinding their
6 applications or requesting a transfer
7 because of the recent events of crime
8 in our neighborhood that has caused
9 the parent or the student distress,
10 to become nervous or scared.

11 Often families just don't
12 want to be subjected to witnessing
13 and traveling through prostitution,
14 drug use, FBI raids or gunfire.
15 Thus, they opt for other schools just
16 on that basis. Our staff are
17 resilient and patient, and we have
18 endured the harsh realities of the
19 neighborhood as well.

20 The Kensington community is
21 more than an open-air drug market.
22 There are law-abiding citizens here,
23 children, young people who attend
24 school, who worship at church, they
25 are business owners, they are

1 families, and they have called
2 Kensington home for generations.

3 There is a fear. There is
4 danger and trauma as a result of
5 everything that I have previously
6 shared. Parents, students,
7 neighbors, business owners are
8 coexisting in an environment with
9 people who have taken over and seized
10 their community and their sidewalks.
11 We are often left to walk in the
12 street to get from one destination to
13 the next.

14 The streets are strewn with
15 trash, mounds of debris, luggage,
16 mattresses, human feces and drug
17 paraphernalia. There is nowhere that
18 this would be acceptable in the City
19 of Philadelphia, and it should not be
20 acceptable here. The lawlessness,
21 violence and crime has to stop and
22 there has to be accountability. This
23 may not be the home of folks
24 struggling with addiction or selling
25 drugs. However, it is our home, the

1 home of many. And again, I say that
2 Kensington is more, so much more than
3 an open-air drug market.

4 Just last week I read an
5 article where an alleged criminal
6 provided an alibi stating that he
7 could not have committed a crime in
8 another part of the City because he
9 was in Kensington selling drugs.

10 Wow. Our school community has found
11 over the last two months, rifles,
12 weapons, shell casings that have been
13 left on the rear corner of the
14 schoolyard. Neighbors are living in
15 fear. Yet they continue to have
16 pride in their community.

17 I implore you to continue to
18 work with established partnerships to
19 make a change in our Kensington
20 community. Our young people are
21 valuable. They deserve the best.
22 They are to be protected and they
23 have the inherent right to maintain
24 their innocence and optimism for the
25 future.

1 In the words of a woman I
2 admire, Dr. Constance Clayton, "We
3 have to do what is right, just and
4 fair for the kids." It is imperative
5 that we restore calm and normalcy to
6 this neighborhood. Please consider
7 this a formal invitation to visit our
8 school at any time. This will
9 provide you with the sense of
10 challenges we face, but more so an
11 opportunity to meet the talented,
12 resilient and committed community and
13 see the vibrant students.

14 I look forward to working
15 with all of you. Together I know we
16 can build equity and problem-solve
17 this very unique situation in our
18 Kensington community. Thank you for
19 listening this evening. I'm Erica
20 Green, proud principal and community
21 member in Kensington.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
23 so much for your testimony, but more
24 importantly for your resilience and
25 fighting for our children and thank

1 you for that. I've heard a lot of
2 testimony in my time. None more
3 heartfelt than that. Thank you.

4 Any questions from the
5 Committee or we're going to move to
6 the last -- go ahead.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I don't
8 have a question, just a statement. I
9 just want to say thank you. Thank
10 you because what you do here is
11 needed. I don't know where these
12 kids would be if they didn't have
13 people like you sticking up for them.
14 So please take my heartfelt thank
15 you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
17 Any other questions?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Mr. Glass.

20 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
21 next witness is Diana Garcia,
22 principal of Willard Elementary
23 School.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
25 afternoon.

1 MS. GARCIA: Is it on?

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Check her
3 mic.

4 MS. GARCIA: Is it on now?
5 (Yes.)

6 MS. GARCIA: Good afternoon
7 to all the Councilmembers, the
8 Philadelphia law enforcement
9 community here tonight, the School
10 District of Philadelphia community
11 that is present, concerned citizens,
12 neighbors and friends. My name is
13 Diane Garcia. I am the proud
14 principal of the Willard Elementary
15 School, which is the neighboring
16 school to Conwell. We are across the
17 street.

18 And I'd like to talk basics
19 with you today. It sounds pretty
20 simple, right, basics. However, that
21 word basic is very important. I'd to
22 like to start by saying basic human
23 rights -- is this better?

24 (Yes.)

25 MS. GARCIA: I'd like to say

1 that I feel like basic human rights
2 are being denied. I feel like on the
3 one hand, like Councilman Jones said,
4 when you walk or drive through this
5 neighborhood, you know it's going to
6 be bad, right. So we have on the one
7 hand what seems to be thousands of
8 sick individuals. They're sick.
9 They have addiction, right. And all
10 that comes with it. We know what it
11 is.

12 And we have fecal matter that
13 our students have to walk through to
14 get to school. The folks that are
15 addicts are dipping, which is a new
16 term for me. I didn't know what that
17 meant, but dipping. We have
18 individuals that are openly injecting
19 themselves all times of day. It
20 doesn't matter that school is in
21 session. It doesn't matter that
22 school is dismissing.

23 So as a result of that,
24 there's crime, there's shootings,
25 right. There's drug sales, and more

1 recently there's been ammunition
2 sales, right. That's a new
3 phenomenon that's happening here. On
4 the other side, like my colleague we
5 have these amazing children that
6 attend our schools.

7 They are the bravest and the
8 strongest people that I know. They
9 are smart. They're intelligent and
10 they come to school against all odds.
11 But when we talk about basic, you
12 know, there has to be some basic
13 things that are in place that allow
14 them to come to school and really
15 learn. We know that. Research tells
16 us that. So again, that is why I
17 feel like basic needs, basic rights
18 are being denied.

19 The implications for the here
20 and now are real. We have these kids
21 and they come to school against all
22 odds, but this is affecting them and
23 we can't continue to act like it
24 doesn't, right. Our students, like
25 Principal Green said, they're

1 resilient, they're intelligent, but
2 they're also human beings, right.
3 They have to endure a lot just get to
4 our doors.

5 So what happens is we as
6 school leaders we do whatever we can
7 and we do anything and everything so
8 that when they come through our
9 doors, they feel safe, they feel
10 loved, they feel acknowledged, they
11 feel appreciated. However, we can't
12 escape our reality, right.

13 As an adult, like Principal
14 Green, we have endured and we have
15 seen things that are horrendous. The
16 sad part is that this has been
17 normalized for our students. It is
18 normal for them to have to walk
19 through fecal matter to get to
20 school. It is normal for them to see
21 folks that are strung out in the
22 streets. When they hear a shooting,
23 they don't even react anymore.
24 That's the implications of the here
25 and now are real and they're

1 everlasting.

2 So I think that -- I'd like
3 to say that we need this City to
4 stand up for our kids. Our kids are
5 the future, right. That's nothing
6 new. We need champions for our
7 students. And I think that you guys,
8 the leadership of the City, is in the
9 right position to make real change
10 for Kensington.

11 I love Councilman Jones when
12 you said that this is it, we are
13 going to do this and we are not going
14 to stand for this any longer. That
15 gives me hope. That gives me hope.
16 So we need to make this community a
17 healthy community. I hope that this
18 community is not being allowed to
19 implode at the cost of thousands of
20 lives. Let's go back to basics.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
22 for your testimony.

23 MS. HANNIBAL: Hello. My
24 name is Jamilah Hannibal. I wrote
25 something from my point of view as a

1 (inaudible) and a former student.

2 I've attended and graduated from
3 Willard Elementary in a mentally
4 gifted program before it was changed
5 into an apartment building that I do
6 not qualify to live in.

7 I have attended and graduated
8 from Conwell Middle Magnet School
9 when it was second to Masterman, and
10 now became a black-gated eyesore. I
11 have attended and graduated from
12 Kensington High School of
13 International Business in which I
14 help break down into a small school
15 as a student activist as a part of
16 Youth United for Change, also while
17 attending a college preparatory program
18 by the name of Upperbound at Temple
19 University.

20 I have attended Penn State
21 Abington for psychology. And as I
22 sat in one of my last lectures, I
23 realized it wasn't for me. So on one
24 of the last Saturdays when I was able
25 to get my hair braided at Fatou's

1 African Braiding Shop, find something
2 vintage at the Village Thrift Store,
3 get my nails done at Janet Nail's
4 Salon and have a nice sitdown
5 breakfast at Koolae Dinner and often
6 times pick up my mom's medicine from
7 Walgreens, I never realized it would
8 be my last.

9 Because business and
10 entrepreneurship was always something
11 that interested me and having a
12 business on Kensington Avenue, that
13 helped kids like me and families like
14 mine become my ultimate dream. So I
15 applied and received my commercial
16 activities license. In 2014 I got to
17 work.

18 I started to (inaudible)
19 myself by attending and completing
20 the Mount Airy CDC Small Businesses
21 Expo, the Philadelphia (inaudible)
22 Program alongside with Community
23 College, town hall meetings, I have
24 verification and confirmation of a
25 certification for COVID-19

1 contribution and various first-time
2 buyer (inaudible).

3 As I was preparing to uplift
4 my community and begin my journey to
5 create generational wealth for my
6 family, I had no idea that the
7 Kensington Business Association would
8 become what it has, an inordinate
9 opportunity of promise of illegal
10 drugs, blatant displays of low
11 expectations of life, basically a
12 dangerous wasting occupied by
13 half-dead addicts and non-operational
14 storefronts. No more cultural summer
15 camps like (inaudible), no more
16 community block parties and public
17 displays of celebration, and the
18 cancellation of the summer lunch
19 program. Three main things that
20 closing even smaller space for kids
21 to go and show and expand their
22 abilities and positive productivity.

23 I can't stop asking questions
24 like after 14 years-plus of
25 deterioration how do we rebuild a

1 community of what was once
2 established with the basics of
3 safety, neighborly love and
4 multi-cultural progression. How does
5 regentrification continue to happen
6 without rejuvenation of the
7 decrepitude of sick human
8 statues. How does a million dollar
9 black market drug business take over
10 the once prominent Kensington
11 Business Association and solidified
12 location and actual storefronts that
13 once served this community.

14 Why is my childhood home not
15 good enough to raise my children.
16 How did it get to this point. Where
17 as an alumni of this great school and
18 once great neighborhood, I stand here
19 years later for the first time to
20 discuss this topic and the obvious
21 reality. YouTube creators and social
22 media influencers create open
23 invitation videos and call it
24 awareness. But the positive forward-
25 moving influencers who can really

1 create change and help like MrBeast
2 would never set foot here.

3 I have no solutions or plans.
4 But what I do have is a body that
5 won't stop moving and a mind that
6 won't quit. Please help.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
8 for your testimony.

9 Mr. Glass.

10 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman,
11 that is our last witness for this
12 panel.

13 Chair recognizes Member
14 Johnson.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chair
16 recognizes Member Johnson.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
18 you, Principal Green and Principal
19 Garcia. And thank you, Ms. Hannibal,
20 for your testimony.

21 But for Principal Green and
22 Principal Garcia, can you give me an
23 idea of the type of trauma support
24 services that your school offers for
25 our young people as well as the type

1 of support system that you would like
2 to see around trauma support for our
3 young people in your individual
4 schools?

5 MS. GREEN: Thank you for
6 that question. I would say here at
7 Conwell we don't have any specific
8 trauma support. So I do have the
9 support of the 24th District,
10 Merakey, the ODAAT program. So those
11 things are really aligned more with
12 safety. So could we use support for
13 young people that are dealing with
14 trauma, definitely.

15 We are trying -- we have some
16 materials, so we're trying to design
17 a calming room for our young people,
18 but of course that requires funding.
19 And so, with the calming room that we
20 have in mind it would be therapeutic
21 supports such as maybe having a plant
22 or having some goldfish. It seems
23 pretty basic. Some therapeutic
24 spinners or having medicine balls for
25 the young people to sit on. And it

1 would be a time where they could ebb
2 and flow into the space as needed.
3 So again, that all comes down to
4 money.

5 So with me having a very
6 small school, that means that there's
7 been a dearth of funding with the
8 School District budget for us. So as
9 a result, I need to just make sure I
10 have in place enough teachers and
11 staff members. So do we need
12 additional somatic trauma, somatic
13 support in place for our young
14 people? We definitely do.

15 We do have one school
16 counselor here on site. We do work
17 with the School District of
18 Philadelphia where they provide
19 support if needed to come in, but we
20 don't have anything in place right
21 now. Now, I know Principal Garcia
22 had a situation earlier in the year
23 so she might have some additional
24 prevention and intervention supports
25 because she has K to 4 there.

1 MS. GARCIA: So at the
2 Willard School, we do -- every
3 morning for half an hour we have a
4 community meeting, and that is the
5 time of the day where if students are
6 experiencing anything they need to
7 discuss, they discuss that in their
8 classes with teachers.

