COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PROPERTY AND

PUBLIC WORKS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, November 12, 2015
1:20 p.m.

PRESENT:
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON, CHAIR
COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

BILL 150809 - An ordinance authorizing the City's Managing Director or his designee to enter into a cable television franchise renewal agreement with Comcast of Philadelphia, LLC and Comcast of Philadelphia II, LLC, renewing the cable television franchises granted by the City to Comcast for Franchise Areas I, II, III and IV...

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COUNCILMAN HENON: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Again, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. The Committee on Public Property and Public Works is now in session.

Would the Clerk please read the title of the bill.

THE CLERK: Bill No. 150809, an ordinance authorizing the City's Managing Director or his designee to enter into a cable television franchise renewal agreement with Comcast of Philadelphia, LLC and Comcast of Philadelphia II, LLC, renewing the cable television franchises granted by the City to Comcast for Franchise Areas I, II, III and IV, under certain terms and conditions.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Again, I'd like to recognize that we have a quorum that is present, and to my right is Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell. To my left is Councilman Greenlee and Councilman Oh. Also present here today

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we have Councilman Dennis O'Brien.

I would like to begin today's hearing by making a short opening statement that will address the procedures and guidelines that we will be using in today's hearing.

For the past three months, our Committee has prepared ourselves for the duty that falls upon this Committee, specifically to review and authorize a cable franchise agreement with Comcast. Before we come to our first witness, let me provide for the record the work that the Committee has already done to prepare itself for the task of ensuring that the citizens of Philadelphia are treated fairly in extending Comcast's right to use the streets of the City of Philadelphia to provide cable services.

First, the Committee examines the Needs Assessment report prepared for the City. The Needs Assessment report sought to document, first, if and how Comcast failed to live up to its existing

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franchise obligations, especially in the area of consumer protection and, secondly, what is the current and the future cable needs for the citizens of Philadelphia.

As we go through this hearing and all the subsequent negotiations, we will be asking ourselves two simple questions. Does the proposal from Comcast make the citizens of Philadelphia whole from past performance/non-performance under the franchise agreement and does this proposal provide a reasonable platform to ensure that the current and future cable needs of the citizens of Philadelphia are met.

After reviewing the Needs Assessment report, we held four full-day briefing sessions to hear from a collection of advocates who have assisted in identifying the City's needs, outside counsel to the Committee to explain what we could demand in the franchise renewal

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versus what types of terms we might require to make good for prior non-performance, Comcast on the way they felt were -- on what they felt were reasonable terms for renewal, and the Administration as to the tentative deal that they reached with Comcast. But I want to make clear that what has been shared with us to date is only an agreement in concept. The agreement has not yet been presented to Council in a formal franchise or legal sentiment language.

Today, we are considering legislation to authorize the City of Philadelphia to enter into a franchise renewal with Comcast. The last time the City Council considered an agreement like this for Comcast was 15 years ago. Because the City of Philadelphia has no -- has so few opportunities to consider agreements like these, this hearing is designated to create time for thoughtful deliberations and conversation

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about key aspects of the proposed agreement.

We will begin with a very brief opening statement from Adel Ebeid from the City's Office of Information and Technology. Adel was the City's lead negotiator for this agreement. Kathleen Sullivan of Comcast. Then we'll have an opportunity to make an opening statement.

We will begin with a series of panel discussions. A copy of the agenda is available on the back table to my left. All of the witnesses listed as a part of the panel topic will be called to sit inside the rail. Each panel topic will begin with a question for the Administration and for Comcast. Once they answer those questions, a group of witnesses will be asked to approach the table to give their testimony.

You will notice that we do not have enough space for everyone at the witness table. So when your name is called, grab a seat in the inside of the

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rail and please wait for your name to be called at the table, and the members of the Committee will then have an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have on the topic.

I am asking each witness to identify themselves, the organizations or company, and whether or not they receive funding from the City or from Comcast. This is meant just to help members understand the various perspectives of the people presenting testimony.

I should note for the record that I received money from both the City of Philadelphia and from Comcast, and I am proud of all their support.

Once we have completed all of the panel discussions, we will allow any member of the public to make a two-minute statement for the record. If you are unable to stay for the entire hearing, you may submit written testimony for the record, and I will ensure that it is distributed to the members of the City

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Council. And if you have any questions about the agenda or the hearing of this format, please see my staff at the back table to my left.

I'd also like to highlight and thank Maria Noh and Serena Roberts from New Foundations Charter School for attending today's hearing and assisting my staff during their annual shadow day. These two bright students have the opportunity to see their elected officials in this body and the issues that we are working on that will directly affect them and the consumers and the citizens of the City of Philadelphia.

So I hope by the end of today's hearing, we are one step closer to leaving a better Philadelphia for those two, and I want to thank them and their classmates for attending here. So if you could stand up, please, Maria and Serena. Are they here?

Well, thank you.

(Applause.)

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COUNCILMAN HENON: They're really doing the work.

Finally, I want to thank the Administration and Comcast for the attention to this issue over the course of the past two years. I would also like to thank my Chief of Staff, Courtney Voss; Tom, who just got new business cards, Holroyd; Jerry Lederer from the legendary Lederer family of Fishtown, who was assisting this Committee and City Council on all professional matters and helping myself and Councilmembers, especially this Committee, through this entire process.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my colleagues and their terrific staff for all the attention and all the hard work on these issues over the past year. It hasn't been easy, but here we are.

I want to reiterate that this process is one that we do not undertake very often. It is our opportunity to bring light to some major challenges and

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issues relating to cable and Internet service. Our goal today is to facilitate the best agreement for the City of Philadelphia.

With that, are there any members who would like to make any opening statements before we begin?

The Chair recognizes Councilman Greenlee.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think you highlighted everything very well. I just wanted to recognize your efforts and the efforts of your staff. As you said, over a year you've been providing information, trying to get us as ready as possible for this hearing. As you said, this is extremely important and this is kind of one shot at it, so we want to make sure we get it right. But you have really prepared us very well, and I very much appreciate it.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Any other

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members?

The Chair recognizes Councilman O'Brien.

COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN:

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and the members of the Committee for your hard work, but I just ponder a question: What would the City of Philadelphia be without Comcast? Whether it's their presence in the community, which is always very visible and sometimes not so visible. They have a very strong footprint in support of our civic missions, our policy agenda, and also supportive of the infrastructure that is important to move the City forward. They also are the only Fortune 50 company located in Philadelphia, and that helps attract and keep a lot of our young people that are attending our universities here and also they are an attraction for other businesses to move in, just like pharmaceutical companies, where you move in next to Comcast, because that's where

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your bread and butter is.

I'd also like to think if a company wanted to come to Philadelphia and build a $1.2 billion building, my God, we would be falling over each other trying to figure out who would take credit for that, who would be the first one meeting with Comcast and saying, We'll do everything for you. That created 20,000 temporary jobs and thousands of permanent jobs.

So the bottom line is, Comcast does contribute economically and philanthropically. Because of Comcast, the City is better. I know but my personal experience that over the years they're going to do what's right but what's practical and possible in this conversation and these negotiations, because that's who they are. But, again, I believe because of Comcast, the City is better.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, Councilman. I appreciate your comments.

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I just want to state for the record that we are here and we understand all the good works that a lot of companies and we understand all the good charitable contributions Comcast does for most neighborhoods in the City of Philadelphia, but we are here to discuss a franchise agreement. So we are going to stick to the franchise agreement and we are going to --

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: -- talk about some of the side agreements and letter conversations on topics that I think Comcast has been great negotiating with.

The Chair also recognizes Councilman Goode for attending. Councilman, would you like to make a statement?

COUNCILMAN GOODE: No.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, thank you for being here.

So any other statements from

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this Committee?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: With that, let's get started.

The Chair would recognize and ask that -- I'm sorry. My apology. The Chair recognizes a new member of the Committee, Maria Quinones-Sanchez to my right.

Clerk, would you read the first panel, please.

We're going to start off with opening statements with the Administration and Comcast. So the Administration, would you please approach the testimony table as well as Comcast and you can start with your opening statements. Please identify yourself for the record and begin with your testimony.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: You may begin.

MR. EBEID: Good afternoon,

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Chairman Bobby Henon and members of the Public Property and Public Works Committee. My name is Adel Ebeid, CIO for the City of Philadelphia, presenting today on behalf of the Administration regarding Bill No. 150809, otherwise known as the Comcast franchise agreement. With me today are members of the City negotiation team. To my right is Michael Athay, Chief Deputy City Solicitor from the Law Department, and immediately behind him to his right is Tom Robinson, President of CBG Communications. Other members of the negotiation team are also available should we need them to come up. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

By way of brief background, Comcast holds franchises from the City to operate a cable television system and provide cable service in each of the City's four franchise areas. I will not go into the number of which communities belong to each franchise area, but we

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made sure that that is in front of you on the written testimony and entered as part of the record.

Franchise Area I expired on October 8, 2015. Franchise Area II expired on August 12, 2015. Franchise Area III expired September 28, 2015 and, finally, Franchise Area IV expired on September 12, 2015.

Just to give you some context of the timeline, over the last two-plus years, under the terms of the Federal Cable Act, the franchisee, in this case Comcast, or the local franchising authority, later on referred to as the LFA, in this case the City, can initiate the franchise renewal process as early as 36 months before expiration of an existing franchise agreement term.

In August or thereabouts, August of 2012, Comcast provided the City with written notice of its intent to renew its franchise agreements, which initiated renewal proceedings. Comcast

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also expressed its desire to reach agreement on a new franchise through informal negotiations.

In order to preserve all of its rights under the federal law, the City was required to officially open a public proceeding to determine the City's cable-related needs and interests. The City officially opened public proceedings in May of 2013 -- I'm sorry; March 2013 by launching a web page phila.gov/cablefranchises announcing the renewal and inviting public comments via a dedicated e-mail address and voice mailbox. The City also issued a press release announcing the start of the proceedings and provided notice to Comcast that the public proceeding has opened.

As part of the renewal process and the public proceedings, best practice calls for the City to conduct a Community Needs Assessment to determine the community's future needs and interests

and review Comcast's past performance. This Needs Assessment also includes an extensive review of public access needs, education access needs, and government access needs. Collectively, these three things often refer to as PEG.

The Community Needs Assessment is critical as a framework for negotiating the renewal of a franchise, because it identifies those cable-related needs that the City can justifiably require Comcast to meet as a condition of the franchise renewal. In April of 2013, the City commissioned a Community Needs Assessment by engaging a consultant, CBG Communications, to assist with the assessment. This is the first time that the City commissioned a Community Needs Assessment of this size and magnitude.

From April 2013 to February 24th of 2015, staff representing the City, CBG, and Comcast met and discussed numerous issues related to customer service, cable system technical review,

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PEG, institutional network, and other cable-related provisions. Numerous meetings with stakeholders also took place during that time. In February 24th of 2015, the City forwarded a copy of the Needs Assessment report to Comcast. The report was also subsequently released publicly and posted on the City website on April 9th of 2015.

It's important to note that although Comcast received a copy of the Needs Assessment report on February 24th, staff from Comcast, the City, CBG began communicating on this since the Needs Assessment process began back in March of 2013.

Weekly meetings and conference calls with Comcast to begin negotiating the terms began immediately following the public release of the Needs Assessment report and continued until literally last night.

During the month of April to May of 2015, the City held six public

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forums throughout various parts of the City to present its findings and collect additional feedback from the public.

In October 29, 2015, Bill No. 150809 referred to Public Property Committee. All in all, between May 20 through November 10 of this year, more than 30 meetings, live and teleconference sessions, between the City and Comcast related directly to renewal negotiations.

I'm going to shift my focus to the Community Needs Assessment itself. The Needs Assessment was wide-ranging, covering numerous community and interest needs within the City. Specifically, the Needs Assessment included a telephone-based residential community survey on cable-related needs and interests, conducted with a random sampling of both Comcast cable television subscribers and non-subscribers, which obtained statistically valid data on City residents' need, interest, attitudes, and opinions related to Comcast cable

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television; a companion online survey as well; a review of public education and government access television needs and interests that included interviews, focused discussions, site visits, reviews of facilities and equipment, and a technical and operational review of Comcast's physical cable television system infrastructure that looked at compliance with cable franchise technical provisions; and, finally, focused discussions, ward groups, meetings, and interviews with a variety of government agency representatives and communications and networking engineers related to potential development of an institutional network. This review focused on the City's current wide area networking experience and visions and needs related to the evolution of the City's network in the future.