9 We also partnered with COMHAR
10 to bring in services for population
11 of our students. We have started a
12 partnership with Lakeside and they
13 provide the course called Neurologic.
14 And what we've decided to do at the
15 Willard School is really learn and
16 understand how the trauma affects the
17 brain. So we're doing brain-based
18 training with our teachers so that we
19 can discuss and work through trauma
20 in a more intelligent manner.

21 We're trying to change our
22 language. We don't call students
23 bad. We don't do that anymore. But
24 we also have a counselor. We did add
25 a second one for the upcoming school

1 year. So we have 5- to 9-year-olds,
2 so that looks different every day.
3 But what we intentionally do is we
4 give lots of love, we give lots of
5 hugs. We try to make our students
6 feel safe and we try to understand
7 them.

8 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
9 you. And I know we're getting ready
10 to go into the next panel. I just
11 want to dig a little deeper because
12 something that you mentioned is
13 tugging at my heart when you talk
14 about how our children have viewed
15 the actions in this neighborhood as
16 the norm, which is totally
17 unacceptable because it's abnormal,
18 right, for children, babies, to
19 actually go to and from school in an
20 environment that isn't really
21 conducive to them becoming really
22 productive members of society unless
23 they have the type of support needed
24 within that school environment which
25 they're going to spend the majority

1 of their day at.

2 And so, I wanted to do a
3 deeper dive from that aspect to see
4 have you seen changes in some of the
5 students based upon what they
6 witnessed inside the neighborhood
7 going to and from school? And to be
8 quite frank, also sometimes it can be
9 within the household, right. Can you
10 give me a couple of examples in terms
11 of that?

12 MS. GARCIA: So we have
13 students that we are aware of the
14 challenges that they face in their
15 homes, so we put things in place for
16 those students that we're aware of,
17 right. We also offer a sensory room
18 at our school, which is a small room
19 that has things that are tactile.
20 That helps calm them down.

21 We have a trampoline in that
22 room. That helps calm them down.
23 But I think that the bigger danger is
24 how do we deal with the students that
25 we don't know have the traumatic

1 experiences. We hear all the time,
2 you know, we lost a parent, we lost a
3 sibling, there was a big raid. We
4 hear all of that and we try to do
5 those students on an individual basis
6 and tailor something for them. But
7 again, the danger is not knowing,
8 right. And if something happened
9 that night, if that child wants to
10 share it -- sometimes we find out
11 that something happened because of
12 their behavior. And taking the time
13 to sort of peel back the layers of
14 that onion, then we get to the root
15 of it.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
17 you very much.

18 MS. GARCIA: You're welcome.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
20 Member Johnson. I think that
21 question was extremely important for
22 the purpose of these hearings. We
23 don't want to just be expert
24 articulators of the problem. We want
25 to recommend solutions on what Member

1 Johnson talked about.

2 We spend a lot of money on
3 CUAS, Community Umbrella
4 Organizations. We spend a lot of
5 money on the School District. If a
6 school ever deserved that kind of
7 service, they should have it. And
8 so, it begs the question if not, why
9 not. And so, as we make these notes,
10 we're going to go back to these
11 departments and say, what is a part
12 of your Kensington plan.

13 And so, thank you for that,
14 Member Johnson.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
18 Vaughn -- Member Gauthier.

19 Chair recognizes Member
20 Gauthier.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
22 wanted to follow up on Councilmember
23 Johnson's line of questioning. But I
24 wanted to ask about your overall
25 services. You described the

1 conditions that your kids have to
2 walk through and deal with on a daily
3 basis, whether it be trash or human
4 waste and things that you just don't
5 want for our young people or anyone.

6 And so, I wanted to ask you
7 all have you seen an increase in
8 services from the District and from
9 the City as you've been trying to
10 weather all of these circumstances
11 here in Kensington? And I also
12 wanted to ask if you could list the
13 top two of what you would want to see
14 the change in terms of support to
15 your schools and to your business in
16 the next six months, what would that
17 top two be for all of you?

18 MS. GARCIA: So to answer the
19 first part of your question, I think
20 that the District is recognizing and
21 trying to put things in place to
22 support our schools. So one of the
23 things that I mentioned earlier is
24 that we are getting a second
25 counselor, which is super helpful. I

1 think that starts to help and starts
2 to help us identify students and it
3 starts to help us put a plan in
4 place.

5 One of the things that I am
6 very proud of at Willard is we try
7 very hard to get as many experiences
8 as we can knowing that our kids can't
9 go out and play, they can't roam the
10 streets like we used to do back in
11 the day, so partnerships are crucial.
12 Partnerships -- we at Willard
13 partnered with the DEA for a dance
14 program.

15 We partnered with
16 Philadelphia Ballet. We partnered
17 with -- went to the game, soccer and
18 baseball clubs. We partnered with so
19 many people to bring experiences to
20 our building. So to answer the
21 second part of your question, we need
22 areas where our kids can experience
23 things in a safe way. We need our
24 kids to be able to walk to school and
25 have corridors clean and safe for

1 them.

2 I think that every building
3 is a little different, right, so I
4 can't answer that globally. But for
5 Willard we work really hard to bring
6 experiences to our kids so they can
7 have those experiences. But we can
8 control what's in our doors. We
9 can't control what's beyond our
10 doors. And what happens and those
11 experiences beyond our doors are
12 impactful to our kids.

13 So having a safe, clean route
14 to come to school without seeing
15 people, I've just seen things as an
16 adult that I never had thought I'd
17 see and our kids see that as normal,
18 so that's really impactful.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you so much for that. And I would
21 love to hear from you as well. And
22 I'm really asking this question and
23 asking you to think not even just
24 about the School District. But if
25 you can have every City agency at

1 your disposal and say give me these
2 two things to improve the experience
3 of these kids over the next six
4 months, what would that look like,
5 right?

6 It sounds like it would be
7 maybe the Streets Department clearing
8 the corridors to school so that each
9 kid can have an experience coming to
10 and from school that's better than
11 what it is and partners to help kids
12 have experiences, what would that be
13 for you?

14 MS. GREEN: Yeah. So I agree
15 that each school is really different.
16 And so, lots of times you don't hear
17 things unless it's principals because
18 we are the CEOs of our buildings and
19 we have teams and we're holding it
20 down. So usually you only hear from
21 me or folks from the School District
22 only hear from me when it's at that
23 point where I'm like, okay, I need
24 some additional help because I'm
25 having those emotional kind of coming

1 undone, if that makes sense.

2 We have to be extremely
3 strong and you heard me say resilient
4 for young people. And so, I come in
5 early in the morning a ball of energy
6 because I know that's what they need.
7 And so, they often say, Ms. Green,
8 you're way too loud. I know and
9 that's okay.

10 I would say that I'm really
11 happy to see the Streets Department
12 is cleaning consistently on Tuesday.
13 That makes a difference. That's
14 really important for the neighbors
15 and our residents here as well as for
16 the business owners. However, the
17 folks that are struggling for
18 addiction can't be picked up at that
19 time, so we do need other locations
20 for them to get the help and the
21 services that they need. But it does
22 need to be blocks away from the
23 neighborhood.

24 And of course we understand
25 that they need to be close to the

1 drug, which is like their medicine.
2 So I completely understand that. I
3 also understand that folks that sell
4 illegal drugs, that's how they have
5 to provide for their families as
6 well. So I do have a clear
7 understanding of the whole picture,
8 always about preserving our young
9 people.

10 So those things are really
11 kind of how I can see things. I
12 mean, I have a plan that I think
13 could work. But when you're talking
14 about my school so, yes, like
15 Principal Garcia, we have lots of
16 partnerships. But what I guess I
17 really need, which we don't have a
18 lot of, is that additional funding or
19 partnerships.

20 So like, we have a schoolyard
21 where capital improvements, I've
22 requested for it to be level. So we
23 need to rein places that are right
24 here on the school property.
25 Principal Garcia is a little more

1 insulated, but I'm sure she needs
2 some things there. My young people
3 through their STEAM classes here are
4 now designing a yard space, which
5 consists of a green space and gardens
6 and an opportunity to maybe grow
7 vegetables.

8 But then they also had a
9 track team so we had Philly Girls on
10 the Run, but they also ran in the
11 Penn Relays. We came in 3rd place
12 for girls. So we missed our first
13 place, but that's all good. Another
14 Philly middle school got it so that's
15 all well because they're all our
16 kids. So they were designing a place
17 for track.

18 We have a flag football team
19 on Thursdays. If anybody wants to
20 come out from 2:30 to 4:00, we're
21 here, and that builds a lot of
22 camaraderie. And I have parents who
23 also join us for that. And so,
24 that's a really nice feeling because
25 parents often aren't able to see

1 their kids play or they don't really
2 want them at the playground for
3 whatever reason. So the school
4 becomes everything that the young
5 people need. And so, it needs to be
6 that safehaven for them where they
7 feel comfortable, where the parents
8 feel comfortable.

9 So, yes, there's a lot of
10 ideas that we have. But I give it
11 back to the voice of my middle
12 schoolers who are developing this
13 yard space, so partnerships like that
14 would make a difference because we do
15 have some of the other partnerships
16 like what Principal Garcia mentioned,
17 but it always comes down to just a
18 little extra funding.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you so much. And then from our
21 business owner, have you seen
22 increased services and if you could
23 have the top two over the next six
24 months, what would that look like?

25 MS. HANNIBAL: I have seen

1 the Streets Department cleaning up,
2 but then there are separate entities
3 that donate clothes and food to the
4 people out there also. So as soon as
5 they clean it up, all the trash
6 consumed during that day is back on
7 the street. All those same people
8 are back there like she said.

9 I honestly do not know of any
10 solutions because the change, it's
11 still mindboggling to me. So I'm
12 just here as a vessel and I'm able to
13 do whatever I can, but that comes
14 along with programs for me to do that
15 and opportunities. So that's all I
16 know.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
18 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
20 Chair recognizes Member Lozada.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thank
22 you, Chairman.

23 I just want to say thank you
24 to you, the principals, because you
25 can choose to say I no longer want to

1 be here, but you choose to stay and
2 you choose to love our students. You
3 choose to love our community. And
4 so, you're appreciated. Thank you so
5 much.

6 Thank you to you as a
7 business owner because you can pick
8 anywhere else in the City to open up
9 your business, but you chose
10 Kensington and you chose to stay.

11 If anybody is really
12 listening to these folks, what
13 they're asking for are basic things.
14 They're very simple things. They're
15 not things that are beyond our reach.
16 And so, let us start thinking about
17 asking the departments how do we
18 provide these resources, how do we
19 address these needs quickly and
20 understand the impact that it will
21 make on the lives of our children and
22 of these people who come into our
23 community to provide them with a
24 positive experience every day.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

1 Member.

2 With that, are there any
3 other questions for this panel?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing
6 none, thank you so much for your
7 testimony. And we appreciate your
8 resilience.

9 Mr. Glass, the next panel.

10 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
11 second panel is Lisette Rivera,
12 Program Coordinator for Strategic
13 Partnerships at Elkin Elementary
14 School.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Please
16 approach the witness table and state
17 your name for the record, and please
18 begin your testimony.

19 (Witness approached
20 Witness table.)

21 MS. RIVERA: Good evening.
22 My name is Lisette Rivera and I have
23 lived on (inaudible) for almost all
24 my life. Not only do I reside in
25 Kensington, but I work within the

1 neighborhood. I remember growing up
2 and being able to walk to my
3 elementary school on my own and
4 playing in the park with my friends
5 without worrying about being
6 attacked.

7 I remember sitting on my
8 steps until dark talking to all my
9 neighbors and eating sunflower seeds
10 with no worries. I now don't know
11 all my neighbors. I remember playing
12 basketball in the park without
13 worrying about being shot. My
14 quality of life in my neighborhood
15 has shifted for the worst.

16 I come outside my house and
17 the first thing I see is people using
18 drugs in broad daylight in front of
19 my kids. Back in the day I remember
20 these drug users hiding in places and
21 being discreet but not anymore. My
22 kids witness drug users pooping on
23 the ground and sleeping in parks, not
24 knowing if they are dead or alive,
25 illegal dumping of infested

1 mattresses and hazardous things. Our
2 local stores barely have merchandise
3 due to looting.

4 My kids and I are not able to
5 come outside without seeing a drug
6 user high as a kite, and we always
7 worry about where we step to be sure
8 we are not close to any needles on
9 the ground. It's so depressing to
10 come outside and witness some type of
11 crime scene, whether it's someone
12 poking another person in the neck or
13 someone being beaten up or robbed.

14 My 3-year-old asks me to go
15 to the park across the street from my
16 house every day, and every day I have
17 to come up with some type of excuse
18 or a lie. I'm forced to buy
19 electronics and attempt to entertain
20 my kids indoors because there's no
21 way I can let them go outside.