The Community Needs Assessment has served as the underpinning for much of the negotiations and the continued

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development of a franchise agreement between the City and Comcast. Specifically to date, this has resulted in Comcast embarking on a citywide physical infrastructure code compliance remediation effort that will result, when completed, in every address in the City being reviewed and remediation of Comcast's plan; substantially enhanced customer service provisions and reporting requirements that will be embodied in a renewed franchise with Comcast; substantial advancement in PEG access delivery methods and financial support over the current cable television franchises; the framework for a managed service institutional network that will provide fiberoptic connectivity in high capacity, connecting more than 225 sites throughout Philadelphia, including park and rec facilities, police and fire stations, health centers, and any facility where municipal services are being conducted.

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Key findings from the Community Needs Assessment report will be discussed later during different sessions in the hearing. It's important to note that the release of the report did not conclude the City's efforts to gather as much feedback as it can from citizens about their needs, interests, and perspectives related to cable service in the City. The Needs Assessment process remains open and will remain open until a franchise agreement is reached and approved.

In closing, the proposed term sheet that you have for review today is the product of extended negotiations between the City and Comcast. The term sheet reflects the City's best efforts in this renewal to address the findings and recommendations in the Community Needs Assessment report to date. It also reflects the City's efforts to incorporate input from various stakeholders. And as with all business negotiations, it's not about getting

everything you want. It's about getting enough of what you want. Bearing in mind the general franchise limitations imposed by the federal law, we believe that we have adequately shaped the significant terms of the next franchise agreement to provide the most benefit to the City and, more importantly, its citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. I'm happy to take questions later on when the session is done.

MS. SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, Committee Chairman Henon, members of City Council, and Council staff. My name is Kathleen Sullivan, Vice President of Government Affairs for Comcast, and I'm joined here by many colleagues in the gallery, but at the table I'm joined by Jim Samaha, who is the Senior Vice President of Operations for the Freedom Region, and Sharon Powell, who needs no introduction, Senior Director of Government Affairs. I'd also like to

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echo what Chairman Henon said about working together for many months and a special thank you to him, Courtney, and Tom for working very closely and making this process very smooth over the last few months.

We are honored to be here this afternoon on behalf of Comcast to support our request to renew our cable franchise agreements with the City. You have our full testimony that we submitted, but Jim and I will provide you with an executive summary.

At the outset, let me say on behalf of Comcast, we are proud to call the City of Philadelphia our home. We started as a community antenna television system headquartered here more than 50 years ago. From our humble beginnings as an entrepreneurial start-up, Comcast has grown into a recognized local leader in media and technology. Today, we are the only Fortune 50 company headquartered in Philadelphia, and our impact we believe

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is felt deeply in the fabric of Philadelphia, both from an economic standpoint and from our extensive commitment to our community.

Over the past 50 years, Comcast has grown from just a few hundred workers to over 8,000 employees at our corporate headquarters and other locations around the City of Philadelphia. Those people also reside in our city and go to church with us and recreate with us. So we're very proud of that fact.

In the past decade, Comcast's cable franchise agreements have generated over $163 million in franchise fees to the City, and we have also made other substantial contributions to Philadelphia through our taxes and our general economic activity. Over the past five years alone, these financial contributions have included over 13 billion in operations and related business activities; over three-quarters of a billion dollars in direct and

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indirect tax revenues; and $42 million in revenues to the School District of Philadelphia, which we are projected to increase to a total of over $269 million between 2015 and 2029, which would cover the terms of this renewal.

The Comcast Center has become a Philadelphia landmark and embodies our investment in the City. Last year we enhanced that long-term commitment to Philadelphia by building the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center. This $1.2 billion, 59-story skyscraper will house a world-class, state-of-the-art media, technology, and innovation center. It will be the largest private investment building development project in the history of not only Philadelphia but of all of Pennsylvania, providing substantial additional economic contributions to the City, including approximately 20,000 temporary jobs during the construction period alone and 2,800 permanent Philadelphia jobs as part

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of our ongoing business operations; $1.73 billion in one-time expenditures within the City during the construction period; and $720 million in expected ongoing annual activity in the City directly and indirectly related to the new center; and also $21.5 million in annual expected City tax revenues.

As a result of its tremendous growth and progress, Comcast has become one of the largest taxpayers to the City and the School District, if not the largest, and the primary driver of economic growth in Philadelphia.

We are also deeply committed to developing a diverse workforce. At year end 2014, our total workforce was 59 percent diverse, and the percentage of new diverse hires across all levels was 69 percent. Thirty-five percent of our workforce are women, 22 percent are African American, 12 percent are Hispanic, and 5 percent are Asian American. Women and people of color

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accounted for 47 percent of all leaders at the Vice President level and above, and one-third of our Board of Directors is minority or female. We recently pledged to hire 10,000 veterans and their families by 2017, roughly 15 to 20 percent of all new employees, adding to approximately 4,200 veterans we have already hired since the year 2012.

We are also proud to say that we have a long working relationship with our community partners and local organizations in Philadelphia, and also we believe that this helps serve the City's needs. In fact, we give nearly 20 percent of our total philanthropic cash contributions to organizations in the City, even though Philadelphia accounts for less than 2 percent of our customers and revenues across America.

Ralph Roberts, the founder of Comcast, personally chose Comcast's first community partner, United Way, in 1963. Fifty-two years later, we still have a

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close relationship with United Way, and in 2015, our local employees have raised more than $1.7 million for the campaign. Today, we work with over 400 local organizations and groups to strengthen the greater Philadelphia community, including Beyond School Walls, Philadelphia Youth Network, Boys and Girls Clubs of Philadelphia, and City Year.

Comcast Cares Day, now in its 14th year, is our annual company-wide commitment to public service. It has become the largest single day of corporate volunteerism in the country. This year Comcast Cares Day drew more than 4,500 Comcast volunteers in Philadelphia alone, working on 38 projects, ranging from digital literacy workshops with People Emergency Center to collaborating with City Year to clean, paint, and beautify the George W. Childs Elementary School. Since 2001, more than 42,000 employee volunteers have worked at

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over 470 project sites, contributing to 254,000 hours of service to our local non-profits.

And Comcast has done more than any entity, private or governmental, to help close the digital divide in Philadelphia and other parts of our country through our widely acclaimed Internet Essentials program. Internet Essentials provides low-cost broadband service to low-income families with school-age children, as well as multiple options to access free digital literacy. When you combine Internet Essentials with Comcast's more than $265 million in projected tax revenues for the School District, the many valuable in-kind services and products that we provide to local schools and libraries every year, and our extensive scholarship, internship, and mentor programs for youth, there's no greater private contributor to education and training of Philadelphia students than Comcast.

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In closing, Comcast is deeply grateful for its longstanding partnership with the City and the people of Philadelphia. We look forward to remaining a vital part of this city as we continue to work, serve, and live alongside each other as colleagues, neighbors, and friends.

Thank you for your time, and it is now my pleasure to turn this over to Jim Samaha, and Jim will give you an overview of Comcast's operations.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Excuse me. Thank you for your testimony.

Jim, we are kind of running against time. If you could summarize your report. I know it's submitted for the record. I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. SAMAHA: Good afternoon, Committee Chair Henon and other members of City Council. As Kathleen mentioned, I'm Jim Samaha, Senior Vice President of

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the Freedom Region, Northeast Division at Comcast. I worked at Comcast for nearly ten years, leaving regional operations, and have over 20 years in the telecommunications industry. I'm honored to appear in support of Comcast's request to renew its non-exclusive cable franchise agreements with the City.

From our corporate headquarters in Philadelphia, Comcast has developed and employed a host of next-generation video and other services and products for our customers across the country. Comcast continues to build and extend a robust, state-of-the-art fiberoptic distribution network in Philadelphia. Over the past five years alone, Comcast has invested more than $270 million in its network here. To help residents and visitors celebrate the recent Papal visit, we also constructed thousands of feet of conduit, placed thousands of feet of fiberoptic cable and coaxial cable, and deployed hundreds of Xfinity WiFi hot

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zones to enable sharing of event videos and images. We will be making even more infrastructure upgrades for the upcoming Democratic National Convention. These ongoing investments will ensure that Philadelphia has the most cutting-edge broadband infrastructure now and into the future.

As our services have become more and more integral to customers' daily lives, we realize that even small inconveniences have become increasingly significant. Comcast is taking several concrete steps to improve the customer experience across the board. We've placed a premium on customers' time by hiring additional technicians, customer care representatives, and service center employees, shortening wait times and narrowing our service windows to two hours or less. In the last two years, we've hired more than 300 technicians in the City of Philadelphia.

We're also making things

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simpler for our customers, starting with their monthly bills, making them easier to read and creating short personalized videos that customers will receive via e-mail to help explain each bill. We recently partnered with the UPS Store to provide more convenient options for equipment returns, and we're rolling out a new cloud-based platform to serve customers more efficiently.

We've opened two new Xfinity stores in Philadelphia at Cottman and Aramingo Avenues, and these are big investments. And we continue to operate service centers on Parkside and Wayne Avenues. We also renovated and expanded our South Columbus Boulevard service center.

And starting this year, all employees, from senior management to front-line representatives, participate in additional customer service/customer experience training annually. We've empowered our employees with new

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technologies to improve customer service and are working daily to identify the greatest opportunities for further improvement. We are confident that these substantial investments and efforts will result in a high-quality experience for all customers, and we're already seeing upticks in customer satisfaction.

In addition, and as part of the franchise renewal process, Comcast is making significant commitments to meet the City's future cable needs and interests. These measures, which are based on extensive consultations with City Council, the Mayor's Office, residential and business customers, community organizers and others, include paying the maximum franchise fees permitted by federal law; namely, 5 percent of Comcast's gross revenues, from providing cable video services within Philadelphia. Last year these fees generated over $17 million for the City;

A commitment of up to 11 PEG

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channels, including four public access channels, two government channels, five educational access channels, and two of the PEG channels will be carried in high definition and other channels may be moved to HD later;

Total PEG funding of $18 million for the term, which is an increase from the last term of $8 million. So we've more than doubled the PEG funding;

A commitment to more than double the current PEG Video on Demand capacity to a total of 20 hours, and a managed services agreement for data services to provide data transport to more than 200 City locations.

Comcast will continue its comprehensive citywide effort to inspect and ensure compliance of its cable plant to be completed within 18 months and with regular progress reports to the City.

Comcast has agreed to additional commitments to Philadelphia.

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These measures go well beyond the new franchise agreements, which are strictly limited by federal law to the delivery of cable television service and reflect Comcast's commitment to the City and our customers.

First, we'll launch a pilot program to extend Internet Essentials program to low-income eligible seniors in Philadelphia, along with the City government non-profit infrastructure for low-income senior broadband adoption.

Second, Comcast will provide a 10 percent discount to low-income seniors living in Philadelphia who subscribe only to Digital Starter service. Eligibility for this discount will be agreed upon between Comcast and the City.

Third, Comcast will make a one-time $500,000 payment to the City for a Digital Inclusion Fund. Comcast will take a leadership role around digital inclusion in an initiative to be developed with the City by the City using

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Comcast's thought leadership in this space, its Internet Essentials program, this funding commitment, and partnering with the City in convening key stakeholders on this subject.

Fourth, Comcast will launch a pilot program to establish a virtual customer care jobs program in Philadelphia which, over a period of time, will employ between 150 and 200 new customer care agents working out of their homes here.

And, fifth, along with a negotiated agreement for data network managed services, Comcast will include WiFi hotspots in those facilities where Comcast is providing managed services for the City.

Comcast deeply values its longstanding partnership with Philadelphia. We look forward to working with the City on these important initiatives to further enhance Comcast's services here over the next 15 years.

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Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, thank you for your testimony. And I just want to let everybody know, I appreciate everybody being here. I allowed an extra amount of time for the opening statements because I think it's important to educate everybody where the City is and what Comcast is doing and intends to do as a part of renegotiating this Comcast franchise agreement.

So with that being said, I am going to apologize in advance for being a little rough on sticking to the timetable that we have. I mean, this is going to be a very, very, very long day, and I want to hear from everybody, but in order for me to do that, I'm going to have to be very strict on the time. So I thank you for that.

MS. SULLIVAN: I appreciate that. Thank you, Chairman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Clerk, would you please call the first panel.

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THE CLERK: Customer Service and Consumer Protection Panel: Lance Haver, Director of Civic Engagement, City Council of Philadelphia; Todd O'Boyle, Media and Democracy Reform Initiative, Common Cause; Adel Ebeid, Chief Innovation Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications, Incorporated; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Richard Keith, Vice President of Customer Care, Comcast; and Rob Slinkard, Senior Vice President of Customer Experience, Comcast.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Lance Haver, front and center, sir. We're going to allow you to go first on this topic.

MR. HAVER: My name is Lance Haver. I'm the Director of Civic Engagement for Philadelphia City Council. In that role I have attended public

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hearings on the proposed franchise agreement, met with community and civic groups, and have through e-mail been in contact with all of the City's registered community organizations and thousands of concerned Philadelphians.

I'm going to summarize the testimony, knowing that there are many people here who would like to be heard. So I'm going to just go right to the issues.

The issue is not if Comcast is a good corporate citizen, but what should consumers and the City expect as a fair exchange for giving Comcast a right-of-way over private and public property? That is the question before Council and the City.

Philadelphia consumers should expect pricing and service that matches the best pricing and service that Comcast offers in its other franchises. No Philadelphian should have to pay higher prices or live with lesser service

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because we are Comcast's hometown. This means, one, matching the lowest prices offered in Comcast's franchises across the country; two, offering the same senior discounts that Comcast offers in other franchises; three, having a consumer call center, not a virtual call center, but a call center like other Comcast franchise areas have; and, four, a one-year rate freeze, much like a signing bonus that other corporations and other individuals get.

We should have an end to bill shock. Every consumer should receive notice at least 30 days in advance that the promotional pricing will be ending and providing consumers with choices as to how they may want to change their service. When a promotion ends, the price should remain the same and the service should be reduced to match the price. Consumers should not be faced with much higher bills because they've lost track of the date that the promotion

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started.

Better customer service. Real benchmarks and real penalties to help Comcast meet its goal of improved customer service and a better way to resolve consumer and billing complaints. The current system, asking people to call Comcast to resolve complaints or call an underfunded, understaffed City number is not sufficient. No one should have to wait on hold hour after hour to speak to someone at Comcast to say that they've made a mistake on their bill.

There are more issues that I believe should be included in the franchise agreement or in a side letter, such as the expansion of the Internet Essential program, adequate funding for PEG stations, and ensuring that all citizens have access to government through the Internet. I believe others will cover those topics, so I've not raised them in my brief testimony.

I am prepared to answer any

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questions. I'll be available if any member of Council would like more information.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. O'BOYLE: Todd O'Boyle, Common Cause. I received no funding from Comcast or the City of Philadelphia.

Thank you for inviting me to be here, Councilman Henon and Committee. On behalf of the more than 400,000 Common Cause members, including 2,400 here in the City of Philadelphia, thank you for inviting me to be here today.

Our motto at Common Cause is "holding power accountable," and the best way to do that is with an engaged, informed electorate.

Far from telecom arcana, the matter at hand here today is a crucial conversation about the future of communications. Cable franchising is the essence of the public interest. It's about striking the right balance between

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private profits and public benefit. It's the age-old compact between we, the people and the communication systems on which we rely.

Getting the balance right is key, because we know what happens when communications firms hold all the cards. The late night TV cliche about ever-rising prices, crummy service, and anemic choice exists for a reason.

That reason, big cable and big telecom, the massive communications firms that spend freely on campaign contributions, lawyers, and lobbyists, systematically whittling away public interest protections at the federal, state, and local level, thus dismantling competition and all the benefits it brings.

So what has this unchecked influence garnered big cable? To take one example, Comcast imposes a data cap on its consumers. Recent reporting reveals what we've known all along: data

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caps have nothing to do with network management. Rather, they're just another way for Comcast to squeeze ever-more fees out of consumers and set a bar just low enough to punish streaming, an emerging competitive alternative to traditional cable packages.

With scant competition on the horizon, your oversight of Comcast is all the more important. The data paint a stark picture. Eighty percent of American households have only one choice for broadband, a near nationwide cable broadband monopoly. The Open Technology Institute finds that consumers here spend more but get less than consumers in other developed nations at every speed tier. Major cable and Internet companies, including Comcast, have cellar-dweller customer satisfaction ratings.

These are national problems with local implications. Respondents in last year's Needs Assessment of Philadelphia Comcast customers reported

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the lowest levels of customer satisfaction of any comparison city study, describing in their own words -- describing their service in their own words as, quote, "terrible," "awful," "horrible," and "lousy."

Those surveys found that customers here pay higher prices than Comcast customers even in other areas. Thanks again to big cable and crimped competition, Philadelphia consumers describe their prices as, quote, "arbitrary and ridiculous."

Last year, Comcast spent some $336 million in its ill-fated quest to merge with its next largest competitor, Time Warner Cable, and thus bring ever-more dominance over our communications ecosystem.

Now, imagine, what if Comcast instead spent those hundreds of millions of dollars on delivering affordable world-class service in its own hometown?

(Applause.)

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MR. O'BOYLE: What if it committed to making its network a superior platform for community media or upgraded Internet Essentials to make Philadelphia the envy of other cities? But any cable monopoly will opt for short-term lobbying campaigns to ensure the comforts of a cozy monopoly over investing in long-term -- investing long term in competitive networks.

So my question to you: Will you demand a franchise that guarantees quality, affordable service, protection for workers' rights, safeguards, vibrant community media, creates a Digital Inclusion Fund, and ensures a fair share for our community, or will you allow one of the most powerful firms in the land who once again call its own shots? The impact of your decision will be felt across Philadelphia, yes, but other communities are watching. They want to know whether you'll deliver responsive governance and vigilant oversight.

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COUNCILMAN HENON: Todd, if you could wrap it up, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. O'BOYLE: Show them that engaged citizenship is rewarded. Show them that they too can hold power accountable.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you so much for your testimony. I appreciate it.

I have questions. I'm going to start off asking panels where it's related to the franchise agreement itself as per the FCC. So I'm going to start off with a few questions for both the Administration, Office of Information and Technology, and Comcast, and I'm going to start by saying on this specific topic, was the topic addressed in the Needs Assessment report? And, if so, what did it say and, if not, why not?

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And I remind you of the topic, the panel is on customer service and customer protection -- or consumer protection.

MR. EBEID: Did you want me to address that first?

COUNCILMAN HENON: I have five questions that I'm going to ask at the beginning before the members. So however you want to -- one of you can address the questions or you can alternate or if you have a response or a rebuttal, I'd like to hear it.

So the question was, on this topic, was this topic addressed in the Needs Assessment report? And if it was, what did it say and, if not, why not?

MR. EBEID: So customer service was a major area of focus for us, and clearly the 571 pages that was published earlier this year, a great portion of it was dedicated to customer service.

Between the online surveys, between the phone calls, between the

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interaction with current customers, we clearly have statistics on how satisfied or dissatisfied current subscribers are with their cable service. And if we need to go into those statistics, Tom Robinson to my right is probably a lot better at it than I am.

But perhaps just looking forward, we've noticed during the negotiations that Comcast took those customer service issues very seriously and that they provided adequate number of reports that we can confirm or verify what we are hearing from customers. Certainly they had their side of the story. Clearly, people are -- some folks are not happy to the tune of about one out of every four, and we believe that we've taken measures in the new agreement that would provide liquidated damages in the event that outages or missed visits are incurred.

Comcast has come to the table, I believe, with enough of those

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liquidated damages to clearly demonstrate to us that they care about customer service, that they will make several attempts to correct the issues and clearly the need -- let me back up for a minute.

Clearly, their desire to generate roughly 150 to 200 jobs in the City focused on a call center, virtual or not, is really a grand gesture that they understand the customer service issues and they have a vested interest in making sure that customers are satisfied with the current service. So that's what we've uncovered during the timeframe that we've spent together.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Comcast, you're welcome to participate.

MR. SAMAHA: So we definitely hear City Council on customer service, and we have two representatives here from Comcast who are prepared to address what we're doing on behalf of the company to improve the customer service.

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COUNCILMAN HENON: That's great. Thank you so much.

Any questions from the panel?

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Very quickly, there was a recent New York Times expose that talked about arbitration and the inclusion of clauses that limit class action litigation against Comcast. Is that language currently in our franchise agreement, and is Comcast willing to remove this so that people can opt in versus opting out?

(Applause.)

MR. EBEID: I'm sorry, Councilwoman. Were you asking the Administration that question?

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Is it still in the franchise agreement? And I guess for Comcast's perspective, a response too.

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MR. REILLY: Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Mark Reilly. I'm Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for Comcast.

So that is not something that's in the franchise agreement. That's something that is in the customer agreement when a customer chooses to do business with Comcast. That's a pretty standard part of a customer agreement for not only Comcast but our competitors as well.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So the question is, is Comcast willing to agree to have people opt into this as opposed to opting out?

MR. REILLY: What we do is standard not only for us but for our competitors and we have that in the customer agreement. Again, it is optional as to whether somebody wants to do business with Comcast and become a customer, but that is -- that's something that's in our agreement, and we don't

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have any current plans to change that.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

COUNCILMAN HENON: So --

MR. REILLY: If I may, Mr. Chairman. So one of the things that had come up as we discussed this topic with the City is, what prospectively is Comcast going to do about customer service. So we brought with us today two of the people who are leading those efforts. So we thought that that would be beneficial to hear what are some of the things that the company is doing that will have an impact on the customer experience. We're prepared to have them provide brief remarks.

COUNCILMAN HENON: First I'd like to finish the line of questioning that we have on the Committee, and it will determine whether we bring up more witnesses or not, because we do have a full agenda. But my question to that is

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with Comcast, the proposed customer service moving forward and some of the changes or modifications or additions I think is great. Is that being negotiated in the package on side agreements with the City of Philadelphia?

MR. REILLY: It is, Mr. Chairman. So while under the franchising law at the federal level having a commitment within a franchise or negotiating to have a commitment in a franchise to have customer care employees is something that isn't within the framework of the law to mandate, as part of our discussions with the City, we heard clearly that there were concerns about the customer experience and what we were going to do incrementally. So we had described what we're doing incrementally, and we heard from the City we'd like to also have some of those efforts be right here in Philadelphia. One of the commitments we made is that we would commit to have 150 to 200 new jobs

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in the City, and this would be part of a pilot. So while the majority of our employees who serve the customer from a call center perspective are in a bricks and mortar building, one of the things that we run into in terms of a challenge when you're looking to hire within the City, not everybody has a vehicle to be able to get to a call center. Not everybody, if they are handicapped, has the ability even if they had a vehicle to get to a call center. So we are launching or prepared to commit to launch a pilot that would enable people to work from their home, and it would open doors to people who don't have access to those kinds of jobs today.

COUNCILMAN HENON: And they're all Philadelphians, so I --

MR. REILLY: These would all be within Philadelphia.

COUNCILMAN HENON: We appreciate the job creation and customer service moving forward, working through

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the details as this process goes along with the Office of Information and Technology.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Oh.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much, Chairman.

So for Adel Ebeid from the City, so you talked about the dissatisfaction rate being one in four from the Needs Assessment; is that correct?

MR. EBEID: Yes.

COUNCILMAN OH: And do you have a breakdown of where in the City geographically that dissatisfaction is? Is it even? Is it different depending on what section of the City you're in?

MR. ROBINSON: No. Based on the results that we got from the Needs Assessment, it's wide-ranging throughout the City, different zip codes. So it's just general dissatisfaction among subscribers all throughout the City.

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COUNCILMAN OH: So there's no pattern to it. It's just randomly across the City.

MR. ROBINSON: Correct. In other words, if it's a -- for instance, we found a number of issues related to phone answering. Those were consistent throughout all the different zip codes represented where those that had those issues.

COUNCILMAN OH: And we have a copy of that that we can look at?

MR. ROBINSON: Sure. I mean, the Needs Assessment itself gives a lot of the details within the 571 pages. In order to be able to provide that data, I mean, the data is available, but we'd have to run some cross tabulations.

COUNCILMAN OH: Would you be able to provide that to the Chairman if he doesn't already have it so I could take a look at?

MR. ROBINSON: Sure.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

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The second question is, in terms of the -- if customers are not satisfied, can they in a simple, easy-to-use manner just terminate their contract or are there guaranteed discounts or refunds if service is not -- if the guaranteed service is not available? How easy is it for the customer to control the contract?

MR. REILLY: I can answer that.

So most of our customers are on promotions. They're taking advantage of a discount. The majority, overwhelming majority, in the City here and across the country are in a promotion. Most of those promotions are either a 12- or 24-month promotion. There's nothing that would preclude the customer from exiting that promotion if they so chose. The only time that there would be any sort of financial repercussion, if there was an incentive provided.

So you see all the time that Verizon and Comcast go head to head

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competing here in the City. And we apologize for some of the junk mail that comes into the home, but we are looking to offer the most competitive products and service and value to the consumer. There are times that we will offer gift cards. So if somebody were to receive a gift card in the amount of several hundred dollars and signed up for service and terminated the next day, there may be some other fee. That's the exception.

The rule is that if you're in a 12-month promotion, 24-month promotion and you elect to discontinue service with us, you call up and discontinue that service.

MR. O'BOYLE: If I may, the gentleman just represented that there's nothing --

COUNCILMAN HENON: State your name for the record.

MR. O'BOYLE: Todd O'Boyle from Common Cause.

COUNCILMAN OH: Could you pull

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the microphone right next to you.

MR. O'BOYLE: Yes, sir. Is that better?