22 It's so overwhelming to know
23 that this is the neighborhood my kids
24 are being exposed to. There's no
25 room to walk on the sidewalk, forcing

1 my kids to walk on the streets
2 because these drug users take up most
3 of the sidewalk to sleep on and do
4 drugs. Not to mention a number of
5 illegal cars that are not registered
6 parked on the sidewalk at an angle,
7 blocking the sidewalk and making it
8 unsafe.

9 Abandoned vehicles are being
10 used as shelter and parked for months
11 with no avail to 311 or 911.

12 Abandoned houses are being utilized
13 for drug use and squatters. Traffic
14 cones are being utilized to save
15 parking space due to so many
16 unregistered vehicles. The warm
17 weather is the scariest. Everyone's
18 outside enjoying the weather, and
19 those are the days that I worry about
20 the most.

21 When I should be happy to
22 enjoy the warm weather, instead I'm
23 worried about an innocent person
24 getting shot and killed which happens
25 on a daily basis. We have the most

1 crime and I ask myself why. Why is
2 this happening in my community and
3 nothing is being done. There's not a
4 day that goes by that a gunshot is
5 not heard in my house. There's not a
6 day that goes by that we don't see
7 our local library infested with drug
8 users, prostitutes and kingpins.

9 Organizations come out to
10 support their needs with clean
11 needles and food, but there's no
12 solution for our kids or the people
13 who live with this eyesore. We can't
14 come outside in the dark due to so
15 many crimes happening. Families are
16 suffering from depression and mental
17 health issues.

18 They're worried sick every
19 time they get a call that their kid's
20 school is on lockdown, forcing a
21 stampede of angry, worried parents to
22 pick up their children. Families are
23 forced to go to shelters due to not
24 having their lease renewed because
25 rent would not be affordable.

1 Families are suffering from
2 all types of abuse. Neighbors are
3 requesting Narcan to possibly save
4 someone's life. It's ridiculous and
5 something must be done. We need a
6 clear action plan to address our
7 community needs. We need your help.
8 When is it enough and how many deaths
9 does it take.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
11 so much for your testimony. We'll
12 wait until the panel concludes and
13 then we'll ask questions.

14 State your name please.

15 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, I
16 believe that is the only witness.

17 MS. RIVERA: Yes, I had a
18 parent and a student. But
19 unfortunately, they were unable to
20 attend.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
22 I think you represented them well.

23 MS. RIVERA: Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Mr. Glass,
25 next witness.

1 THE CLERK: Mr. Chair, that
2 is the final witness for this panel.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.
4 What I will say is what makes you
5 stay?

6 MS. RIVERA: So like I said,
7 this is my community and I want to
8 change -- I want to fight for a
9 change. I just don't want to just
10 leave like everyone is doing. I get
11 letters in the mail, hey, we're
12 buying your house for this much. I
13 don't want that. I want to be here.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: I heard
15 that. All right.

16 Mr. Harrity, Member.

17 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Listen,
18 I feel you.

19 MS. RIVERA: Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Like I
21 said, I live at G and Allegheny and
22 Willard Street. What you're dealing
23 with on a daily basis, I am also.
24 It's not right. I have seniors that
25 can't go to the corner store. Not to

1 mention once they get to the corner
2 store, there's nothing in it.

3 MS. RIVERA: Exactly.

4 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: But we
5 are here now, and I'm telling you I'm
6 not going to rest until this
7 neighborhood -- I moved here 16 years
8 ago. My family, my wife and her
9 mother have been here 50 years. 16
10 years ago you could walk around this
11 neighborhood. As a matter of fact,
12 10 years ago you could walk around
13 this neighborhood and you could go
14 shopping and you could be in stores.
15 And I'm not going to be satisfied or
16 happy until we are able to do that
17 again.

18 So I thank you for your
19 courage to get up here and speak
20 because I know it's not an easy thing
21 to do. Especially in our
22 neighborhood, you never know what's
23 going to happen. It's just crazy.
24 I'm a City Councilman, and I have
25 come home to this neighborhood every

1 day. And every day on my way home I
2 pray to God, God, please let me get
3 home, find a parking spot and get in
4 my house in safety. That's
5 ridiculous. Every day I do that.
6 I'm tired of it. I'm with you.

7 MS. RIVERA: Thank you so
8 much. I appreciate your time.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES:
10 Mr. Harrity, thank you.

11 Mr. Glass.

12 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
13 third panel is Assistant Principal
14 Julio Nunez from Casarez Elementary
15 and four students from Casarez
16 Elementary as well are here to
17 testify.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Please
19 come up to the witness table. We're
20 glad to have you. We're proud of
21 your resilience.

22 (Witnesses approached
23 Witness table.)

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
25 Could you state your name for the

1 record and begin your testimony.

2 MR. SMITH: My name is Devon
3 Smith. Good evening, Councilperson
4 Quetcy Lozada and Councilperson
5 Curtis Jones, Jr. Thank you for
6 organizing this meeting on public
7 safety in Kensington. My name is
8 Devon Smith. I'm a student in 5th
9 grade at Gloria Casarez Elementary.

10 I have been attending this
11 school for six years. I've also been
12 very involved in helping improve my
13 community. I am known as a young
14 changemaker to use my voice to
15 advocate for a safer and cleaner
16 neighborhood and a better community
17 at school for all. That is why I'm
18 here to share with you and the public
19 what it's like living in Kensington
20 and going to school here.

21 I hope my testimony helps
22 improve things for my family and all
23 of us who live and work here. Some
24 people who do not live in Kensington
25 may ask what is it like living here,

1 so I'm here to tell you what it's
2 like living here for me. On a
3 regular day I see people on the
4 street selling, buying and using
5 drugs. That is something I see on my
6 way to school, on my way home from
7 school and when I have to venture out
8 to the corner store to buy something.

9 There's so much trash on my
10 street I feel disgusted and sad to
11 say this is my neighborhood. People
12 stand in front of stores all day
13 selling drugs with no consequence. I
14 know if I misbehave at school I will
15 get a consequence from my teacher or,
16 or --

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Take your
18 time.

19 MR. SMITH: -- or Mr. Nunez.
20 How do they not get in trouble. It's
21 not even safe for us to play outside
22 at all because you never know when
23 someone will shoot a gun. My
24 questions for you are how come kids
25 in Kensington don't have safe places

1 to play like parks or safe streets to
2 walk to libraries? Are we not worth
3 it?

4 How can people walk to their
5 corner stores without fear of getting
6 shot? Why is Kensington train
7 station so dirty? Why is gun
8 violence or just violence so bad in
9 Kensington? There are so many
10 questions but no answers. My parents
11 tell me and my sister all the time
12 about how they grew up in Kensington,
13 and how back in the day it wasn't
14 perfect but it was cleaner and safer.
15 Why can't my generation experience
16 the same? Thank you for your time
17 and for allowing me to speak.

18 I hope you can change things.
19 I also want to invite you to my
20 school for Career Week on May 22nd.
21 I hope you can visit.

22 MS. SOLANA: Good evening,
23 Councilmember --

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
25 evening.

1 MS. SOLANA: Good evening,
2 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada and
3 Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr. My
4 name is Jolene Solana. I'm in the
5 5th grade, a student at Gloria
6 Casarez Elementary here in
7 Kensington. I have been attending
8 since 2nd grade along with my younger
9 sister Wilhemina, who's in the 3rd
10 grade. I have lived in this area
11 with my mom and dad and three
12 siblings for the last four years.

13 I'm here to share with you
14 and the community what my experience
15 has been here. It is not good. For
16 example, my siblings and I are
17 constantly exposed to secondhand
18 smoke because of plenty of people
19 smoking in front of and around our
20 house. That's not all.

21 There are plenty of people
22 doing drugs on the street or while
23 sitting on our porch laying on our
24 couch. Sometimes we have to wake
25 them up and ask them to leave. My

1 dad deals with that every day. We
2 all have fear for our safety. One
3 time someone threw a beer bottle at
4 our front door and it broke all over
5 the porch.

6 My parents are worried so
7 much for our safety that they moved
8 our bedrooms from the front of the
9 house to the room facing the backyard
10 so that no bullet pierces through our
11 windows. I walk to school with my
12 little sister every day. On my way
13 there, I find clusters of people we
14 have to walk by quickly not making
15 eye contact who smoke and curse in
16 front of us and who are definitely
17 not a good influence on children.

18 Sometimes I have to advise my
19 sister to mind her own business and
20 not to pay any attention to them
21 because we don't know if those people
22 have guns on them or how they're
23 going to react if we make eye contact
24 with them or say anything about what
25 they're doing. Sometimes there's no

1 crossing guards and I have to make
2 sure I am responsible for myself and
3 my little sister when crossing the
4 street. I worry about my little
5 sister and I being kidnapped. It
6 makes me feel very anxious.

7 I also wish people outside
8 Kensington know that my neighborhood
9 could be fun sometimes. For example,
10 on Christmas last year there was a
11 parade with floats and they were
12 giving everyone presents. Santa even
13 picked up one of the children and
14 brought them on top of the floats. I
15 also want people to know how unsafe
16 the streets are, especially for
17 children like me.

18 I have personally seen many
19 car accidents that make me in fear f
20 being near the road. All of this is
21 not good for my mental health. I
22 would like the Mayor and City Council
23 to ensure the rule of law is enforced
24 so that children like me can enjoy a
25 safe and healthy community. Thank

1 you.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: I have to
3 catch my breath. Your testimony was
4 amazing.

5 Please continue.

6 MR. BENJAMIN: Good afternoon
7 (inaudible) --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: You have
9 to fix their mic. There we go.

10 MR. BENJAMIN: Good
11 afternoon, Councilpeople and
12 audience. My name is Donnie
13 Benjamin. I'm also a student at
14 Gloria Casarez. On G Street and
15 Ontario Street I have been living in
16 Kensington for one year. My family
17 and I used to live in New Jersey. I
18 live with two sisters, my brothers
19 too and my mom and my dad.

20 My little brother Jaleel goes
21 to the school with me. Where we used
22 to live in Northside, New Jersey I
23 remember it was very clean and
24 peaceful, where it is very different.
25 Where I live in Westmoreland Street,

1 it's scary that people do -- what
2 people do around me is scary. The
3 people around me and the substances
4 that they carry makes it scary.

5 I feel like they are very,
6 very sad. Maybe people who sell
7 drugs think it's a good way to make
8 money, but I don't. I don't feel
9 safe because the drugs are available
10 to anybody, adults, young people and
11 children like me. That is not good.
12 I wish people who don't live in
13 Kensington knew there are people like
14 me and my family who just want to do
15 the right thing and do well in school
16 and work and live in a peaceful place
17 where there is no trash on the
18 streets and where children do not
19 have to see people injecting
20 themselves or selling drugs. I wish
21 more people cared about this
22 community because then the residents
23 like my parents and siblings would
24 feel safe and not feel like we're
25 trapped in our own house or held

1 hostage by the violence and the drugs
2 on the streets.

3 I would like to be an
4 entrepreneur. I love technology and
5 I would like to learn as much as
6 possible because I know it's the
7 future and maybe some of this can
8 help make my neighborhood safer.

9 Thank you for listening to my
10 testimony.

11 MR. NUNEZ: Good evening,
12 Councilmembers. I do not have my
13 testimony. I have my students'
14 testimony. I'm going to let that
15 speak for itself.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Let's give
17 them a round of applause for their
18 bravery, for their constrictions. We
19 need to let them know this is not
20 normal and it's not okay. We're here
21 and we're going to make a difference.
22 We're listening, we're writing, we're
23 making our own notes to make
24 suggestions, so thank you for that
25 testimony.

1 Are there any questions? Oh,
2 Member Squilla.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
4 you, Mr. Chair.

5 I just want to say when I
6 first came, I wasn't going to say
7 anything and I've been listening
8 because we've been doing this for a
9 long time here. But hearing this
10 testimony today shows us we failed
11 the community. We failed the
12 community. We failed the young
13 people. We failed the teachers, the
14 parents, everybody. We're all the
15 blame.

16 This has been going on for a
17 long time and everybody's turning
18 their heads. We allow people to walk
19 the streets, doing whatever they want
20 to do, engaging them and then letting
21 them continue that same path. We pay
22 more attention to the people who are
23 unhoused in the community than the
24 people who live in the community. We
25 don't even help the people who are

1 unhoused, but we engage them. And if
2 they don't want the help, we let them
3 continue that.

4 We have failed. It's time to
5 do something about it. We got to
6 stop listening and start doing. When
7 you hear that it's traumatizing to
8 see this and think that it's okay,
9 it's not. We are elected to
10 represent the people of this
11 community. We can't throw people
12 away. We need to help the folks on
13 the street and get them off the
14 street.

15 We need to help the people in
16 the community by getting them off the
17 street and let them be able to live
18 in a community that's safe and clean
19 and let them go out and play and go
20 to the store. This would never
21 happen anywhere else, and we're
22 turning a blind eye to it.