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

MR. O'BOYLE: The gentleman from Comcast just represented that there's nothing preventing Comcast customers from exiting, other than the lack of competition. And while Verizon may deliver service in some neighborhoods and in some households, it doesn't overlap one for one with Comcast, and far too many consumers, far too many Philadelphians find that they have no alternative for service that meets the federal definition of broadband.

(Applause.)

MR. O'BOYLE: So with respect, there's quite a lot that locks people in to contracts that they would rather not have.

MR. REILLY: If I may, so I appreciate my colleague's comments about the competitive environment. I think one

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of the things that we need to keep in mind, we're here about a video franchise, and while I know there's keen interest in broadband, as the Chair had said at the opening, this is about the video franchise.

If you look at the video marketplace, it is more competitive than it has ever been. So when we're talking about video services, there are plenty of choices. We all have seen the press reports about the success of Netflix, Apple TV, DirecTV, Dish Network. So to say that consumers in Philadelphia don't have choices with respect to video isn't accurate.

MR. O'BOYLE: It is accurate that Philadelphia consumers have no alternative for -- can't turn to direct broadcast satellite for Comcast SportsNet.

COUNCILMAN OH: Todd, we can't hear a word you're saying.

MR. O'BOYLE: So I'll project.

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Is it not true that marquee sports that are so important to Philadelphians are not available from all the providers that you just listed?

MR. REILLY: So like any programming offering, there's a negotiation between the parties who want to offer that to the consumers, and we are in that same space, that we as Comcast negotiate with many programmers to offer that to the consumer and is nothing prohibiting a competitor from getting content that we offer to the consumer.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: And I appreciate that. And what I want to try to avoid moving forward is having a debate at the table publicly. If the questions aren't answered from any witness -- we just happen to be setting the tempo and the tone here -- please submit the questions to me and I will get

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it to the appropriate party and make sure that the questions are answered and I will post them publicly. This way, you're made aware of it. So thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Greenlee.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know we want to move along, but I guess to the Comcast representatives, I think Mr. Haver hit a key point when he first started this about what services that Philadelphians have as compared to other cities, and obviously as representatives of Philadelphia, we think we should at least get what everybody else gets. And can you comment generally on that as far as comparisons of other cities, where we stand on service and rates, that kind of thing?

MR. REILLY: Sure. So --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Discounts, yes.

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MR. REILLY: Sure. So we offer similar products and services here than everywhere else, and it isn't -- there isn't this great disparity. There is different broadcasting alternatives and different PEG channels in different communities. So they aren't identical. And there are some legacy issues with respect to the regulated services, meaning the limited basic offering. So if you do a comparison of where Philadelphia sits in terms of product offering as well as price, here's an example. So our most popular video service is Digital Starter. Digital Starter is 69.95. The disparity in price on Digital Starter across the country is within about a dollar or two, and in some cases where in Philly it's 69.95, in other places it's 70.95. So generally you've got parity with respect to both product offering as well as price.

So one of the things that I think helps put this into perspective, we

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look to offer similar products and services across the board so that we remove differences that can cause problems.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Let me just ask -- I understand -- and I think this might have come from some information you provided -- Montgomery County, limited basic is like $45; is that right? It's a big difference.

MR. REILLY: So --

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Montgomery, Maryland. I'm sorry. Montgomery County, Maryland. I'm sorry.

MR. REILLY: Right. So you do have limited instances where there's a legacy, and I think if you look at the chart that's in the written testimony, you'll see that all of them, with one exception, Montgomery County, is all within a dollar or two of one another.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. All right. But you did say all. That's

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what threw me off there. Because that seemed like a big -- obviously 45 to 60 whatever is a big difference. But all right. I hear what you're saying. Are they up for a renewal soon?

MR. REILLY: They are.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. All right.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Is Lance Haver still in the room? I'd like to call you back to the table.

(Witness approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: So there were a few questions or a few issues that Lance had raised in his testimony. So I'm just looking to see if I can get a preliminary answer or response to some of them. I just want to recap a little bit here.

Notification on bundled

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services in advance to termination and what that fallback could possibly be; a one-year freeze.

And what else, Lance? If you could just recap. Just give me the top four --

MR. HAVER: Mr. Chairman, first, we have asked Comcast to give us a list of rates across the country and discounts across the country. Ms. Sullivan promised to get that to me on October 22nd. Unfortunately, they've been so overworked, they haven't had a chance to compile that. I suggest that that would be very important. We've heard stories about how they're somewhat similar. I would suggest even if it's only $4 a month less expensive some place else, that Philadelphians should have that advantage.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay.

MR. HAVER: The question of the promotions, when you come off of the

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promotion as it now stands, Comcast does not send you any advance warning. The first thing that most consumers get is a higher bill. It seems to me a company that's as technologically advanced as Comcast could notify people by e-mail or through the bills that their promotion is going to end next month, tell people what their options are, and allow people to make an informed decision and that the default position shouldn't be higher prices, it should be lower service, which would create an incentive for someone to call if they really wanted that service.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. Great. We can address those now or I could get those questions to you guys, to Comcast, and have a response. So if you have some quick responses to a few of them, it wouldn't be a bad idea to share it now.

MR. REILLY: I think -- so let's talk about the promotion and the end of the promotion. So as most people

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know, we bill in advance for video service. So you sign up and you pay in advance for the coming 30 days. So when you enter into a promotion, it's the exact same model. So you pay for your first month of that promotion. Let's say that first month is going to be $99. It's part of a promotion, and the normal price for that product is 114.99. So you get on your first bill 114.99 and then service discount is disclaimed right on the bill, and it subtracts and then you see your net price that is owed of $99. You pay that in advance of that coming month. So let's say you're going to start on December 1. New promotion. You get a bill in November that says effective December 1, you're going to be at $99 a month, and it's displayed as a service discount. At the end of the promotion, you get a bill and it says if there is no longer a service discount, it's the 114.99 but, importantly, you're getting that before that new rate goes

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into effect. So the customer then has three choices. They can say, Oh, yeah, I'm in that 12-month promotion, it came to an end and I'm going to continue now paying 114.99, or a customer can call in and say, I really don't want to go to 114.99, what are my options? And if you look in Philadelphia at the statistics, 72 percent of consumers in Philadelphia are on a promotion. So people are very comfortable with making choices that I've enjoyed, for example, HBO under this promotion, I know it's going to end, take that off, I don't want my bill to go up. Third choice would be going to one of our competitors. The good news is, most people either elect for the promotion to end and pay the new price or seek a different promotion.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. So what I'm going to ask is, one, can we take a look at some of the questions that Lance had submitted and he feels that it hasn't been responded to in a timely

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fashion, if we could take a look at that after today's hearing and discuss some of the options. And what I'd like to do is also revisit notification in maybe a different light.

MR. REILLY: And I will say this, Mr. Chairman: We'll take that opportunity to respond in writing. This is an issue -- when we had made a commitment to really change the customer experience to improve that, we had Charlie Herrin, one of our executives in Philadelphia, take on the role of the head of the customer experience. This is one of the number one issues in looking at changes to the bill that he's leading the charge. So we will provide further detail on what those plans entail in our written response.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I'd appreciate it, and I'd like to do that sooner than later, if we could, as we go through this entire process, and I'm going to make sure that Mr. Haver has

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some of his concerns and issues on multiple topics, but specifically when it comes to customer service, consumer protection, because he is working for Council as a whole and he speaks for all of us when it comes to this. So I thank you.

Thank you, Lance.

MR. HAVER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Any other questions?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Clerk, you want to call the next panel, please.

THE CLERK: Next up is the Workforce Panel consisting of Steve Mullin, President, Econsult; Bill Hankowsky, President, Liberty Trust; Mary Ellen Taggart-Ford, Steinbright Career Development Center at Drexel University; Eric Rosso, the Deputy State Director of Working Families Pennsylvania; Adel Ebeid, Chief Innovation Officer, City of

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Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Karen McClendon, Regional Vice President, Human Resources, Comcast; Ramacess Jean-Louis, Director, Workforce Diversity and Inclusion, Comcast; and Rob Wonderling, CEO, Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Good afternoon, everybody. Please, if you could summarize and make it brief and keep it to three minutes, it would be much appreciated.

MS. McCLENDON: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and other Councilmembers. My name is Karen McClendon. I'm the Vice President of Human Resources for the Freedom Region in Comcast.

Comcast NBCUniversal is a corporate leader in diversity and

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inclusion and has won numerous awards for our achievements in supporting a more diverse workforce and supplier base, including being named the Best Places to Work for LGBT employees by the Human Rights Campaign in 2014 and among the Black Equal Opportunity Employment Journal's 2013 Best of the Best list for top diversity employers.

At year end 2014, our total workforce was 59 percent diverse, and the percentage of diverse new hires was 69 percent. Thirty-five percent of our workforce are women - 22 percent African American, 12 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent Asian American. Women and people of color account for 47 percent of all of our leaders at the Vice President level and above, and one-third of our Board of Directors is diverse. We recently pledged to hire 10,000 veterans or their family members, representing roughly 15 to 20 percent of all of our new hires.

As of the third quarter of

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2015, Comcast's Philadelphia-based workforce is 59 percent diverse, including 35 percent of people of color and 37 percent women. There is a 50 percent diversity at the Director levels, including 20 percent people of color and 36 percent women. There's also 36 percent diversity at the Vice President level and above, including 13 percent people of color and 28 percent women.

Between year end 2010 and third quarter 2015, there's positive growth in the number of diverse leaders among Comcast's Philadelphia-based workforce. A number of diverse Directors increased by 143 percent, including 157 percent increase in the number of people of color. This is compared to 105 percent increase in the number of white Directors, 123 percent increase in the number of female Directors compared to 108 percent increase in the number of male Directors. The number of diverse VP level and above also increased by 81

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percent, including 61 percent increase in the number of VP and above people of color. There's also a 96 percent increase in the number of VP and above women, and this is compared to a 54 percent increase in the number of VP and above men.

Comcast has also extended its diversity efforts well beyond the company, spending hundreds of millions of dollars over the last few years with diverse vendors in Philadelphia. Nearly $100 million worth of vendor contracts related to construction activity for the Comcast Center in Philadelphia were awarded to 73 minority-owned businesses, comprising 45 percent of the vendors on this project.

In recent years, we've also increased spending to minority-owned communication firms. For example, we have Grupo Gallegos, which is now our primary agency for Hispanic markets, and Burrell Communications, which is our

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primary ad agency for African American markets. We also work with other diverse suppliers in Philadelphia such as Pomerantz and Impact Dimensions.

COUNCILMAN HENON: If you can wrap it up, I'd appreciate it.

MS. McCLENDON: Okay. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. And if we can all try to summarize our written testimony that has already been submitted on the record, I'd appreciate it.

Next.

MR. JEAN-LOUIS: Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Ramacess Jean-Louis. I'm the Director of Workforce Diversity and Inclusion at Comcast. I'm happy to be here today to provide testimony about our diversity and inclusion initiatives at Comcast.

At Comcast, we have a very holistic approach to diversity and

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inclusion. We have five major departments that focus on diversity and inclusion. We have our Governance Department that primarily focuses on reporting and tracking the success of our departments. We have our Workforce Diversity Inclusion Team, which focuses on moving the needle with regards to women and people of color in our employee population. We have our Supplier Diversity Team. On the supplier diversity side, we're doing very well. We have recently been inducted in the Billion Dollar Roundtable, which means that we've spent over a billion dollars with diverse suppliers. We are the only media and tech company who is a part of this Billion Dollar Roundtable, so I'm very proud to be a part of that.

We have our Community Investment. That's our foundation that contributes to our community partners. And we have our Programming. It's very important to us that we have diverse

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talent not only in front of the cameras but behind the camera as well, and that's through NBCUniversal as well as through our multicultural platform on the X1 Xfinity platform. And we also have a sixth area, which is Comcast Ventures, which makes investments in minority entrepreneurial start-ups.

Our diversity goals are that we want Comcast to look like America. We want to make Comcast more reflective of the communities we serve. What we're looking for is year-over-year progress with regards to our diversity numbers, and I am proud to say that we are trending in the right direction on the corporate level as well as on the local level here in Philadelphia. As Karen mentioned, our workforce is 59 percent diverse on the national level and local level. We not only believe that it's the right thing to do, but it makes good business sense.

In order for us to innovate and

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grow and keep our customer base, we know that we have to embrace diversity of thought. And if we want to continue to do that, we must start by embracing a diverse employee population.

In addition to the diversity numbers that we've shared with you, we also put strong emphasis on inclusion. Diversity is about making sure that you have the right mix of people. Inclusion is about making sure that the mix is right. After we're able to really attract a multicultural employee base, what do we do with them? We have to make sure that we offer them proper development opportunities in a growth and a career path, and that's what we've been able to do.

In the Freedom Region and in Philadelphia, our employees have access to eight Employee Resources Groups. Our ERGs are employee-led, executive-sponsored affinity groups designed to promote networking,

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professional development, exposure to senior leadership, and business product and marketing development strategies. Our ERGs are as follows: our Black Professional Alliance, our Asian Pacific Alliance, Unidos, VetNet, Women's Network, Out, Abilities Network, and YPN. So in addition to that, we also have strong workforce development partners like National Black MBA Association, National Society of Hispanic MBAs, National Society of Black Engineers, National Sales Network, and it continues. But in the attempt to save time, I'll just rush down to where Comcast is recognized for a lot of advancements that we've made in the area of diversity and inclusion. So as Karen mentioned, Philadelphia top workplace, according to Workplace Dynamics. And Workplace Dynamics is actually a third-party survey that is sent out to our employee base to see how we perform. So we were nominated along the top group in the Philadelphia

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top workplaces.

In addition to that, Diversity Inc. has us listed as the top 50 companies for diversity, and in three consecutive years, Comcast's Internal Diversity Council was listed among the top 25 diversity councils by the Association of Diversity Councils. In 2012, Comcast and NBCUniversal's combined Diversity Councils ranked fifth among the top 25 diversity councils. Black Enterprise Magazine named Comcast and NBCU among the 40 best companies for diversity.

Thank you for your time, and I encourage you, if you want additional information, to take a look at us at Comcast.com/diversity.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

Next, Mr. Hankowsky.

MR. HANKOWSKY: Thank you. I'll try to respect your request if we summarize. So I submitted my testimony

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yesterday. My name is Bill Hankowsky, President and CEO, Liberty Property Trust, and I'm privileged to be here because we are privileged to have partnered with Comcast on developing both the Comcast Center and the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center now under construction.

Comcast has made a tremendous impact on the City of Philadelphia. None is more visible than the vertical campus that's actually being created now in Center City Philadelphia. With the completion of the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center, we'll have brought two of the tallest, most sustainable, technologically advanced buildings to Philadelphia, three million square feet of development, making a contribution to the renaissance of this city.

I think we all know about the Comcast Center that was done in 2008. This is a building that was at the time the largest private investment in

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Pennsylvania history at $800 million, tremendous economic benefits both in terms of the construction and the jobs that it brought into town. It's the nation's tallest LEED green building.

I'll skip all of the benefits of that, which are in my testimony.

It has the largest visual video wall in the world. It also provided a connection and expansion of our public transit system by extending the Suburban Station concourse west. It also provided new public spaces on the plaza and in the concourse level.

If that wasn't enough, we now are underway a second building, the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center. This is a 59-story building. It would be the tallest building outside of New York and Chicago in the United States. It will be even more advanced, both in an environmental sense and a technical sense. It will be filled with young people, engineers, software people.

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They'll all -- it's the building with the blue jeans versus the building with the coats and ties. It will also be the home to NBC10 and Telemundo, which are moving into the City from City Line Avenue. It will also provide an incubator for start-up businesses in the tech area. Again, tremendous economic benefits.

But I'd like for a minute, if I could, to conclude, I'd like to take off sort of my real estate partner hat with Comcast and put on my hat as a businessman, as a citizen, as a resident of Philadelphia, and as a former head of the Commerce Department and PIDC. I've been involved with economic development for a long time in this city, and during that time, there is no single company that has shown a bigger commitment to the City of Philadelphia than Comcast. They're a business powerhouse, and this city needs business powerhouses. It's a company that could locate anywhere. They would be welcomed with open arms, vast

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economic incentives.

I'm going to go off my testimony.

When they acquired AT&T, the Mayor of Denver flew to this city and offered them a package to go there. They didn't take it. This is a company that's made a commitment after commitment to be in Philadelphia, and they're growing this business right here. They're creating opportunity for young people in Philadelphia. They're expanding our knowledge work base. They're creating a social infrastructure. This is a city on the rise, thanks in no small part to this City Council and many of the projects and initiatives you've supported that are now bearing fruit in Philadelphia. So, once again, after a hiatus, we're attracting young people, young people who view the City as a place with opportunity for talent and a dynamic new urban environment.

So the combination of

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opportunity and environment is a recipe for a successful city, and I can't stress how important an ingredient Comcast is in a recipe for success for Philadelphia.

So thank you for your time, and I would recommend your support for 150809.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Steve Mullin, please approach the witness table. State your name for the record and proceed with a summarized version of your testimony.

MR. MULLIN: I will. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hello to members of the Committee and Councilmembers. My name is Steven Mullin. I'm President of Econsult Solutions Inc. here in Philadelphia, and I will summarize and sort of augment to a certain extent both Kathleen Sullivan and Bill Hankowsky's testimony.

I will note that in 2013, Comcast hired Econsult to estimate this

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Fortune 50 corporation's current economic impact in Philadelphia and the impact, the potential future impact, associated with the new Technology Center and the expansion there.

You've heard all of the details about the new construction, but we took a look at the potential spinoff impacts of the new construction as well as the existing operations. And based on the information provided by Comcast there, its current operations directly represented almost $1.9 billion in annual expenditures in the City, with approximately 8,000 direct employees and contractors in the City. We estimated that these $1.9 billion of expenditures, along with the spending activities of its employees in the City, the Comcast operations annually generate $2.7 billion in total economic impact to the City. This activity also generates over $130 million in taxes annually to the City and over $13 million in taxes to the School

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District of Philadelphia from, one, the use and occupancy tax; two, estimated real estate taxes paid by Comcast employees who live in the City; and, three, estimated increases in real property taxes paid by the surrounding Center City properties due to the increase in their property value because of their proximity to Comcast Center.

As has been mentioned here, Comcast has shown its commitment to Philadelphia and calling Philadelphia its global headquarters with its new Comcast Innovation and Technology Center. You've heard that noted that that is estimated to cost $1.2 billion, which we think will generate over the construction period a total impact of $1.7 billion in the region and generate approximately 1,800 direct, indirect, and induced jobs per year of the construction.

Once completed, we estimate that Comcast will have an additional almost over $700 million in City

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activity, spending activity, and support an additional 2,700 jobs, including 1,500 new Comcast employees.

The new operations, the extended operations, we forecast will support an additional $22 million in tax revenues for the City, and in the first year of its operations, it is estimated that the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center will support $3.4 million in taxes to the School District of Philadelphia through the use and occupancy tax and the estimated taxes I mentioned earlier.

As was mentioned before, Comcast Center has the third highest tax assessment among privately owned properties in the City, and based on current market assessment data, with the addition of the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center, Comcast will be responsible for the highest amount of property assessment among all privately owned properties in the City. After both

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buildings roll off of the real estate tax abatement, a program applied to all new construction and major rehabilitation in Philadelphia, an additional 3.4 million per year will be remitted to the School District and 2.7 million per year in City tax revenues. So in total, Comcast's direct and indirect economic activity from its current and expanded operations, we forecast that to generate over $160 million annually in taxes to the City and over $20 million annually in taxes to the School District after the abatements expire.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Mr. Mullin, if you can wrap it up, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. MULLIN: And that's my conclusion.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

Next witness, please.

MS. TAGGART-FORD: Good

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afternoon. My name is Mary Ellen Taggart-Ford. I'm the Associate Director for Curriculum and Strategic Initiatives at the Steinbright Career Development Center of Drexel University. I will summarize the statement that I previously sent in, but I do appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

Drexel University for about 100 years has had a model of education that combines both academics and experiential learning, and a large part of that experiential learning is the Drexel co-op experience.

Cooperative education is the number one reason that students state that they come to Drexel. So each year, 91 to 94 percent of our undergraduates are involved in that program. That means that for this year, we're going to have 6,000 students out working, 84 percent of whom will be in the Delaware Valley and the rest will be nationally and internationally.

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There is no way that we would be able to do this without the support of our employer partners. Right now we have 1,700 active employer partners who work with our students and who work with us to create substantive positions for those students.

Comcast has been a committed partner with Drexel in providing these co-op opportunities. The number of students that Comcast has hired has increased by 121 percent over the past five years. Last academic year, which just ended for us in September, they had hired 124 students for six-month work periods. Comcast has consistently ranked in Drexel's top ten employers by number of jobs offered. Their commitment to the co-op program continues to grow, and for the current co-op work period, they have 70 Drexel students employed.

At Comcast, 100 percent of these Drexel co-ops are in paid positions, with salaries that reflect the

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student's major and level of responsibility. Not only are they paid positions, but they are in multiple positions and multiple majors. Last year they hired students in 26 different majors. So it gives our students opportunities to do many things while they're at Comcast, including marketing services, network engineering, and political affairs.

Drexel's co-op students complete an online review at the end of every one of their co-op experiences, and we call it an employment summary and planner. When they return to campus, they meet with a member of our staff to discuss their ES&P, or planner, and their overall experience. Students who work at Comcast consistently provide highly positive feedback regarding the supervision, mentoring, and job responsibilities they experience while on co-op. Many of our students return to Comcast in part-time jobs while in

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classes and in full-time positions after graduation.

We are pleased to have this relationship with Comcast, and I can answer any questions or comments.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

Next witness. State your name for the record and you may proceed.

MR. ROSSO: Good afternoon and thanks for inviting me to testify today. My name is Eric Rosso and I'm the Deputy State Director for Pennsylvania Working Families. Today, I'd like to speak to Comcast's role as a corporate citizen in Philadelphia and what that means in the context of this franchise agreement in front of us.

Comcast has a long history of labor complaints and abuses and advocating against policies that would help many working families. One of the most recent examples of this is Comcast's

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leading role in fighting and lobbying against providing earned paid sick days for Philadelphia workers.

While Comcast has spent time, effort, and money advocating against policies designed to help alleviate poverty, they have also been no stranger to asking for corporate welfare, generously provided by the State and City. Comcast received $42.75 million in assistance to build the Comcast Center, coupled with a $29.3 million tax break from the City's ten-year property tax abatement program from 2008 to 2013. This also doesn't calculate taxes avoided with over 1,000 Comcast subsidiaries and holding companies registered in Delaware, all this while Comcast currently takes in profit of $8 billion annually, headquartered in a city with a poverty rate of 26 percent.

(Applause.)

MR. ROSSO: Recently, as details of the framework for the

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franchise agreement have come to light, a provision stated that Comcast would provide a new 200-person call center in Philadelphia for customer service. I raise this today to ask what kind of jobs will these call center positions be. Will they be ones that pay at least $15 an hour and will Comcast fight efforts to unionize these employees?

(Applause.)

MR. ROSSO: I say this knowing that a parent with a spouse and two children would need to make at least $24.10 an hour to live and sustain their family in Philadelphia. Will these Comcast workers make enough monthly to pay what was recently dubbed as the "Comcast tax" by an Inquirer article highlighting the $150 most pay in Philadelphia for the company's own cable and Internet services? Or is Comcast something that they won't be able to afford in their monthly budget?

The City has a choice as they

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negotiate this agreement. As a condition, Comcast should agree not to block its own workers' right to organize a union.

(Applause.)

MR. ROSSO: Comcast should also guarantee at least $15 an hour in wages to all of their employees and contractors. If the City of Philadelphia were to demand that its largest corporate citizen meets these needs, it would demonstrate our elected officials' and Comcast's commitment to fighting poverty. It would raise standards all across the board for future negotiations with profitable multi-billion-dollar corporations.

These demands would be a precedent from what other cities have done in recent franchise agreements. In their 2006 agreement, Seattle included language with Comcast that supports the use of union labor. New York City included language in their franchise

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agreement with Verizon guaranteeing the right to collectively bargain.

In closing, Pennsylvania Working Families asks City Council today to take up these demands in their negotiations with Comcast. We remind those in attendance what Comcast's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Brian Roberts, recently said in Comcast's 2014 earnings report: 2014 was a great year financially, operationally, and strategically for Comcast NBCUniversal.

Let's make 2015 a great year for Philadelphia citizens financially, strategically, and for the City operationally.

Thank you for your attention and time.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Next witness, please.

MR. WONDERLING: Thank you, Chairman Henon and members of the City Council's Public Property and Public

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Works Committee. Good afternoon. My name is Rob Wonderling and I serve as the President and CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, and on behalf of our approximately 4,500 member businesses today, we're really honored to testify in support of Council Bill 150809.

My testimony has been submitted for the record, so allow me just to summarize on behalf of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

In an increasingly global economy, accelerated and exacerbated by advancing in technology and a new urbanism that's afoot in many North American cities as well as other cities around the globe, what is the coin of the realm in the future is a job, the question of jobs that provide adequate income and economic opportunity for all. And here in the City of Philadelphia and in the greater Philadelphia region, we've been fortunate and blessed for over 50

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years to have a truly significant economic asset in the Comcast Corporation. It is a top five employer. It's been one of the top five private employers in the Philadelphia region, and it is the only corporation that we can boast as being part of the Fortune 50.