23 So I wasn't going to say
24 anything, but I have to. And we're
25 going to do everything we can to make

1 sure we're just not cleaning up after
2 the problem. Cleaning up after the
3 problem doesn't fix the problem. We
4 need to address the problem. We need
5 to (inaudible) we engage them.

6 They need help, and we don't
7 give them help by letting them decide
8 not to take help. So there needs to
9 be a consequence for them not taking
10 help, and we have to do that. We
11 have to change our policies. We've
12 been doing the same thing for five
13 years. It doesn't work. It's
14 getting worse. So it's time to
15 change that and now (inaudible).
16 Thank you.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
18 Member Squilla.

19 MS. SOLANA: Mr. Squilla, you
20 didn't fail us. It's just a new
21 option for a new opportunity.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
23 you for that. I (inaudible) and you
24 taught us something today because
25 every obstacle and every challenge

1 gives us opportunity. And this is an
2 opportunity that can happen, and it's
3 up to us to do that. Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm glad
5 you said so. Thank you so much.

6 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Listen,
7 (inaudible), you all hear me talk all
8 the time on Council about my kids.
9 And you know I don't have any kids.
10 My kids are grown. When I say my
11 kids, this is what I'm talking about.
12 This is why I care about them. This
13 is what we have to fix.

14 The fact that they can speak
15 on this is not right. They should
16 know nothing about this. We are
17 robbing them of their childhood. And
18 time is -- as Councilman Squilla
19 said, it's time for a change. Thank
20 you.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
22 so much. Thank you guys.

23 Member Gauthier.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
25 want to first thank you all for being

1 here and sharing with us. It was so
2 powerful but also heartbreaking, but
3 necessary. So thank you very much.
4 I wanted to know are we allowed to
5 ask questions to the Admin or --

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes,
7 ma'am.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
9 Sorry. I just wasn't sure if we were
10 allowed to ask questions to the
11 partners from the Administration who
12 are here. I agree with Councilmember
13 Squilla that the changes need to be
14 (inaudible), that they need to be
15 real. I also think that I'm hearing
16 so many things voiced that are just
17 very, very basic things and it feels
18 embarrassing to me that we can't meet
19 some of those things within the
20 short-term.

21 So to hear the middle schools
22 talk about needing a calming room,
23 like how much would that cost, right?
24 It's probably like a few thousand
25 dollars. I don't even know. That's

1 not a huge ticket item. To hear the
2 young woman talk about not having
3 crossing guards, why can't we have an
4 effort through Streets who manages
5 that effort now to get crossing
6 guards around these schools.

7 To hear some of the children
8 talk about the trash on the way to
9 school or using traffic calming, I
10 know that some of these issues are
11 very big or very deep, but I feel
12 like we should come out with a list
13 of very basic things that we are
14 going to do in the next couple of
15 months, right, because the kids
16 deserve it.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: So,
18 Member, you hit it right on the head.
19 The idea is to listen. Sympathy is
20 one thing. Empathy is another. And
21 getting involved is a third. And
22 we're all changed by what we heard
23 today and we're not going back to
24 what we --

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Mr. Chair, I have a question. Sorry.

2 The question was, and I don't
3 know who's here from MDO, can we
4 develop that list? Can we develop
5 the list of three months from today
6 and whatever time period this
7 Committee wants to pick, these are
8 the short-term things that we're
9 going to have happen in this area?
10 How hard is that to do?

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Who is
12 here from the MDO? Would you please
13 come up to the witness table.

14 MS. FOIZEN: Hi. Good
15 afternoon. Noelle Foizen, the
16 Managing Director's Office, Director
17 of the Opioid Response Unit. I've
18 been collecting that list,
19 Councilmember. And we will
20 absolutely guarantee to come back
21 with a plan.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Oh,
23 you're from the MDO?

24 MS. FOIZEN: Yes.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 (Inaudible).

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We
3 can't hear you.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: The mic.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
6 would like to have as a deliverable
7 of this hearing too, in the very
8 short-term I think we should have a
9 list of very simple things that we
10 are going to deliver to the
11 community, and these are things that
12 the City can do pretty easily. We
13 just have to get it done.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: To your
15 point, one of the things on the list
16 has to be a safe corridor to this
17 school. That includes cameras, that
18 includes crossing guards, that
19 includes boots on the ground for the
20 police department so that they can
21 get safe passage to a school. And
22 that's the basic.

23 What you said is true,
24 nothing that they've asked for is
25 unreasonable. These are things that

1 are their right. And we just need to
2 do a list. I saw from the Kensington
3 Business Association comment. We
4 have the Commerce Department here.
5 On my way up here I couldn't help but
6 see that across in the park there was
7 an encampment with tents all the way
8 down the street.

9 And I couldn't help but
10 notice that every business that was
11 across from that encampment was
12 closed. That is a direct result of
13 some of the unintended consequences
14 that come with trying to help people
15 and then not having consequences for
16 some of the quality-of-life crimes.
17 How do you run a business if you
18 can't keep inventory. It's just not
19 fair. All right. I'm off my
20 soapbox.

21 Member Vaughn.

22 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: I'd
23 just like to say, babies, we hear
24 you. And we are definitely here
25 because we want to make a difference.

1 You have people on this stage that
2 recognize, know that this problem's
3 been going on for quite some time
4 because we live here also.

5 So there's never been a time
6 where you have had three
7 Councilpeople representing your area
8 of the City, and we mean what we say
9 and we say what we mean. And it's to
10 the point that Councilwoman Lozada
11 will tell you whenever she contacts
12 me and asks for something or support
13 for the area, I'm saying yes.

14 No matter who gets offended,
15 who doesn't like it or what it takes,
16 I am for you and you are guaranteed
17 changes are coming. A change is
18 coming for your community because we
19 want you to know we care and we want
20 to you to feel safe. Now, I don't
21 know, like one of my colleagues said,
22 if we can get the policing. But if
23 not, we'll try to get the (inaudible)
24 because the police need to do a big
25 hiring as well.

1 It's a lot of shortages as a
2 result of the pandemic that we all
3 suffered through. But with that
4 being said, we can provide a common
5 goal. We can give you some of the
6 things that you are asking for. And
7 understand that some of the most
8 important people in the City are in
9 this room tonight listening to you
10 and we hear you. Please give us a
11 chance to make a difference.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
13 Member Vaughn.

14 Thank you guys for your
15 testimony and your bravery. We
16 appreciate you.

17 Mr. Glass.

18 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
19 next panel is Casey O'Donnell, CEO of
20 Impact Services; Susan Post, CEO of
21 Esperanza Health Center; and Bryan
22 Belknap, LEAP Advocate from the
23 McPherson Square Library.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
25 so very much. Please come up to the

1 witness table. Have a seat.

2 (Witnesses approached
3 Witness table.)

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
5 for your patience. And state your
6 name and begin your testimony.

7 MR. O'DONNELL: You want me
8 to start?

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes,
10 please.

11 MR. O'DONNELL: Casey
12 O'Donnell, Impact Services. My
13 office is right up the street.
14 We've --

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Hold the
16 mic closer.

17 MR. O'DONNELL: Casey
18 O'Donnell, Impact Services. My
19 office is right up the street. I am
20 not going to read my testimony
21 tonight because I think hearing from
22 the kids is the most important thing.
23 I do have to say a couple of things.

24 One, we're sitting in the
25 back of the room feeling like we're

1 getting gaslit. We've had this
2 conversation three times a year for
3 the last seven years with most of
4 this group of people. So I think,
5 one, we are at an inflection point,
6 right. We know midway May there are
7 going to be changes, hopefully not
8 too many changes of people that have
9 been supporters of this work and new
10 people that have been doing this work
11 for a long time but maybe have never
12 held office.

13 I'm only here because
14 Councilwoman Lozada asked me to be
15 here and read another testimony on
16 the same subject. I'm glad the
17 children were able to speak tonight.
18 I think from a solution-based
19 perspective I will read two
20 sentences, which are I can't stress
21 enough the need for trauma-informed
22 and resident-driven plan for
23 Kensington.

24 I want all of you to consider
25 what you want for your own block.

1 Don't think about Kensington for a
2 minute if you're not from here.
3 Think about what you want for your
4 own block, your own family and your
5 own community. Think about the
6 collective power that you possess as a
7 group to actualize that vision in
8 your own spaces, right. We need to
9 offer that same power and influence
10 equally to all neighborhoods,
11 including Kensington.

12 Affluent neighborhoods can
13 make a phone call to solve the
14 problems on their blocks, and that
15 problem gets handled for them.
16 Middle class people are empowered to
17 deal with the block themselves.
18 Neighborhoods like Kensington are not
19 afforded that, right. Other people
20 are making decisions for this
21 solution. And the truth is the
22 solutions are already in this room.

23 You have a lot of smart,
24 talented people on the stage. Look
25 at the law enforcement brass that's

1 in here. Kevin Bethel's stepped up,
2 right. He's been working on this,
3 the school-to-prison pipeline. You
4 have talent in this room. All the
5 police brass work hard and we're
6 happy to have partnerships with MDO's
7 Office, DBHIDS is here, the DA's
8 Office who by the way has a brilliant
9 data lab.

10 I don't know if any of you
11 are accessing the data that the DA
12 makes available. The police have a
13 data lab. None of you are working
14 together. There's ideological
15 gridlock in the City which actually
16 prevents progress. You're aware that
17 you have a sidewalk ordinance, right,
18 that dictates what can happen in
19 public space, and you know that it's
20 not actually enforceable, right. But
21 it exists in the City code, and we've
22 all read it and we don't know why it
23 doesn't mean anything. So we've been
24 here before.

25 And so, let's take the

1 opportunity on the 17th to reset,
2 figure out how all you guys are going
3 to work together and how we can get
4 the job done for you. We are here
5 working in the neighborhood every
6 day. I thought after my son was out
7 of diapers I wouldn't be cleaning up
8 human feces anymore, right, but I'm
9 doing that in my 50s.

10 I have four guys that just
11 clean up needles all day. That's
12 their full-time job, right. We're
13 all here doing the work. We are here
14 to support you. We are here to work
15 for you, but you guys have to work
16 together to get it done. Okay.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well said.
18 I'm going to push back a little bit.
19 I vouch for everybody on this stage
20 that this is not just talk, that most
21 of the people are going to come back
22 and we're going to hold the next
23 Mayor accountable and no longer
24 ignore this neighborhood. You can
25 take that to the bank. Thank you so

1 much.

2 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
3 next witness is Susan Post, CEO of
4 Esperanza Health Center.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.
6 Thank you for your patience. State
7 your name for the record and begin
8 your testimony.

9 MS. POST: Thank you. I'm
10 Susan Post. I'm the CEO of Esperanza
11 Health Center (inaudible). Esperanza
12 has three health centers in North
13 Philly, and our largest is at
14 Kensington and Allegheny. We
15 recently opened our first wellness
16 center, the CORE, on the same block
17 to provide health and wellness
18 services in Kensington, and I'm very
19 glad to be here tonight.

20 We're a bilingual faith-based
21 health center compelled by Christian
22 faith serving almost 10,000 people in
23 Kensington. I believe we are one of
24 the biggest investors in Kensington.
25 We've spent more than \$30 million on

1 this one block to provide high
2 quality health care and wellness
3 programming.

4 We moved to Kensington about
5 15 years ago. Our goals are long-
6 term for these guys, and we're hoping
7 to see many people achieve wellness
8 in our community. We're looking for
9 the health that both those who are
10 suffering from the addiction of
11 opioids as well as for the residents
12 of the community who are experiencing
13 the trauma and health risks that this
14 brings to everyone.

15 In recent years a substance
16 use disorder has moved throughout
17 Kensington. I've been heartbroken to
18 encounter mothers who are just
19 walking around looking for their
20 adult children, have you seen my boy,
21 can you help me find my daughter.
22 This is a space where family tragedy
23 intercepts with social, mental health
24 and medical needs of a community.

25 Families are devastated by

1 the opioid epidemic, both those who
2 are addicted as well as those who
3 watch on the streets. These families
4 could be my family or your family.
5 We can't help Kensington without
6 first considering the needs of the
7 addicted (inaudible) opioids.

8 We operate our health center
9 and encourage the City to engage in
10 community-driven public strategies to
11 improve the quality of life in
12 Kensington and to address the opioid
13 crisis. As a local business, we're
14 devastated by the destruction and
15 violence around us. It's rough every
16 single day. Our staff and
17 unfortunately our patients are faced
18 with the challenges of being
19 physically present in a community
20 where the open market scene of
21 opioids and narcotics has turned into
22 a disaster in terms of safety and
23 because of gun violence.

24 At Esperanza we respond to
25 frequent overdoses on our sidewalk,

1 sometimes multiple times in the day.
2 And it's not really our
3 responsibility to do so on the
4 sidewalk, but we do it because
5 preserving life is our business. On
6 multiple occasions our employees have
7 been caught in crossfire within 100
8 feet of an active shooter in the
9 course of their workday.