There are plenty of metropolitan regions that would welcome the opportunity to have an organization like Comcast in their business, civic, and community ranks. We're in the business at the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce of encouraging individual and collective growth and prosperity, and I can tell you when we recruit and engage new members to our organizations, one of the first things those entrepreneurs, large and small, ask us, What about Comcast? Who could we meet at Comcast? How can we follow Comcast? What is Comcast doing as it relates to innovation? Those are the intangible benefits of having a

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standard-bearing, job-creating entity that has made a substantial commitment over its history to this city and this region.

In many respects, this franchise agreement is not necessarily about the present nor the past. It is about the future. In that regard, we stand tall with Comcast as they continue to lead the way, not only with the second tower that they're building that will be an anchor of innovation, but their commitment to the community, their commitment to spurring entrepreneurship and, in particular, their commitment to technology.

Yesterday, the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, along with eight key partners, launched the Global Healthcare Technology Collaborative. Comcast is a partner in this collaborative. We are currently asking entrepreneurs from organizations, large and small from all around the

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world, to come to Philadelphia and solve for some of our most thorny issues around healthcare and the healthcare delivery system, whether it be chronic disease, cyber terrorism or the avoidance of cyber terrorism or issues surrounding population health in our communities that need it most. I can tell you that hospitals are engaged in the Greater Philadelphia Care Collaborative, but so is Comcast. And much like that tower that's coming out of the ground next to their current headquarters, we think this digital collaborative, again in partnership with Comcast, will be a magnet for young and old to come to the greater Philadelphia region.

So in summary, Mr. Chairman, the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce supports Council Bill No. 150809.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

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Do we have anybody else that is testifying on this topic?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: So we are taking up a lot of time with prepared testimony. So what I'm going to ask moving forward is, the folks that are testifying in addition to the Administration and Comcast, I'd like Comcast to address their testimony and the questions that they raise in their testimony and I would like the Administration to do the same as we move forward.

I do have some questions on workforce development. I'm going to start off before I go to the Committee. And I would certainly recognize Councilman Goode over there, who I see in his seat.

So workforce. The question is, is workforce addressed in the expired franchise agreement and is workforce addressed in the proposed but not

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complete franchise agreement?

Somebody.

MR. EBEID: So, Mr. Chairman, I think it was very important for you to hear all these testimonies. Under the Cable Act and when we were negotiating the cable-related terms, workforce is not part of that scope. We did recognize that an EOP plan was required and submitted by Comcast and that the prevailing wage language that is similar to the one in the Verizon cable franchise is also included in the new term moving forward. That was the -- our conversations were limited to those two topics.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Great. So prevailing wages are covered.

Does Comcast and its contractors regularly submit certified payrolls to the City, demonstrating who is working on the systems and if they are being paid prevailing wages? I guess that's a question for both the

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Administration and Comcast.

MR. EBEID: I'm happy to get an answer for you on that. Ms. Angela Dowd-Burton should know.

COUNCILMAN HENON: So I'm going to ask a few questions on prevailing wages.

Who is being paid them? Are they employees or are they subcontractors or are they 1099's? Are there regular reports submitted to the City of Philadelphia, whether it's the Franchise Department in OIT or with Labor and Standards that monitors prevailing wages with the City of Philadelphia? Do they submit either quarterly, annually or monthly certified payrolls? And are the employees subcontractors or 1099's? And I want to state for the record that the City only recognizes two types of employees by law and code. They are direct employees or contract employees.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez.

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COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to kind of reiterate what our Chair started with. We appreciate Comcast. We appreciate its economic engine and the jobs that it provides in the City of Philadelphia. I particularly appreciate in the editorial today by David L. Cohen where he highlighted, and I'll quote, "Comcast serves many communities under thousands of similar agreements, but Philadelphia is different. It's our home."

And in that spirit, what we're talking about in this franchise agreement is not devaluing the value that Comcast brings, but increasing that value and adding value given Philadelphia's reality and challenges.

It was very rewarding --

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: It was very rewarding to hear around the employee stats, the suppliers, and the

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diversity and inclusion, and I would be remiss if I did not recognize Comcast's agreement on the 200 call center jobs, its work with our RISE office and returning citizens, WorkReady, and summer employment. I was also pleased to look at the cooperative education program with Drexel University. Having graduated from a CTE high school with an opportunity of cooperative education, I personally have firsthand experience in that value.

In an editorial earlier today, I listed some areas around workforce; in particular, youth workforce development, and I really wanted to state this for the record and as we continue this discussion, I'd like to see Comcast look at creating a more robust pipeline for high school students in Philadelphia public schools.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And I'm looking at a very similar model to the Drexel University in terms of not just

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summer employment, but really ongoing employment and continuing education and training so that our young people -- we have models of that with Boeing, we have it with SEPTA, and really want Comcast as we continue this discussion to look at that and really come back and say to us, We can increase these opportunities by a thousand hours or whatever and a number of student opportunities. I think that's hugely, hugely important as we have a financial crisis in the School District. And these cooperative programs that existed in the past, the ones I benefited from, have seen the services cut. So we're going to be looking at hundreds of employment opportunities for young people. I think it goes along with our new Mayor's commitment to increasing 10,000 new jobs for summer employment opportunities, and we want Comcast to be added value in that public discussion.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,

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Councilwoman.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Goode.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon. My questions will be limited strictly to the Chief Information Officer.

During the budget process when you came before this Council for your budget to be approved, several members, including myself, asked about the Comcast franchise agreement. I specifically asked whether you were the chief negotiator on behalf of the City. You said it was a team effort, but if there was one person, it was you. And then you asked members of Council not to ask you anymore questions, to let you do the negotiation, and then basically you'd get back to us. So that's what happened. I said, So we should trust you in that way, and you said yes.

So do we have what we need

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right now?

MR. EBEID: Do we have what? I'm sorry.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Do we as members of Council have what we need right now?

MR. EBEID: Do we have an agreement?

COUNCILMAN GOODE: No. Do members of Council have what they need in order to make a decision?

MR. EBEID: I think you have what amounts to the core essential elements of the agreement.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: So let me ask you a more simple question. Do I have a copy of the franchise agreement?

MR. EBEID: You have a copy of a term sheet that includes the major --

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Do I have a copy of the franchise agreement?

MR. EBEID: The franchise agreement being the 80- to 90-page document, you do not.

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COUNCILMAN GOODE: Why do I not have a copy of the franchise agreement?

MR. EBEID: Because there are still more details that we need to iron out.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: So why don't I have a copy of what you have?

MR. EBEID: You have a copy of the term sheet that includes the core elements --

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Why do I not have a copy of what you have?

(Applause.)

MR. EBEID: So we've offered briefings to Councilmembers.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Why do I not have a copy of what you have?

MR. EBEID: Because it's still under --

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Because it's none of my business yet, right?

MR. EBEID: Not at all. Because it's still under --

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Could you

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kindly tell me what the franchise agreement says with regard to prevailing wage?

MR. EBEID: We can get you the exact -- we can actually read the exact language.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: I would love to hear what the franchise agreement says with regard to prevailing wage. I would love that.

MR. ATHAY: Michael Athay, City Law Department.

The prevailing wage provision in Comcast franchise and in Verizon franchise reads, "All employees of the franchisee shall be paid at least the prevailing wage, as that term is defined in Section 17-107(1)(j) of The Philadelphia Code, as amended, or under any provision of any subsequently enacted wage law. The franchisee shall require all of its contractors and subcontractors to pay all of their employees at least such prevailing wage."

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COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thanks for sharing.

Can you tell me what the franchise agreement says with regard to goals for workforce diversity?

MR. ATHAY: The franchise requires that Comcast, as Verizon was required to do, submit an Economic Opportunity Plan.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's lovely. What are the goals for workforce diversity?

MR. EBEID: Councilman, there are two -- from my understanding, there are two Economic Opportunity Plans posted on OEO's website with regard to Comcast.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: I doubt it, but go ahead.

MR. EBEID: They're on there because I downloaded them this morning.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: So what do they say?

MR. EBEID: So if you give me a second, I will...

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COUNCILMAN GOODE: And thanks for posting them this morning.

MR. EBEID: So the two documents that were posted by OEO quite a while back, the first one is dated February 25th, 2014.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's for the tower.

MR. EBEID: That's correct. It's for the --

COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's not for this. But go ahead.

MR. EBEID: And then the second one was posted on February 25th, 2014.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's old. Thank you. I didn't think anything new was up there.

Can you tell me what the franchise agreement says with regard to collective bargaining?

(Applause.)

MR. ATHAY: The franchise agreement does not address collective bargaining. The franchise agreement is

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limited to what the City can ask for under the Federal Cable Act.

COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thanks for sharing. I hadn't seen it, so I didn't know.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Councilman.

Any other questions for this panel?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: As we try to move along, thank you all very much, appreciate it.

Mr. Creelman, which panel do we have next?

THE CLERK: PhillyCAM Channels and Funding.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Hold on one second. We might change that. Hold on one second. Sorry.

THE CLERK: Sorry about that. Internet Essentials/Low-Income Programs.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Internet

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Essentials are next.

THE CLERK: Minister Rodney Muhammed, President, Philadelphia NAACP; Reverend Terrence Griffith, President of Black Clergy; Reverend Moore, Tenth Memorial Baptist Church; Sister Mary Scullion, Project HOME; Sharmain Matlock Turner, Urban Affairs Coalition; Joseph Torres, Senior External Affairs Director, Free Press; Hannah Sassaman, Policy Director, Media Mobilizing Project --

(Applause.)

THE CLERK: -- Reverend Gregory Holston, New Vision United Methodist Church, POWER Coalition; Adel Ebeid, Chief Innovation Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications, Incorporated; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Steven Bradley, African American Chamber of Commerce; Sharon Powell-Lee, Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs, Comcast; Trinity Thorpe-Lubneuski, Senior

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Manager, Communications, Internet Essentials, Comcast; Marcus Allen, Big Brothers Big Sisters.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Rather large panel, but okay. What we're going to ask, if everybody could listen, we're not going to ask Comcast and the Administration to give a statement. We just ask you to be there for questions and we can move on to the other people for brief, brief, underline brief, statements and then we'll have some questions. Okay?

Mr. Muhammed, I think your name got mentioned first, but whoever would unless -- I'm sorry. Please, Reverend, please. Please identify yourself and proceed.

REVEREND GRIFFITH: Councilman Henon and members of the Committee, good afternoon. My name is Reverend Terrence Griffith and in addition to being the

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Senior Pastor of the First African Baptist Church of Philadelphia, I serve as President of Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity.

The renewal of Comcast's cable franchise for the City of Philadelphia is a crucial, important topic, and I thank you for giving leaders in the community like myself the opportunity to tell a story about Comcast that talk about its commitment to diversity and the value it brings to our community.

As President of Black Clergy, I have made it my passion to advocate for expanded employment opportunities for the dispossessed in our city, particularly those considered minorities. Increasing the economic opportunities is the only way to break the cycle of poverty, which plague too many of our neighborhoods and burden dispossessed families. That's why I'm particularly pleased to see Comcast's commitment to diversity over the years, extending to all parts of the company.

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Comcast actively recruits a diverse talent pool to make sure that the company is representative of its hometown, from entry-level jobs to the corporate suite. This provides young African Americans in Philadelphia with role models in the business community.

At the same time, as one of the City's largest private employers and a Fortune 50 company, Comcast is creating jobs at an incredible rate, including entry-level jobs of people who either just graduated from school or who do not have college diplomas. In a city still struggling to recover from the departure of manufacturing, Comcast provides jobs with family-sustaining wages for many families. Its growth is also having other positive impacts.

The new Comcast tower, the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center, will include a new Four Seasons Hotel, which will employ hundreds of service sector workers.

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Comcast has intimated that it is committed to growing the minority business community by spending billions of dollars on diverse vendors, many of them located right here in Philadelphia. This provides African American entrepreneurs with crucial opportunities to expand their businesses.

But Comcast's commitment to our community doesn't stop there. Its Internet Essential program prepares thousands of low-income children across Philadelphia, many of them minorities, for the 21st century economy by providing their families with low-cost broadband access at home to bridge the digital divide. Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity was thrilled when Comcast approached us about four years ago to support this program.

Comcast Internet Essential program also provides digital literacy classes to make sure that Philadelphians of all ages have the skills to search for

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jobs online, navigate the Internet, and work in the modern economy. We are particularly pleased with Comcast's decision to expand its Internet Essentials program to low-income senior citizens, who are particular challenges when it comes to utilization and navigation of the Internet. Through it all, Comcast works closely with thousands of community partners that make Internet Essentials a success, including many church and faith communities. These partnerships allow our members to participate in digital literacy classes and learn about Internet Essentials from people they trust.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Reverend, excuse me, if I can. Can you summarize the rest of your testimony.

REVERENCE GRIFFITH: Certainly. Certainly. I'm almost finished, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

REVERENCE GRIFFITH: But let me

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just simply say that we cannot be penny wise and pound foolish on this issue. And so I ask you to consider where our city would be today without Comcast. And I just want to thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. And I apologize for anybody that I cut short, but we are working against time. And I'm going to state for the record again -- I'm making a lot of statements, but I'm keeping notes on it so I can fulfill the commitments. I will post everybody's testimony publicly, which is submitted to the record anyway, so it is of public record. I will post it to make it easier for folks to read post hearing, as well as questions that I'm going to submit to both the City and Comcast and their panels. And I ask as we move forward, keep in mind two, three minutes summarize and please keep it to the topic of the panel. So today right now we're talking about Internet Essentials. I

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know everybody does a lot of good all across the City. I want to hear about Internet Essentials and getting as many people of low-income into the programs and Internet Essentials as possible. So thank you.

Next witness.

REVEREND MOORE: Mr. Chairman and other members of the Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity in my capacity as pastor of the Tenth Memorial Baptist Church for the last 41 years and a former President of Black Clergy to testify before the panel today.

Two parts of my testimony I want to summarize. One as a Board member of United Bank of Philadelphia, the City's leading African American-controlled bank that provides banking to traditionally underserved communities. I've seen firsthand Comcast has consistently supported United Bank, serving its first credit facility in 2004 for $24.5 million and increasing that

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commitment year over year. The credit facility directly benefits minority communities.

Also I've seen Internet Essentials make a difference in the lives of many members of my congregation and many of the congregations that I've related to in Philadelphia. I am relieved that Comcast puts such an emphasis on making sure that members of the Philadelphia community are aware of that program. Comcast has a great network of employees who work tirelessly to share the word with local communities and other organizations and individuals.

So I'm happy to ask if the Committee would certainly support the company's franchise agreement.

Thank you so much, and I do appreciate the time that you've given.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for coming here and testifying, Reverend. Thank you.

Next witness, Mr. Muhammed.

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MR. MUHAMMED: My name is Rodney Muhammed, President of the NAACP Philadelphia. To Councilman Henon, the Chair, and to the rest of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Comcast Corporation.

They had an initiative that began four years ago, and at that time, about 40 percent of Philadelphia citizens had no Internet connection. The program Internet Essentials brought low-cost Internet to 70,000 Philadelphia area residents and has provided 3,700 local residents with digital literacy training, a figure that's even more significant when you consider that Comcast is unable to serve Philadelphia Housing Authority properties. No other program has had such success in connecting low-income families to the Internet in Philadelphia and across the country.

I have personally seen this program evolve over four years, and as the company has responded to feedback

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from its customers and community partners, Comcast has made several improvements to the Internet Essentials since its launch, including several Internet speed increases, streamlining the application process, and increasing the populations eligible for the program, as well as providing a free WiFi router to all Internet Essential customers.

Comcast has also been tireless in promoting the program to Philadelphia families. Nearly 130,000 pieces of literature are mailed annually to the School District of Philadelphia families in several different languages, and Internet Essential ambassadors, Comcast employees who use their relationships with the community groups, increase the awareness of this amazing opportunity for families that are constantly working -- they are constantly working to spread and help families apply.

Comcast makes a tremendous impact on Philadelphia's economy, its

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workforce, its entrepreneurs, and its families, and I strongly urge the Committee and City Council to consider this impact when deciding on the future of the Comcast franchise agreement.

And so I thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony.

Next witness, please.

MR. BRADLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Steven Scott Bradley. I'm Chairman of the African American Chamber of Commerce for Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. I'm here to extend the relationship that the African American Chamber has with Comcast. We have a Board member from the Comcast organization serving on our Board, and Comcast has been very instrumental. We encourage our membership to seek entrepreneurship, and they have played a major role in encouraging whether it's training, whether it's development and

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supporting our entrepreneurial efforts.

Bridging the digital divide in our community is critical to encouraging entrepreneurship, and through the Internet service, we're trying to encourage young people at a young age to consider entrepreneurship, and through their digital divide program, that's encouraging young citizens in our city to consider entrepreneurship. So we're here in support of the renewal.

Thank you very much. And we have submitted for the record written testimony.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Absolutely, and it will be submitted. Thank you so much for your testimony.

MR. BRADLEY: You're welcome.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Next witness, please.

MR. ALLEN: Good afternoon, Councilman Henon and the members of the Committee on Public Property and Public Works. My name is Marcus Allen, and for

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the past two years, I've had the honor of serving as the President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Southeastern Pennsylvania. Thank you for holding this hearing today and allowing me to speak about the role Comcast has played in supporting our organization and impacting the lives of young people in greater Philadelphia.

This year, Big Brothers Big Sisters celebrated 100 years of providing one-to-one mentoring services to young people across the Southeastern Pennsylvania region. Throughout this past century, our programming services have evolved to allow us to bring the benefit of mentoring to over 120 young people in the Philadelphia region.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is most known for our community-based match program where we recruit adults and young people who meet on the weekends to discuss school, play games or maybe attend a show in the City. While this

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remains one of our core programs, we found this isn't the only way for adults and volunteers to make a difference in a child's life.

In 2006, Big Brothers became the first Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter in America to launch an innovative program named Beyond School Walls, which provides workplace mentoring for local students. Prior to Comcast joining this program in 2008, there were only two Philadelphia-based companies involved in the Beyond School Walls program. Since then, Comcast and its employees have consistently stepped up to support the growth of this program.

Beyond School Walls brings students from Potter-Thomas Elementary School, a community that is heavily concentrated with Latino families, to the Comcast Center every other week during the school year to meet with their "bigs." According to the data from the School District, 94 percent of students

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at Potter-Thomas are black or Latino, and 100 percent of the students are recognized as being economically disadvantaged.

Beyond School Walls gives these students the chance to establish consistent, supportive relationships with adult role models outside of their family who can relate to their experiences. In the first year, we were able to match 35 students. By the time Comcast got involved, we matched 55. No one can tell the story of the power of mentoring better than our "bigs" than "littles." Comcast "big" Rebecca Gadsden recently said of her little Ailani, Since Ailani comes from a big family, our afternoons together provide her with one-to-one time she needs to discuss her hopes, her dreams, and her aspirations. Comcast's continued support for this program means that I can continue being a part of the team that helps Ailani focus on her future.

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Comcast's commitment to Beyond School Walls in Philadelphia ignited a trend here and across the country. Since the first year of the program, we now have 23 corporate partners mentoring nearly 1,000 children across the region, showing that Comcast isn't just an innovator in tech, they are also leading the way in mentoring as well.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. Could you conclude your testimony.

MR. ALLEN: No problem, Councilman.

Our success in our organization can easily be seen in our numbers, and Comcast has been a part of that.

Just to sum up, Comcast has also provided support to our national organization in which they provided $60 million in cash and in-kind support, and they've given over 20,000 hours of their employees' time.

I know you have a lot to consider with all of today's testimony,

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but I ask you to bear in mind the impact Comcast and its employees have made in the lives of children in the Philadelphia area as you make your decision.

Thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. Thank you.

Next testimony, please. State your name for the record and you may proceed.

REVEREND HOLSTON: My name is Reverend Gregory Holston. I'm the pastor of New Vision United Methodist Church at Broad and Westmoreland Streets. I recently was named the National President and CEO of OIC of America, a national job training and employment network across the country of 32 affiliates in 22 states.

Today, I'm here in my role as the Co-Chair of POWER's Economic Dignity Team. POWER is comprised of 45 congregations across the City of Philadelphia, representing over 35,000

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individuals, Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild, who are dedicated to building a city of opportunity that works for all.

As my church is in one of the poorest sections of the City of Philadelphia, but not just the City of Philadelphia, also the State of Pennsylvania and the nation as a whole, the congressional district that my church is in is listed as the first or the second poorest congressional district in the country. The three zip codes around my church at Broad and Westmoreland Streets have poverty rates of 38 percent, 35 percent, and 50 percent, with a deep poverty rate of roughly 25 percent.

Deep poverty is for an individual roughly $5,500 a year or less than -- or about $100 a week to live on. Many of these individuals are served in our church, our Sunday breakfast and a Wednesday night dinner, and they do not have access to Internet. They don't have

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a way of accessing the ability to be able to get jobs, because so many jobs only advertise now on the Internet.

(Applause.)

REVEREND HOLSTON: They're not -- they don't have children. Many of them don't have school-age children. Many of them are not seniors. They fall in that age range in between. And so even some of the things that have been discussed today will not help them. They still will not have the access that they need. And we desperately need those individuals of having quality jobs for good wages.

(Applause.)

REVEREND HOLSTON: I'm appreciative of the fact that Comcast gives a great deal of charity to many organizations in this town, but today we come not to ask for charity but to ask for justice.

(Applause.)

REVEREND HOLSTON: Charity is

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always controlled by the powerful to dispense as they please. The definition of justice is where the people get fairness and equality for all.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Reverend?

REVEREND HOLSTON: I'm almost done.

There's a dream about ten years ago that Internet access in this town would be for everyone. Before the Comcast, before all the deals were done, that was the dream. We still believe in that dream. It's still needed today. It's still desperately needed, and you have the ability to make the difference and to give us the justice that we need.

Comcast makes 64 billion a year, 8 billion in profit, 500 million in revenue in the City alone. Justice demands that they pay the appropriate fees and rent for our streets, for our neighborhoods, for our poles, for our roadway, that they pay their expected

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rent that they should pay. Today we are the lessor. They're the lessee. They need to pay the right fee.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

REVEREND HOLSTON: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony, Reverend.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Can I go out of order and let the young lady testify, please.

State your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. PHILPOT-HINTON: Good afternoon. My name is Kia Philpot-Hinton. I'm a member of Action United, and today I'm here to speak in place for one of our members named Malique. Malique had to leave suddenly to go pick her daughter up from school.

And so we just wanted to share our story, which is representative of our organization of low- and middle-income people and the people in our communities.

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And so I want to share Malique's story.

Two years ago we got a letter from the school about Comcast's affordable Internet for $10 a month. I went in to the service center at 49th and Parkside to ask about the program. The agent told me that the more expensive $37 per month plan was better for me, even though I am on a fixed income. She said I could afford it. And when I did it, I quickly fell behind on my bills. I stuck with it because my daughter needed Internet for her homework.

We moved and added cable service. My bill went up to $120 and then $162 per month. Finally, I was stuck with a $579 back bill that I can't afford to pay. Because of the back bill, I am in debt, my credit is messed up, and I no longer qualify for Internet Essentials.

Looking back, I know that I was oversold and scammed by Comcast. I'm sure many other people have also been

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trapped in this vicious cycle. We need City Council to force Comcast to make Internet Essentials the affordable, reliable Internet program it claims to be.

Comcast should be helping low-income people, not pushing them further into poverty. We are sick and tired of being scammed by Philadelphia's richest corporations.

And I just want to add that we've been faced with the issue with underfunding of our schools, and many of us from low-income and middle-income families, you know, we send our kids to schools despite the lack of resources, really just trying to do what we can to make sure that they get what they need for a bright future, and we just feel like, you know, Internet is something that should be available for all of us.

(Applause.)

MS. PHILPOT-HINTON: Yes. And it's really a way for our children to

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have access to information just so that they can have a brighter future.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

MR. TORRES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Committee members for asking me to testify today. My name is Joseph Torres and I work for Free Press, a non-partisan organization that advocates for media and telecom policies serving public good. We have close to a million activists on our list, including 8,000 right here in the Philadelphia area.

I am here today to urge the City Council to adopt a franchise agreement that removes the barriers so many poor families face when seeking affordable high-speed Internet service. Lawmakers across the country increasingly recognize the need for action to increase broadband adoption.

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Earlier this year, President Obama said access to high-speed broadband is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity for American families, businesses, and consumers. He directed federal agencies to focus on broadband deployment, competition, and adoption.

We believe the primary reason that a third of the U.S. population and a third of the Philadelphia residents remain unconnected is due to a lack of competition, resulting in absence of affordable service.

Last year, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler said that meaningful competition for high-speed wire broadband is lacking.

As a growing number of households cite price as the main barrier to adoption, the operating margin on broadband for large cable companies like Comcast is 60 percent.

High prices make for a persistent digital divide that harms the most vulnerable populations. Just 46

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percent of households making under $20,000 a year have broadband compared to 94 percent of those making over $100,000 a year. Eighty-two percent of white households have high-speed broadband compared to just 66 percent of black and Latino households. This is why we support the efforts of local residents and the CAP Comcast Campaign to close those divides.

We commend the City Council and Comcast for tentatively agreeing to expand Internet Essentials to low-income seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans, but it's clearly not enough. We join our allies in calling for further expansion to those who are eligible for programs like Lifeline, Medicaid, food stamps. Comcast should remove burdensome eligibility barriers that prevent many residents from signing up if they fail to pay a Comcast bill, if you do not have a childhood who qualifies for free school program. And while adoption programs,

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like Internet Essentials, play an important role at chipping away at the digital divide, they are not a substitute for comprehensive policies to improve broadband choice, lower prices, and combat the impact of structural inequality and poverty.