10 Our security people now wear
11 bulletproof vests. After one
12 shooting, a medical assistant said
13 that she was torn between dropping to
14 the sidewalk to escape the bullets
15 and also worrying about the danger of
16 the needles that were on the
17 sidewalk. And she does this because
18 she's choosing to serve here in
19 Kensington. And it isn't right that
20 that's what she's worried about
21 during her day. She's a healthcare
22 worker.

23 In the fall I was attending
24 an anti-violence evening meeting at
25 Esperanza with many people in this

1 room and with the DA's Office as
2 gunfire broke out literally 10 yards
3 from where I sat in the meeting. A
4 load of more than 50 rounds was shot
5 endangering everybody in our
6 community meeting, and more
7 importantly one man was left dead on
8 the street right next to where we
9 met. And I felt a dilemma after
10 that. I wondered is it right for
11 patients to have to consider the
12 danger of traveling into a violent
13 community in order to see their
14 doctor. How do I respond to this.

15 I don't believe that we are
16 doing enough to limit the open-air
17 drug dealing. The number of people
18 living on the sidewalk continues to
19 grow and the lack of sanitation is
20 absolutely overwhelming. The gun
21 violence resulting from the drug
22 trafficking is totally out of
23 control. We need to do more and we
24 need to do it collaboratively. This
25 is vital to the health of the entire

1 City.

2 And so, from Esperanza's
3 perspective I'd like to request that
4 the City consider the following
5 priorities: Number one, address the
6 enormous safety concerns with regard
7 to the gun violence, and that all
8 begins with stopping the selling of
9 the drugs here. To me this is the
10 most important issue.

11 Secondly, increase the City's
12 capacity for inpatient rehab for
13 opioid use disorder. Third, find
14 creative solutions for sheltering
15 individuals who are still using
16 substances so they can be brought off
17 the streets safely. Four, deploy
18 additional outreach workers to serve
19 as bridges to rehab, emergency
20 shelters and other needed linkages.
21 In many ways, this will be
22 (inaudible) for greater impact than
23 adding more police presence.

24 Fifth, improve the sanitary
25 conditions of our community, as this

1 is an urgent need and will go far in
2 improving everyone's health. And
3 lastly, what I think would be best
4 for us is that the City would commit
5 to creating a safe corridor for those
6 of us who are coming to the Esperanza
7 Health Center, that they might be
8 protected as they arrive at our
9 medical center and the wellness
10 center. This would help get help
11 into our community. Please do not
12 abandon us.

13 There are a good number of
14 amazing organizations who like
15 Esperanza are putting themselves out
16 there to serve this important
17 community. And the residents, while
18 often rightfully angry, are engaged.
19 We need more people from the City to
20 add to the solution. We can't do it
21 on our own. We need help. The City
22 must protect our safety and the
23 safety of the residents. What is
24 happening now is not okay.

25 The massive problems facing

1 Kensington need a massive response.
2 There has to be relentless will from
3 the City that matches the will of the
4 residents to make a change. All that
5 we and the neighbors want is no more
6 and no less than any other
7 neighborhood in the City. Thank you
8 for listening.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
10 Well said.

11 Mr. Glass.

12 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
13 next witness is Bryan Belknap, Youth
14 Advocate at the Mcpherson Square
15 Library.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.
17 State your name for the record and
18 begin your testimony.

19 MR. BELKNAP: Bryan Belknap.
20 I'm a resident of Kensington and I
21 work at McPherson Square Library as
22 the LEAP Youth Advocate. Thank you,
23 Committee, for holding this hearing.
24 I'm reading this statement put
25 together by myself and Joel Nichols,

1 (inaudible) leader of the North
2 Philadelphia Neighborhood Libraries.

3 Our statement is not a full
4 list of our safety concerns for the
5 people of this community. We are
6 choosing to focus our observations
7 and concerns of our library staff for
8 the mental well-being of young people
9 growing up in Kensington. We know
10 Kensington is consistently a leader
11 in gun violence and homicides.

12 Each person shot has a family
13 and the trauma of these incidents
14 ripples across our community. One
15 teen that works for the library
16 witnessed his cousin bleed out on the
17 street after being shot. He
18 struggled to sleep for weeks
19 afterward and admitting to having
20 anxiety nearly being outdoors.

21 Another of our attendees was
22 hit by an automobile as the driver
23 fled a shooting in the street.
24 Unfortunately, many of our children
25 have witnessed gun violence while

1 families have been victims
2 themselves. As staff, we work to
3 find these young people supports. We
4 take classes and trainings on trauma-
5 informed practice. We seek out
6 resources in the City and community.
7 We partner with schools, community
8 organizations and City agencies to
9 expand support structures available
10 to young people.

11 However, we are unaware of
12 any Kensington-focused groups
13 specifically addressing the mental
14 impact of gun violence. When we
15 sought resources for our teen, what
16 we found out was that he, a person
17 experiencing anxiety being outdoors,
18 would need to travel to another part
19 of the City to find help catering to
20 his needs.

21 From our training and
22 education on trauma, we know that
23 children learn by mirroring the
24 behavior around them. Last year
25 outdoor fires were commonplace

1 throughout Kensington. That spring
2 we had a rash of teens and preteens
3 setting fires in the park. We
4 experienced violence throughout our
5 community and we see unsheltered
6 people living in dehumanizing
7 conditions. And unfortunately, we
8 continually find young children
9 throwing rocks at the unsheltered.
10 We also hear reports of teens
11 initiating violence on young
12 children.

13 As a staff, we are extremely
14 concerned about what mirroring looks
15 like in the young people of
16 Kensington. We work at modeling
17 kindness and empathy to all people,
18 and we are making a conscious effort
19 to grow the number of adults that our
20 young people see practicing healthy
21 stress responses and conflict
22 resolutions. And we've been thrilled
23 with gains made.

24 The Department of Parks &
25 Recreation led a massive multiple

1 group effort to activate McPherson
2 Square last summer. This fall we saw
3 significant gains in the healthy
4 stress responses from our frequent
5 attendees of those summer programs.
6 We are encouraged by this. What we
7 remain concerned is if children of
8 Kensington keep reflecting the
9 behavior that they see around them,
10 can we balance the healthy behavior
11 against the unhealthy enough that
12 they mirror that healthy behavior.
13 We also note the training of
14 importance of stability in gaining
15 resilience.

16 However, we witnessed massive
17 instability in the lives of our young
18 people. Poverty, crime and racism
19 keep many of our families from stable
20 housing. Many of our families move
21 multiple times each year. We had a
22 family of multiple siblings come to
23 the library because they could not
24 find their way to their new home, but
25 they could find their way to the

1 library.

2 We work with several families
3 each year that find themselves
4 homeless. The fragmentation and
5 instability of the lives of
6 (inaudible) people extends beyond
7 housing insecurity. The heart of
8 Kensington has no local neighborhood
9 high school. This means that it is
10 unlikely that all of your young
11 person's friends from elementary
12 school will attend the same high
13 school as them. Because summer
14 employment programs are often housed
15 at high schools, this fragmentation
16 extends into summer employment
17 opportunities.

18 Our traumatized teens will
19 likely be asked to travel to an
20 unfamiliar location in order to find
21 summer employment. We have also
22 witnessed instability of assistance
23 in our young person's life. No one
24 walks the streets of Kensington alone
25 before a stranger offers them

1 assistance. This is true of our
2 young people as it is for the adults.
3 Often that stranger, that assistance,
4 will never be seen by the young
5 person again.

6 The young person still face
7 all the same challenges as before.
8 This is a fairly unique part of life
9 in Kensington and one that adds to
10 the instability in the lives of our
11 children. A young person's life in
12 Kensington is full of potential
13 trauma. As the library staff, I seek
14 to promote resilience. We're
15 concerned about the level of
16 instability in the lives of our young
17 people.

18 People working in the field
19 of trauma experience common burden.
20 You interact with people who often
21 need you to be hopeful and positive.
22 You need to remain hopeful even when
23 you find situations heartbreaking.
24 You need to stay upbeat when you find
25 yourself discouraged. But the staff

1 at McPherson Square Library, we
2 understand this burden well.
3 Everyone working in Kensington
4 understands this burden.

5 Our building is frequently
6 used as a (inaudible) and we are
7 often aware of all sorts of wars
8 happening around the area. We feel
9 the struggles and hardships of our
10 community. Still when that
11 kindergarten walks through the door
12 at 309, they deserve a smiling,
13 joyful welcome.

14 (Inaudible) deserves to make
15 this happen. We do so daily.
16 Working at McPherson Square Library
17 comes with a toll on your mental
18 health. Thank you to the Committee
19 for hearing (inaudible).

20 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman,
21 that is our final witness to testify
22 for this panel.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are there
24 any questions for members of this
25 panel?

1 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I know
2 we've been here before. We know that
3 as government we tend to work in
4 silos. We tend not to share
5 information. We tend not to collect
6 data that we're willing to share with
7 others. I think what we can promise
8 you here today is that we will change
9 that. We will change how we do
10 business in this community so that
11 not only is this District better, but
12 so that our City is better.

13 We will break up the
14 concentration that is happening in
15 Kensington regardless of whether some
16 of us are here or not in the future.
17 Everyone up here when I ask to come
18 to Kensington, when I talk to them
19 about making Kensington a priority
20 and many of them who are sitting in
21 the audience who work for City
22 government have all said yes.

23 They all understand that what
24 we've done up until now has not
25 worked. They all understand that a

1 big part of what has been missing in
2 the past has been the community
3 voice. I think one of the biggest
4 things was the young people's voice
5 in all of this, right, because I
6 think it brings a different
7 perspective to the conversation. It
8 brings a different commitment not
9 only from us as electeds, but from
10 all of those folks who work in City
11 government because that's their want
12 and we have a responsibility to them.
13 We have a responsibility to their
14 families. So I think that that is
15 what is different.

16 And you have commitment. All
17 I ask you as providers, as
18 community-based organizations in this
19 community is to give us that
20 opportunity. This young lady said
21 today is another opportunity to make
22 something different and we want to
23 take that opportunity. We just ask
24 to be a partner in that process.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chair

1 recognizes Member Harrity.

2 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: You
3 know, I'm kind of overwhelmed with
4 what's going on here tonight. As
5 been said by you guys, this has been
6 done before. I wasn't up here
7 before. I'm up here now. I can
8 honestly say that me, Sharon, and
9 Quetcy who is our District
10 Councilperson, Squilla who is our
11 District Councilperson, we are going
12 to support them.

13 Everybody up here is ready to
14 do what needs to be done. You have a
15 voice now. We are not -- I'm not
16 going anywhere. I mean, I may not be
17 elected in May, but they got to deal
18 with me until January. And I can
19 guarantee you (inaudible) worse.

20 So with that being said, I
21 appreciate the work that you do. As
22 the boots on the ground, you see
23 what's going on. And I'm not going
24 to disappear. I live at 722 Willard
25 Street. Everybody knows. I put it

1 out there all the time. People
2 always laugh and say, well, you put
3 your home address on things, aren't
4 you afraid somebody is going to come
5 to your house. And I say, I live in
6 Kensington, let them come to my
7 house. I'd love them to see what I
8 have to see every day and what the
9 kids and seniors in my neighborhood
10 have to see.

11 So while we have done this
12 before, I can guarantee you that
13 these people haven't been here
14 before, and we are all here now. And
15 I'm just happy to have Councilman
16 Jones and Councilman Johnson whose
17 neighborhoods actually were kind of
18 like ours a while back and they were
19 able to fight and bring their
20 neighborhood back.

21 And I'm going to fight and
22 we're going to bring this
23 neighborhood back. Quetcy Lozada has
24 got your back. Sharon has got your
25 back. I got your back. This ain't

1 happening any more. Things are going
2 to change.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chair
4 recognizes Member Vaughn.

5 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN:

6 Mr. O'Donnell, while I have empathy
7 for what you've been through in the
8 past, please ask somebody about me.
9 I don't play the games with anyone in
10 my life or in my -- in my
11 professional or personal life. And I
12 don't have to be BS your or gaslight
13 you to believe anything that comes
14 out my mouth.

15 When I say we hear you and
16 we're here to make a difference,
17 believe that. I am not running for
18 re-election. I have nothing to lose.
19 I have served this City for 35 years
20 of my life, and I'm not going
21 anywhere either. And you can ask a
22 lot of people in this room about me
23 and my reputation of providing
24 services to the City of Philadelphia.

25 I am not afraid. And I need

1 you to give us a chance. I get
2 offended when somebody says that I'm
3 full of it, and that's what you said,
4 but we'll prove you wrong.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
6 Member Vaughn.

7 Member Gauthier.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
9 you, Mr. Chair.

10 I wanted to thank all of you
11 for your tremendous public service to
12 this neighborhood and just everything
13 that you do on a daily basis to serve
14 everyone that's trying to live and
15 survive here.

16 I have a question for
17 Ms. Post. I really appreciated the
18 very sort of concrete recommendations
19 that you offered. I had a question
20 about one of your recommendations. I
21 want to get clarity on the need to
22 expand the City's capacity for
23 inpatient rehab. Can you just
24 clarify for me what does the City's
25 current inpatient rehab capacity look

1 like and how should we be thinking
2 about expanding that capacity to help
3 what's going on here in Kensington?

4 MS. POST: I think it's not
5 just a number of beds that are
6 available, but it's also being able
7 to get a person in them. A lot of
8 times we'll have somebody come that's
9 (inaudible) they've decided that
10 they're ready for rehab, but there's
11 just so much -- it's very complicated
12 and very hard to actually find a
13 place that will take a patient,
14 especially if they're uninsured and
15 don't have the ability to pay. But
16 we do find them, but it's just very
17 hard.

18 And I think if we wanted
19 people to get into a place of help
20 for themselves, that's what we'll
21 need, making an easier pathway for
22 them.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
24 Mr. Chair?

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Do we
2 have anybody from Public Health or
3 MDO that could speak to this issue of
4 rehab capacity and how the City is
5 thinking about expanding it or if the
6 City is thinking about expanding it?

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, there
8 is someone from Public Health.
9 Please come to the witness stand and
10 state your name for the record.

11 (Witness approached
12 Witness table.)

13 DR. BOWEN: Hi. I'm Jill
14 Bowen, Commissioner --

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can we
16 switch mics.

17 DR. BOWEN: How's that?

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Much
19 better.

20 DR. BOWEN: First of all,
21 thank you for having this hearing
22 today, this listening session. I'm
23 Dr. Jill Bowen, Commissioner of the
24 Department of Behavioral Health and
25 Intellectual Disability Services.

1 There is capacity. We've been
2 expanding a bit. We've been doing
3 that this year pretty intensively.

4 We've also been standing up
5 really innovative programs that break
6 down barriers to access, including
7 programs that are especially created
8 so that people who have wounds from
9 the intensive Xylazine impact can get
10 their rehab. We also have programs
11 now that can help people who are on
12 IV antibiotics to be able to begin
13 their rehab. All of these are
14 barriers that are breaking down one
15 after the other after the other after
16 the other.

17 As far as access for people
18 who don't have insurance, we have the
19 BHS. It's absolutely created exactly
20 to provide the services for people
21 who are uninsured, so that is not a
22 barrier if they're uninsured. And if
23 they're on Medicaid, that's why we
24 have Community Behavioral Health in
25 Philadelphia, then they should be

1 able to have access.

2 If anybody is having any
3 difficulty with access, they should
4 be reaching out to us, especially
5 Esperanza or any of the programs.
6 I'll tell you what I'm more concerned
7 about is the workforce and being able
8 to have the staffing that we need in
9 all of these programs. This is
10 amazing when there's staff that are
11 talking about what their experiences
12 are on the ground. We hear that a
13 lot from the people who are working
14 in the neighborhood, and of course
15 from the residents in the
16 neighborhood.

17 So any support we can get
18 from City Council, I know we've been
19 talking with you all a lot to help
20 support the providers that are doing
21 this unbelievable, incredible work.
22 But we do have capacity, we've been
23 breaking down barriers left and right
24 over this past year and a half and
25 have also increased the number of

1 beds in the inpatient rehab and
2 expanded the type of care we can
3 provide to address the realities on
4 the ground.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: So I
6 hear often in the situation where
7 there's like a mismatch or a gap
8 between what people in a community or
9 what the providers are saying and
10 then what the City is saying. So I'm
11 wondering there probably needs to be
12 a more specific conversation about
13 the access to rehab, but that also
14 leads me to question what regular
15 contact is there between providers
16 and community members and agencies of
17 the City to talk about what resources
18 and services are available and how
19 they're working on the ground.

20 And that's all I have,
21 Mr. Chair.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
23 question. Good question.

24 DR. BOWEN: There's lots and
25 lots and lots of effort. We're

1 talking about door-to-door effort,
2 getting materials out, palm cards,
3 all sorts of efforts to get
4 information out through multiple
5 modalities. There are PSAs running
6 constantly telling people about the
7 way to access services night and day.
8 As you know, there's posters up.

9 There's trauma cards that are
10 delivered, thousands of them across
11 the City to many locations. There
12 are websites and social media. So
13 there's many, many, many, many
14 efforts to get that information out
15 to people. Still there is a question
16 that people have. And as much as we
17 are trying to remove from the
18 equation I don't know what to do,
19 there is still a lot of that out
20 there.

21 So we are trying -- we don't
22 sit and say, oh, well, we've done
23 that. We try another approach,
24 another approach, another approach.
25 So beginning what we call TEC, TEC

1 for Trauma, Equity and Community
2 which is going to community to
3 community to community to talk to the
4 people around the table who can also
5 further get the word out, the people
6 from the community who can spread
7 this information out because we want
8 people to have access to all of our
9 robust treatment programs and also
10 going provider-to-provider, which
11 we've already begun doing, to make
12 sure that people who are using the
13 services, people who are providing
14 services, people who live in the
15 community that we serve, that
16 everybody has the same information.

17 And as I said, multiple
18 modalities where we've done a lot of
19 these very intense focus groups to
20 try to figure out what the message
21 from community to community is,
22 because not every community obviously
23 speaks the same languages, processes
24 the same information the same way.
25 We need to communicate to people in

1 the way that they want to be
2 communicated to. So I can say
3 something, but that doesn't mean that
4 the person has heard something or
5 that I've said it in the way that's
6 most meaningful or that I'm the right
7 messenger for that particular
8 message.

9 So we take all of this very,
10 very seriously because this is at the
11 core of the work that we do, so
12 that's our promise as DBHIDS. That's
13 my promise. Just like you are making
14 your promises that we do not rest, we
15 do not rest. We never stop, and we
16 never stop thinking, we never stop
17 innovating. We never stop trying
18 because there's a lot of work to be
19 done.

20 And just like you, we're so
21 impressed with these young people.
22 We already have established a youth
23 group, and we want to invite these
24 folks to be a part of it. So thank
25 you.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
2 Member Harrity.

3 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I have a
4 follow-up for you. You never
5 actually gave us the number of beds
6 that are available. I'd like to know
7 that. I'd also like to know what is
8 the time frame for them being in the
9 program? Is it 30 days, 60 days, 90
10 days? Because while for some forms
11 of addiction 30, 60 days may be okay,
12 but this stuff here, the fentanyl and
13 the tranq and all, it takes longer to
14 get that out of their system.

15 So is there any avenues for
16 longer-term treatment I guess is what
17 I'm asking? And also, I would like
18 to know the number of beds that
19 are --

20 DR. BOWEN: Yeah. I'll get
21 you that number of beds. I don't
22 have that off the top of my head.
23 But I can tell you that we do have
24 spots so that people can get into the
25 program. The barriers that we're

1 hearing, the access, those are the
2 things that we're breaking down.

3 So we know a lot of them and
4 we have removed a lot of them, but
5 there are then others that we don't
6 know and we need to break that down
7 because it should be very, very easy
8 getting in. As you know, you want to
9 act immediately. So one of the
10 things that we've done to try to make
11 it easier to get in is put assessors
12 on the ground, right, so you don't
13 have to stop, have an assessment, go
14 some place else. By then you've lost
15 the person. They've already walked
16 out. They're done.

17 So we've expanded our ability
18 to do that, right, to get them in.
19 So we do have capacity trying to get
20 people in exactly when they're ready
21 when they need to be there. And the
22 assessments are one of the big ways
23 in which we do that. So we'll get
24 you the actual number. As I said, we
25 do have capacity. Again, concerned

1 about the workforce.

2 As far as how long people can
3 stay, with some of the more complex
4 issues they are staying longer. The
5 program I talked about, which is the
6 first one, I have to say the state is
7 very, very excited about (inaudible)
8 which is for people who have wounds
9 that require acute hospital inpatient
10 stay, for medical care they're not
11 getting their rehab then, we know
12 that moment, and then they stay
13 longer than they need to there
14 because they're on IV antibiotics.

15 Well, we have figured out a
16 blended financial model for
17 sustainment. We figured out a
18 programming model and how we are
19 running a program that shifts them
20 into rehab even while they are on
21 their IV antibiotics. We figured out
22 a way to sustain it, and everybody is
23 pretty interested and excited about
24 it across the Commonwealth because
25 it's a model they haven't seen

1 before. So that's what I mean by we
2 don't stop, we don't stop. And they
3 of course will need longer stays than
4 others.

5 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

6 Absolutely. Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Member
8 Johnson.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yeah,
10 thank you. Just a brief comment. On
11 one for Casey O'Donnell, just talking
12 about something I think is very
13 relevant regarding this conversation,
14 is just making sure as we move
15 forward, the key stakeholders and the
16 leadership here in the City
17 Philadelphia in partnership with our
18 Councilmembers are at the table and
19 are on the same page when it comes to
20 the overall strategy in addressing
21 the particular issues that are taking
22 place inside this community, rather
23 it be from the intervention
24 standpoint, rather it be from the
25 prevention standpoint or even a law

1 enforcement standpoint.

2 All of the key stakeholders
3 have to be at the same table with a
4 common goal and a common mission, and
5 that's to make sure that these
6 children and these neighbors and
7 these families in this community are
8 safe irregardless of our ideologies,
9 right, because the common goal has to
10 be taking this community back.

11 Yes, you're right. I was
12 here in 2011 at another school when I
13 first became a Councilperson about
14 this very same issue. So we're going
15 to move forward with our new
16 leadership, right. It has to be at
17 least from my perspective either
18 monthly meetings, let me change that,
19 weekly meetings, weekly meetings,
20 right, with a dashboard and a
21 scorecard on how we're making
22 progress in a variety of different
23 areas that are impacting this
24 community.

25 But most importantly, it

1 can't be everybody in City
2 government. It has to be in
3 partnership with the community to
4 make sure we're moving forward in the
5 right direction. And so, that was
6 the key points that you made, and I
7 just wanted to comment on that as it
8 relates to how we're going to be
9 working in partnerships and moving
10 forward because it has to be a
11 considered effort.

12 Even talking to my colleague,
13 we're not even talking about the
14 enforcement of blocks being rented
15 out to drug dealers. There's a whole
16 different conversation that fuels
17 some of the things that we're seeing
18 taking place inside the community
19 from an enforcement standpoint, so
20 everybody has to be on the same page
21 as it relates to how we're addressing
22 the issue.

23 And to also Bryan Belknap,
24 correct?

25 MR. BELKNAP: (Nodded

1 affirmatively).

2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: It's
3 critically important that we look at
4 the trauma that our young people are
5 experiencing who are living in this
6 part of Kensington, right, but it's
7 also happening all throughout the
8 City of Philadelphia because hurt
9 people hurt people, right. Some
10 people pick up habits based upon what
11 they see, right, going to and from
12 school. So that trauma-informed
13 piece is so critically important and
14 it has to be intense.

15 But also, hopefully what
16 comes out as well is all City
17 agencies in the City of Philadelphia
18 has to address this issue with a
19 sense of urgency because there's a
20 variety of issues taking place in the
21 City of Philadelphia. And to be
22 upfront, that's not going to be
23 totally changed overnight. It's
24 going to take hard work and digging
25 deep and putting your foot in the

1 ground and making sure that we
2 address this issue all on one accord.

3 And so, I just wanted to
4 respond based upon those two comments
5 that were made, but thank all three
6 of you for taking time out of your
7 schedule and participating and
8 providing testimony.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: And I
11 just want to say one more thing to
12 everyone here, reach out to us. Let
13 us treat you like (inaudible). My
14 telephone number at City Hall is
15 215-686-3450.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Give
17 them your cell number.

18 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: I'm
19 trying to get back to you in less
20 than 12 hours with some type of
21 response, if not a solution. We get
22 back to you. I pride myself on
23 constituents (inaudible), and my team
24 understands that it's important and
25 they will respond or they got to deal

1 with me. So don't think that that
2 type of response or service is only
3 catered to one section of the City.
4 You're eligible for it too. Give me
5 a call.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
7 Mr. O'Donnell, you wanted to respond?

8 MR. O'DONNELL: If I can
9 respond very quickly --

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Get the
11 mic.

12 MR. O'DONNELL: If I can just
13 add quickly, one, it's not to
14 disrespect anybody here. It's not
15 just a list of interventions, right.
16 We actually have to agree on a
17 resident-driven, trauma-informed
18 comprehensive plan and then also set
19 boundaries around that plan.

20 So for example, everyone in
21 this community whether they're
22 supporting people in their addiction
23 that are unhoused or they're
24 residents that's frustrated, everyone
25 here agrees that everybody deserves

1 safety, right. That includes people
2 that are in the narcotics trade. So
3 if you have 900 guys in the
4 neighborhood, and that's about the
5 calculation that are on corners, that
6 means we need 1,000 jobs, right.

7 So we have to decide what
8 problem we're solving for, create a
9 plan around it and get everybody on
10 board for that plan and stick to it,
11 and we're here to do it for you and
12 with you. But we actually have to do
13 that. That means if you're going to
14 have wound care, everybody decides
15 where that wound care is happening,
16 but then it can't happen anywhere
17 else, right.

18 If you're going to give out
19 food, let's all decide where people
20 can eat, but then it can't happen
21 anywhere else, right. And nobody
22 wants to stop people doing work if
23 they think it's God's work or they're
24 doing it from their heart, but we
25 have to be able to set some

1 boundaries around this, and that
2 includes creating safety for
3 everybody.

4 The last thing I want to say,
5 and I'm telling you this as a
6 clinical psychologist with a
7 specialization in trauma, you can't
8 teach trauma while people are getting
9 retraumatized. You can't ask a child
10 to feel what the real normal feeling
11 would be when they see someone dying,
12 because if they felt that every day,
13 think about the emotional impact. So
14 we have to figure out what problem
15 we're solving for and creativity for
16 everybody.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well said.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 Squilla would like to be recognized.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I want
21 to piggyback on what Councilmember
22 Johnson said. It has to be a united
23 approach. We can't work in silos any
24 longer. Silos will not work. We
25 have an opportunity and Council came

1 up with their position, public safety
2 position, and the Administration and
3 I know they weren't supportive of it,
4 but the job of that person was to
5 coordinate and collaborate with every
6 department in the City of
7 Philadelphia, and yet maybe there is
8 somebody who's supposed to be doing
9 that now and it's not happening.

10 This will enforce the issue
11 of people needing to work together,
12 whether they agree or not. The
13 reason why we have so many beds
14 available -- and I'm not sure that's
15 true because I've walked with people
16 and we took them to places where they
17 said there was not a bed available --
18 but if the reason we might have beds
19 available is because we have
20 programs, we have a (inaudible)
21 program where we go and offer warm
22 handoffs, right, and we do that and
23 we do it to help people. But then
24 there's no consequence if they don't
25 go and follow up on those warm

1 handoffs.

2 We have AMP Court that we set
3 up, right. We have AMP Court where
4 people who then have chances to go
5 into a court system that could offer
6 services, but we don't send people
7 over to AMP Court. So we need to
8 work together as a universe, as a
9 City and understanding that we don't
10 even have to agree on everything.
11 One thing we do agree is with public
12 safety, and that's what this position
13 is.

14 There's a question on the
15 ballot in this election is to allow
16 this position to be started in the
17 Administration. And so, we do have
18 an opportunity to start this. And
19 that person's job would be to
20 coordinate efforts. We went to
21 Trenton this year and what we learned
22 from them is something different that
23 we didn't do is every department
24 worked on what they were doing
25 together on public safety, how they

1 dealt with trauma, how they dealt
2 with cleaning streets, how they dealt
3 with Parks & Rec, with every
4 department working and meeting and
5 then coming up with a plan. And it
6 was driven by community, right.

7 It's not that difficult. We
8 can do this. We have the people on
9 the street that see it day-in and
10 day-out. We need to rely on them to
11 have them work with us so that
12 everybody knows what everybody else
13 is doing. And so, we have to stop
14 silos, we have to work together.
15 You're going to hear that time and
16 time again. And the people in the
17 community know what we need to do.
18 We need to follow that direction.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
21 The researchers are in this room.
22 And if we are able to work together
23 better, we can solve this problem.

24 THE CLERK: Councilmember
25 Jones, the final panel will be Marnie

1 Aument-Loughrey, Chair of the
2 Kensington Independent Civic
3 Association.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
5 so much for your testimony.

6 THE CLERK: Alfred
7 Klosterman, Harrowgate Civic
8 Association.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
10 Please come to the witness stand.

11 THE CLERK: And also, Shannon
12 Farrell, the President of the
13 Harrowgate Civic Association.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
15 Welcome, welcome. Thank you for your
16 patience. State your name for the
17 record and begin your testimony.

18 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY:
19 (Inaudible).

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Switch up.

21 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY: Is it
22 working now?

23 (Yes.)

24 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY: Thank
25 you, Council, for coming here. My

1 name is Marnie Aument-Loughrey. I'm
2 the Democratic Ward Leader of the
3 33rd Ward and I'm the Chair of
4 Kensington Independent Civic
5 Association. Yes, Councilman Jones,
6 you just made the connection.

7 For anybody not sitting
8 there, Councilman Harrity is my other
9 half. We have been together for 16
10 years now. I moved him up in the
11 world from South Philly. I'm sorry,
12 Mike. I don't think there's one
13 person in this room from any of the
14 Managing Directors, the Behavioral
15 Health or the Police Department that
16 do not know who I am. I have fought
17 hard in court -- DA Krasner, you know
18 who I am too.

19 I have fought with plenty of
20 yous. I have argued with plenty of
21 yous. But when I'm doing that, I'm
22 doing that for my community. I have
23 lived at 720 East Willard Street. My
24 parents moved in there 1970. In 1992
25 when I separated from my first

1 husband, I came back and I live at
2 722 East Willard Street now with
3 Councilman Harrity. I raised my two
4 children there. My four siblings and
5 I were raised there. I worked for
6 Senator Sharif Street.

7 My sister is a lieutenant in
8 the Philadelphia Police Department.
9 My brother was an electrician until
10 he passed, and my sister is a
11 respiratory therapist at Temple
12 Hospital. My 36-year-old son is an
13 EMT for Einstein Medical, and my
14 daughter works for the IRS. We are
15 the products of Kensington. That is
16 what Kensington is. That is what
17 Kensington offers.

18 I have a 14-year-old grandson
19 that will not come out of the house
20 unless he checks his Citizen's app.
21 If we're out and we get off 95, he
22 checks the Citizen's app. I have
23 Chief Inspector McCarrick. I have
24 Captain Wheeler. I have Captain
25 Vaughn(ph). I have Inspector Lucas.

1 They are my friends. They are my
2 helpers.

3 Every community meeting when
4 they want to beat up on our police
5 department, I stand and I defend them
6 every time because it's not their
7 fault and it's not Commissioner
8 Outlaw's fault that their hands are
9 tied. It is top of Administration's
10 fault. Thankfully after May 16th he
11 will no longer be there. It will
12 take to January, but we will have
13 somebody new.

14 I give every Councilperson
15 sitting up there right now a pass
16 because none of you were here except
17 Councilman Squilla three years ago
18 when we had our meeting at Harrowgate
19 Civic Association in the PAL Center.
20 Councilman Squilla was there then,
21 and District Krasner was there when I
22 chased him out of the building
23 because I didn't like his answers,
24 not personal. He has his opinion. I
25 have mine. But I live here.

1 I asked them then to move
2 into this District. I asked
3 everybody -- where were we at
4 Shannon?

5 MS. FARRELL: (Inaudible).

6 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY: Take
7 your families and move them here.
8 Bring your wife, your children, your
9 lover, your grandchildren. Move into
10 Kensington for a month. See what we
11 live with for a month. Don't drive
12 through our neighborhood. Walk
13 through our neighborhood.

14 Our biggest thing is putting
15 out fires. Councilman Jones, you
16 talked about the encampment. That's
17 one very small encampment. We
18 removed how many off of the Avenue,
19 Shannon, and they come back again.
20 You know how they remove them? It's
21 like getting somebody out a house
22 from Sheriff's sale. They post it,
23 they take them to court.

24 I have Municipal Court Judge
25 Dugan sitting back there. I worked

1 with AMP Court with him. AMP Court
2 worked wonderfully. We need it back.
3 We need it up and going. He is one
4 of the best judges when it comes to
5 AMP Court. We put how many people
6 into help.

7 But you know what the problem
8 with putting them into a rehab is?
9 Do you know what the problem with
10 putting into a safe handoff is? They
11 can't get a cigarette. If they walk
12 out to get a cigarette, they're
13 thrown out of the program. You
14 cannot expect them to quit alcohol,
15 quit drugs and then quit smoking all
16 in the same day. It's impossible.

17 You want to talk about
18 trauma. Our kids have PTSD. They
19 are walking over bodies laying there.
20 They're seeing things that they
21 should not see. When my grandson was
22 9, he seen a man injecting in his
23 penis. That's reprehensible. You
24 can't unsee it. Our children, our
25 future is being traumatized daily

1 here in this community.

2 On Saturday we had a shooting
3 at G and Madison. They rang out at
4 the 700 block of Willard Street. All
5 they did was told the kids to get out
6 of the street. The kids didn't come
7 back out until four hours. Saturday
8 was a beautiful day. They should
9 have been out riding their bikes and
10 playing outside.

11 If this was Grays Ferry,
12 South Philly, Overbrook, you would
13 not be having this. I could not see
14 this happening in Overbrook Farms
15 where Bob Brady lives. I am
16 asking -- I'm giving a pass to
17 Councilwoman Lozada, Councilwoman
18 Vaughn and Councilman Harrity because
19 they ain't gotten in here until
20 November, and I'm giving a pass to
21 Councilman Driscoll because he didn't
22 start until June. But the other
23 Councilpeople that are up for
24 re-election, we have been asking, we
25 have been begging, we have been

1 screaming, we have been yelling.

2 This has been going on for almost 10
3 years now.

4 Ten years ago we did
5 McPherson Library with the Flyer
6 Foundation. \$200,000 was put into
7 that playground that the children
8 cannot use outside because it is
9 overtaken by the opioid epidemic.
10 I'm not talking homeless. A homeless
11 person is someone that lost their job
12 and lost their home. That's
13 homeless. The people out there are
14 choosing this.

15 They chose it the first time
16 they stuck that needle in their arm.
17 They chose it the second time, the
18 third time and the fourth time.
19 After that, they no longer have a
20 choice. They can't make a conscious
21 decision. We need to make that
22 decision for them. It's that plain.
23 It's that simple. They cannot
24 mentally and physically make that
25 choice for themselves.

1 Dave Malloy, he comes to my
2 meetings. He's sitting there, he
3 does I don't know how many Merakey
4 handoffs. But he will tell you, you
5 can't expect them to make that choice
6 on their own. They don't have the
7 capacity or the capability. I am not
8 (inaudible). Everybody has someone
9 in their family or knows somebody
10 that is touched by this epidemic.

11 They said COVID was a
12 pandemic. We have that going on
13 right now here. It's not just
14 Philadelphia. It's not just
15 Pennsylvania. This is going on
16 across every part of our state, every
17 part of our country. We need to
18 (inaudible). Philadelphia is the
19 first city. We are known for where
20 we started. This country started
21 here. Let's start fixing this
22 problem and let the other people see
23 how it's done.

24 I know people worry about
25 civil rights, but our civil rights

1 are being jeopardized. And you know
2 what, they don't have the choice to
3 make this choice for themselves.
4 They wouldn't even know it if we did
5 violate it. I'm sorry. They don't
6 have that mental capacity anymore.

7 Nobody here wants to stop
8 them from getting help, nobody. But
9 we are losing our children worrying
10 about them. Our children are
11 traumatized. Our businesses are
12 closed. What we are asking for is
13 not hard and it should not be
14 unimaginable. What we need is your
15 help. We're asking for it for this
16 last time. We need it.

17 And I'm hoping, Councilman,
18 the next time you come into this
19 neighborhood walk with me. Driving
20 through it doesn't give you the
21 actual impact that walking through it
22 does. And after that, maybe if you
23 come back three to six months, you'll
24 see a change because you'll be able
25 to have the opportunity to understand

1 what's needed. But I do thank you
2 for coming here instead of having
3 this meeting in City Hall.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: I think
5 I'll be safer walking with her than
6 walking with you. She's a tough one.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I have
8 to go home with her.

9 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY: And he
10 asked me to be nice.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: You are
12 nice.

13 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY: I
14 thought so.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Mr. Glass,
16 who do we have?

17 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman, our
18 next witness is Alfred Klosterman,
19 Harrowgate Civic Association.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
21 for your patience. State your name
22 for the record and begin your
23 testimony.

24 MR. KLOSTERMAN: My name is
25 Alfred Klosterman. I live on a block

1 in the Harrowgate section, a very
2 troubled block and very troubled
3 community due to the opioid crisis.
4 There's a very big drug dealing
5 operation up my corner, so I have
6 (inaudible) advantage passing by
7 24/7. On the frequent (inaudible)
8 days, they come in packs of 20 and 30
9 for free drugs. It's awful.

10 Anything left on the porch or
11 sidewalks can be stolen, especially
12 to be sold for drug money. They sit
13 on my steps overnight shooting up, so
14 I need to take their used needles to
15 the curb in the morning. Most days I
16 go to Kensington Avenue early to
17 catch SEPTA. There are more needles
18 and human waste along the way. At
19 the bus stop, more needles and
20 usually (inaudible) addicts around,
21 usually a few prostitutes too.

22 The drug sales on my block
23 have been going on for years. On
24 nice days the four men sell out on
25 the sidewalks. On rainy or cold

1 days, they sell inside the abandoned
2 houses they took over. The addicts
3 have their own abandoned house steps
4 away when they shoot up and pass out.
5 The houses are near the alley, smells
6 horribly of urine. There's trash
7 everywhere. L&I sealed up those
8 houses, but they are immediately
9 opened up again.

10 The drug crews change over
11 time. When the existing dealers are
12 shot, a new crew takes over. This
13 happens once or twice a year. The
14 shootings are usually at night but
15 not always. I've watched a man jump
16 from a stopped car and shoot a dealer
17 who was standing on a porch, dead
18 with one shot. Another time I woke
19 to 18 shots. I saw from my window
20 one of two dealers who had been
21 killed. Police told me he was hit 12
22 times. I had called 911 and watched
23 the two surviving dealers drag him
24 into a car and police pulled up, then
25 they all rushed to the hospital.

1 Another time I woke to 16
2 shots. That was the night my
3 neighbor's 12-year-old daughter died
4 on her front step caught in dealers'
5 crossfire. And, yes, neighbors have
6 confirmed to me (inaudible) even if
7 they're awakened. Another time I was
8 at my computer 8:35 p.m. when there
9 were shots from the corner. That's
10 the night they hit a 5-year-old lying
11 on the couch with his mother, gone
12 through the window frame. I
13 immediately emailed Noelle Foizen of
14 the City's Opioid Response. I told
15 her that I was sitting there shaking,
16 that I couldn't take this anymore,
17 that it was horrible. That's when
18 she wrote back to calm me and offered
19 trauma resources and anything else I
20 needed. Then and now though I just
21 need to (inaudible).

22 I've called and emailed the
23 police many times. I don't know why
24 they haven't been able to help. I've
25 written most of City Councilmembers

1 many times. I don't know why they
2 haven't been able to help either.
3 I'm 72. I'm just seeking to have a
4 decent quality of life. Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

6 THE CLERK: Mr. Chair, our
7 final witness for this evening is
8 Shannon Farrell, President of the
9 Harrowgate Civic Association.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
11 State your name for the record and
12 begin your testimony.

13 MS. FARRELL: My name is
14 Shannon (inaudible).

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: No, it's
16 not working. Can we switch mics?

17 MS. FARRELL: The red
18 button --

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: There we
20 go.

21 MS. FARRELL: I shut it off.
22 My name is Shannon Farrell. I'm
23 President of Harrowgate Civic
24 Association. I -- you know, I'm
25 going to sound an awful lot like

1 Casey, but I don't care if I offend
2 you.

3 We've done this over and
4 over, so I really hope that you're
5 new and that you have until January
6 so I'm going to hold you accountable
7 for trying to hold us accountable for
8 calling you out because you have
9 colleagues sitting there, their
10 inactions where you should be
11 directing your frustration. The fact
12 that we're still living like this is
13 where you should be directing your
14 frustration. Never ask somebody
15 who's testifying on the community
16 who's working every day. So --
17 sorry.

18 We've done this over and
19 over, and we've heard a lot of talk
20 from people. You're not the same
21 Councilmembers that we usually sit
22 with. It was Cindy Bass, it was
23 Helen Gym, it was Derek Green, it was
24 Councilwoman Sanchez at the time
25 so --

1 MS. AUMENT-LOUGHREY: Allan
2 Domb.

3 MS. FARRELL: Yeah, Allan
4 Domb. So I hope that you do stick
5 to what you say. We want to believe
6 that because our children testified
7 today, which thank you, Councilwoman
8 Lozada. It was very important. It
9 was the first time that they have
10 done that. They're scared to speak
11 out. So I'm glad that they did.

12 Many times we sit in meetings
13 and people try to tell us that the
14 most vulnerable citizens of our
15 community are those who are living in
16 the streets that are addicted. And
17 you'll find more people to contact
18 you about them. But always remember
19 and push back, the most vulnerable
20 citizens in our community are the
21 children like the children that
22 testified today who have anxiety
23 about walking their little sister to
24 school. They are the most
25 vulnerable, the most important.

1 And if you prioritize them,
2 you should be able to help everything
3 else because helping the addicts in
4 the neighborhood would help them.
5 Helping with businesses staying open
6 or putting their lights on, getting
7 more of an active community, making
8 it safe, (inaudible) parks. Now, we
9 need people for our corridors. We
10 have plans for this. Supporting
11 community plans, supporting residents
12 will accomplish this.

13 Safe corridors for schools,
14 to me that always seems like a
15 failure. The whole neighborhood has
16 to be safe. I see kids walk out
17 every day to have to walk over
18 needles, human feces, local drug
19 dealers so that they don't have to
20 dodge bullets. Sometimes they can
21 walk one block to school and they go
22 out of their way to avoid the corner
23 for a group of people who are there
24 to buy drugs in the morning, for
25 example. That's scary for kids

1 walking to school. You see 50, 60
2 people coming down the street to get
3 free samples. They walk right over
4 you. There has to be priority moving
5 forward.

6 We reprioritized everything
7 else for seven years. First, we have
8 to help the users and if we
9 prioritize them, it will help you,
10 but it didn't. Because the users,
11 they're not accepting help. There's
12 many reasons why, but we have to
13 prioritize the residents. And that's
14 what we're doing. And that's why we
15 have a plan to do.

16 And I'm glad you all are
17 sitting up there. We will hold
18 you -- I will hold you accountable.
19 I will not let you walk away from
20 us. We're very excited about having
21 three Councilmembers from the area to
22 support Councilman Squilla who has
23 been with us the whole time.

24 If you want to know why
25 things have not worked, you should

1 ask him. He's been trying to make it
2 work but hasn't. I still hold him
3 accountable. I email him. My whole
4 entire email, I email him personally.
5 I worked for Quetcy for years. Now,
6 it's going to be a different
7 situation. I'm going to hold you all
8 accountable because something has to
9 be done. Even if you're going with
10 us and supporting us, if we see that
11 somebody's not helping you, we'll
12 understand that as long as you're
13 with us and we go forward.

14 And it has to be for the
15 kids. It has to be about our kids,
16 because today their future is in what
17 we do and what we decide is in our
18 hands. And our futures are going to
19 be in theirs very soon. So let's
20 take care of them, make sure we raise
21 compassionate kids that have safe
22 communities to live in that are
23 getting a good education because
24 that's the next step.

25 We don't have the best

1 schools, they don't have the best
2 curriculums and (inaudible). But
3 getting to school safely is a
4 priority. Being able to use your
5 local library is a priority. So we
6 really need this panel looking
7 forward to. That's the only reason
8 why I have a little bit of hope, is
9 because there are three members I
10 know. Sharon's a fellow Ward leader.
11 So is Councilman Johnson, so is
12 Councilman Jones. So on all levels
13 I'll see you.

14 So I just -- I think
15 everybody said it. There was so much
16 that was said. I'm not going to pile
17 it on. I'm going to say I'm the
18 person that's going to hold you
19 accountable. I can track you down
20 wherever you are. And don't ever get
21 mad at us for getting mad at you
22 because your colleagues put you in
23 that position. So thank you very
24 much.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: We will

1 never get mad at you for getting mad
2 at us, as long as we get stuff done.
3 That's what we're (inaudible).

4 MS. FARRELL: Absolutely.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you
6 like closing remarks?

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I just
8 want to take the opportunity to say
9 thank you to all of you who testified
10 today. Thank you for sharing your
11 stories and how you're impacted on a
12 daily basis with everything that is
13 happening here in the Kensington
14 community.

15 I'd like to say thank you to
16 everyone from City government who
17 came and participated, who heard for
18 themselves from young people and the
19 community residents about the -- the
20 positive effect from the police
21 department who are consistently
22 present and who is (inaudible).

23 Thank you to Conwell and the
24 Conwell family for opening your
25 doors. We also appreciate you. I'd

1 like to recognize the staff who's
2 Councilman Jones' staff that put all
3 of this together. Thank you so much
4 for all of your work that do. And I
5 look forward to continuing this
6 conversation.

7 Like my colleague said, this
8 is not the last time that we will be
9 here. We will find a different place
10 to visit, because to me it's
11 important I hear from you every day.
12 I live here. I'm raising my family
13 here, so I see it every day. I
14 experience what you experience on a
15 daily basis.

16 But it's important for me to
17 continue to bring my colleagues out
18 to hear from you directly as opposed
19 to what I'm hearing from you. So I
20 plan to continue to bring government
21 to you in the community so that they
22 can get a firsthand look of what you
23 go through on a daily basis. I
24 appreciate every single one of you.
25 Thank you for coming out.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
2 Harrity.

3 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Well, I
4 want to thank everybody that
5 testified today. Coming from the
6 neighborhood, I know what it is to
7 actually come out and speak up. It
8 can be dangerous. So I applaud you.
9 And kids, please keep your heads up.
10 You guys are great. I always say and
11 I tell my colleagues all the time
12 that you would be amazed if you gave
13 my kids the same as every other
14 neighborhood. And I'm not going to
15 stop fighting for you. And I know my
16 colleagues are not going to stop
17 fighting.

18 As I said, it's different
19 now. I'm here. I live here. I'm
20 not going anywhere. I already
21 decided to fight. So you have my
22 support, and I'm going to continue to
23 be here. And I would absolutely love
24 to come speak at the school to talk
25 to the kids whenever you're ready,

1 please.

2 And listen, this is just a
3 testament to you. These kids are
4 more articulate than I am. You know,
5 it was really something. It was a
6 sense of pride for me because that's
7 what I talked about. I talked about
8 our kids every day and how they are,
9 achieving under circumstances where
10 others, including myself as an adult,
11 would not. And it just goes to their
12 resilience and it just goes to their
13 teachers, what they are learning. So
14 thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
16 Squilla.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I'm just
18 going to say thank you. Thank you
19 for being here. Thank you for
20 speaking up and knowing that, yes, we
21 need to hold everybody accountable,
22 everybody. I've been here for a long
23 time. I've been to a lot of these
24 meetings and you heard the same
25 things over and over again.

1 We hear good intentions.
2 They say the path to hell is paved
3 with good intentions, right. We
4 don't want to go to hell. Intentions
5 are (inaudible), right. We need
6 action. We need action and we need
7 everybody to work together.

8 So thank you, Councilmember
9 Lozada, for your leadership,
10 Councilmember Jones. It's really
11 important to know that you need --
12 you can't do this by yourself, we
13 can't do it by ourselves. We need
14 everybody to be on the same page.
15 You can't blame anybody, but we need
16 to hold everybody accountable. So
17 thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
19 Member.

20 Councilman Johnson.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Well,
22 first and foremost, I want to thank
23 Chairman Councilman Curtis Jones and
24 I want to thank Councilmember Quetcy
25 Lozada for making this a number one

1 priority as she arrived in City
2 Council.

3 And I just want to say as we
4 wrap up -- and I have an 8-year-old
5 and a 6-year-old at home and they are
6 very, very observant, very, very
7 observant about the world that's
8 going on around us, our neighborhood
9 that's going on around us, about
10 what's going on in the City.

11 And so, I just want to
12 refocus this conversation back on our
13 young people and just thank them for
14 stepping up and having the courage to
15 speak their truth. Let's just give
16 them another round of applause.

17 And (inaudible) and I know
18 often times we hear, they still
19 constantly say that our children are
20 our future, but the reality is these
21 children who spoke today, they will
22 be our future leaders. They will be
23 future Councilpeople, future
24 Senators, future Mayors, future
25 doctors, future lawyers that's coming

1 from this community.

2 So I just want to thank our
3 young people for stepping up to the
4 plate, and most importantly to our
5 educators because you're on the front
6 line day-in and day-out and you
7 deserve all the support that you can
8 receive as it relates to protecting
9 our most precious commodity in the
10 City of Philadelphia, and that's our
11 children. So thank you very much.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
13 Member Johnson.

14 Mr. Glass, you have an
15 announcement about testimony?

16 THE CLERK: Yes. In order to
17 sign up for public comment, there are
18 two email addresses on the board
19 outside the lobby. You can send an
20 email to both of those email
21 addresses requesting to be heard at
22 our next hearing. That will be June
23 7th at 5:30 p.m., here at Conwell
24 Middle School.

25 So please make sure that you

1 take down those emails addresses,
2 send an email to make sure that you
3 are signed up for public comment if
4 you wish to sign up for that meeting.
5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So this
7 concludes our public hearing, the
8 Committee on Public Safety. We will
9 stand at recess until June 7th,
10 6:00 p.m. Location to be determined,
11 so this will be a continua -- oh, it
12 will be right here. Thank you.

13 (Committee on Public Safety
14 concluded at 8:15 p.m.)

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

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