Internet access is critical to the health and well-being of the City's most vulnerable communities. The City Council has a unique opportunity to take major strides toward eliminating structural barriers that prevent so many people from getting broadband today.

So thank you, and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

Next witness, please. Identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. SASSAMAN: Chairman Henon, esteemed members of the Public Property

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Committee, and City Council, thank you for inviting me today to speak to you about Internet access here in Philadelphia. My name is Hannah Sassaman. I am the Policy Director at Media Mobilizing Project.

(Applause.)

MS. SASSAMAN: And we coordinate the CAP Comcast Coalition, representing teachers, students, low-wage workers, people with disabilities and many others in the poorest big city in the United States, and it's my life's work and our organization's mission to change the unfair policies that keep most poor and working people from having their right to communicate.

I'm going to talk mostly about facts. We have poor Internet access because of poverty. In March, the Inquirer analyzed census records to demonstrate that Philly has the third worst at-home broadband access of any big city in the U.S., 64.1 percent, behind

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only Memphis and Detroit. While training and relevance are big reasons why people can't get online, poverty is the biggest reason, and it is no coincidence in America's poorest city. And that's because we have little to no competition, especially for low-cost broadband.

Comcast controls 80 percent of the Philadelphia cable market. Options for at-home broadband access are not expanding. They are shutting down. Clear Wireless, as you may have heard from your constituents, is under threat of being shut down now in November.

My next-door neighbor, Tracy Emerson, struggled with her Comcast bill as she raised her two children. When she broke her foot and lost her job, she had to cut it. "I couldn't afford it. They're always changing their packages. It's never less. It's always more," she told me. Her son has to look for jobs when she tethers her phone to his computer. She takes her computer to the

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laundromat to get online.

Because we have no competition, it is essential that programs like Internet Essentials truly serve the largest possible community of low-income people.

(Applause.)

MS. SASSAMAN: Right now -- thank you.

Right now only families in Philly with school-age children and now as of today seniors, but school-age children that qualify for the National School Lunch Program can access IE or if you go to a school that has 50 percent or more kids that get free lunch. That means that most people cannot qualify, families without kids, college students, unemployed people or people with disabilities. If you otherwise qualify, but you have a back bill, you can't get the program. If you scrimp and save to pay for full price Internet, you have to turn that Comcast Internet off for 90

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days in order to qualify for Internet Essentials. I don't know about you, but I would not turn off my water, my electricity, my heat, my phone or my cable or Internet to qualify for a discount, because access to every one of those things is a human right.

(Applause.)

MS. SASSAMAN: If we expand Internet Essentials to people using Section 8 vouchers in Philadelphia, 16,000 households would qualify. If we expanded it to food stamps recipients, 147,000 people would qualify if they otherwise did not. If we expanded it to people who get Medicaid, 605,000 people would qualify if they otherwise didn't. These are poor people. They've proven it. And in Seattle, Washington's recent franchise with Cablevision -- this is also in the packet that I provided as testimony -- Cablevision as part of a franchise was pushed to provide discount speeds up to 40 megabits per second --

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that's four times the speed of Internet Essentials -- to low-income residents, Section 8 housing recipients, and residents eligible for, not just receiving, Obama Phone.

New York is expanding it all across the public parks, building 40 community tech centers.

I'm going to now close by telling you what we want, what the CAP Comcast Coalition is pushing for. We want definitely, as it was outlined in the term sheet you received in October, for Comcast to expand Internet Essentials to not just seniors but people with disabilities and veterans. Do not let them back off of that commitment to those populations.

We should go further and expand it to all low-income people that use or who are eligible for Lifeline and Medicaid or any other means-tested program that expands it broadly. We must remove the 90-day window, keeping

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existing customers who would otherwise qualify offline.

Set the basement speed for Internet Essentials at their bottom rate, full price speed at 25 megabits per second, which is the same definition as broadband, by the way. Ten megabits per second is not broadband.

Comcast must report regularly to Council on their success, with goals to increase participation. Help customers access the program. Don't do what they did to Malique.

The Digital Inclusion Alliance that's part of the draft term letter is a good start, but we need more investment from Comcast, 500K a year. And not just 500K, protect customers' privacy and do not preclude future discounts from being available.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Excuse me, Ms. Sassaman. Can you sum up and conclude your testimony.

MS. SASSAMAN: My last line

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was, I think that this is an idea that we can all support and work towards together.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Any questions from this Committee?

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I will be brief because I know we're trying to move this.

I think this is one of the areas where Comcast over the last few years has demonstrated its willingness to work with us about how do we create expansion. You know, the name is fitting when you say it's Internet Essentials, because it is essential. Can you imagine a situation where a foster child can Skype with his counselor because they need intervention? Can you imagine a senior who can call their doctor because

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they feel ill and don't want to get on the bus and be able to check in via Skype? That's why Internet Essentials is essential.

And I think as part of this discussion as we talk about its current utilization and the need to give access, I think we need to look at it as how government, how the healthcare, how we provide for our most vulnerable communities. This is an area where Comcast has moved, but this is an area with the most potential as we serve Philadelphia's most vulnerable. And we will be looking at all of those opportunities to partner with our DHS system, with our health departments, with our other community-based stakeholders in providing more services.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, Councilwoman.

The Chair recognizes Councilman

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Greenlee.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly agree with the comments Councilwoman Sanchez just made.

But specifically, Ms. Powell-Lee, I know I've been asking this for a while, and I still don't understand. This whole issue of the 90-day turnoff, explain that. I still don't understand it. Why is that necessary to do?

MS. POWELL-LEE: Well, thank you, Councilman Greenlee. I'm going to invite our national Senior Director to address this issue, as we have talked privately about that. But this is a chance to let the most vulnerable folks who have not had the Internet service at all. So that's why that policy was put in place, to give those people an opportunity, the most vulnerable, our children who have never had the service in their home. That's why that was put

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in place. But I would ask that Karima --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: But let me just add this, and I know that has been an answer. But isn't it reasonable to think there's a lot of people who have the service but are really scrimping and saving to try to keep it?

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So you're making them make that choice and I -- okay. Go ahead. That's my concern.

MS. ZEDAN: Good afternoon, Chairman Henon, the rest of the Committee members. My name is Karima Zedan. I'm the Program Director for Internet Essentials for Comcast. And I'm afraid I don't have a really stellar answer for you as to why the 90-day policy exists. However --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That means you're going to do away with it or what?

MS. ZEDAN: I can offer you this --

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(Applause.)

MS. ZEDAN: -- which is, I can offer you a couple of statistics, which is that the policy was put in place from the very beginning so that we would target families with school-age kids who had never been online. So the intent of the program was to target folks involved in education who needed to cross over the digital divide, and that's where we put all of our grassroots efforts and that's where we put our media and our PSAs toward that effort, to really try to help people understand the relevance and the value of the Internet.

People who are online really already get it, and all of the research demonstrated that the number one barrier to broadband adoption was in fact relevance. So that's where we've put our efforts, and that's the best answer I can offer you at this time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. But then you're asking people -- and I

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don't want to get into a debate. I know we got a long day. But you're asking people that have somehow put it together to save money and maybe not paying something else to turn off for 90 days to get -- we're not going to agree on this, I guess, but I have to say that is one as we go on, you're going to have to convince me to be supportive of this and not change that 90-day.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I'll just go on record saying that.

Ms. Powell-Lee, can I just ask one other question, and I appreciate the senior program that you're doing. Has there been any more discussion on veterans and disabled, on including them in this program? I think it's timely since Veterans Day was the other day.

MS. ZEDAN: So certainly. Actually, a number of our partners across the footprint and here in Philadelphia have come to us asking about different

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populations, and the reason we chose seniors first in other markets and now we're launching here in Philadelphia is because that was the number one population where people said we really need to help seniors get online. And this isn't -- Internet Essentials isn't the kind of model that's a plug-and-play model where we can just say now we're going to serve X, Y or Z populations. We actually need to take some time and study and learn about seniors in this case, take our best practices and see what works.

We anticipate this will actually be quite different than connecting families with school-age kids, because you have a kid in the household and the kid is online. The kid has a device. The kid can get excited about the Internet. Seniors -- for many seniors, the thought of a smartphone, a tablet, understanding the Internet will be much harder.

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MS. POWELL-LEE: We've also worked closely with many local community-based organizations, including Philadelphia OIC, Career Wardrobe, People's Emergency Center, PAL centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Lift to host hundreds of digital literacy trainings, which I think are extremely important, and that's open to everyone. Educational forums, parent-teacher training, and a wide variety of community events throughout the year. We've been working diligently on this Internet Essentials initiative, and we also thank some of our Councilmembers who have also worked alongside with us, allowing us to come into your districts and to meet with families. So this is an important issue to us.

We appreciate your concern, Councilman Greenlee, but at this time, we are definitely working with the most vulnerable and those who have never had the Internet in their home right now.

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COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. I understand. I think disabled people would certainly be declared as vulnerable also, but I'll leave it at that. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, Councilman.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

There's been so much talk about how cable money could be used and how contributions could be made and what areas. Many of us have individual thoughts about areas we're interested in, like libraries and such, but this whole issue that we're talking about now seems to me to be the premier issues that we need to consider. And it seems to me, even though we have many hours left, that if you consider how you can come to grips with this -- whenever you want to work

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something out, everybody has got to give a little -- you decide how you're going to please everybody with this population, then maybe we can move in a positive manner and everybody will feel good about trying to resolve this issue.

So that's my suggestion. Consider all that's been said. The backdrop of all of this has been the same since this hearing started. So you know how people feel and what this Internet access issue is, and we ask you to try to come to grips with it and try to make an offer that will please all the members of Council.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, Councilwoman.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: The Chair would like to recognize that Councilman Jones, Majority Leader, has joined us. I'm not sure if he wants to join in the conversation, but we're going to be here

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for a little while, Councilman.

I just want to reiterate for folks at the hearing here, Internet Essentials was the only letter that each member of Council signed that has been a common and consistent concern, trying to get more people online. We've had a lot of folks that can vouch for the characters and the contributions that Comcast has given and continues to give on a regular basis. And thank God. I'm pleased that -- I don't know if the numbers are right, that $8 billion company grew a billion dollars a year over the last four years. That is fantastic that we have that right here in our backyard. And we are not only vouching for the organizations that are here to testify, we're vouching for the people of the City of Philadelphia, and through this Needs Assessment, we have the opportunity to talk about things that change. I mean, things change all the time. We change legislation here in City

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Council on a regular basis. Sometimes people argue that we change the rules after we set them, but what we do is, we adjust. And I'm glad to hear that in some separate conversations outside the term sheet that Internet Essentials is important when it comes to eligibility, getting low-income and Philadelphians online, not just with children but the eligibility. We talk about senior discounts. And I know that as the Councilman had just discussed about the 90-day turnoff and turn on the service as well as the speed that's being offered, I'm glad that we're having those conversations.

So the conversations I encourage -- I hope will continue as we go through this process, as we move forward again. We have collectively as a Council -- and this is one area that we all agree on, tweak and modify as we offer better benefits to the City of Philadelphia in a fair fashion.

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So I thank you for having this discussion. We'll be submitting more questions for the record, and hope to get a positive response or a response in a timely fashion.

Are there any other questions here for the panel?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, thank you so much for your testimony. We appreciate it.

Clerk, would you call the next panel.

THE CLERK: Next panel, PhillyCAM Channels and Funding.

(Applause.)

THE CLERK: Gretjen Clausing, Executive Director, PhillyCAM; Louis Massiah, Executive Director, Scribe Video Center/PhillyCAM Board; Mike Wassenaar, President, Alliance for Community Media; Anthony Riddle, Co-Director, BRIC Community Media; Trudy Haynes, Member, PhillyCAM; Beth McConnell, Founding

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Member, PhillyCAM; Adel Ebeid, Chief Innovation Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications, Incorporated; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Kathleen Sullivan, Vice President, Government Affairs and Regulatory Relations, Comcast; Mark Reilly, Senior Vice President of Government and Regulatory Relations, Comcast.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Can you state your name and proceed with your testimony, please. Gretjen, you want to lead off.

MS. CLAUSING: Yes.

Good afternoon. My name is Gretjen Clausing and I'm the Executive Director of PhillyCAM, the City's public access television station, and I would like to --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: A little

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closer to the microphone, please.

MS. CLAUSING: A little closer? I'm in media. I should know that.

I will start again. Good afternoon. My name is Gretjen Clausing and I'm the Executive Director of PhillyCAM, the City's public access television station, and I would like to thank Councilman Henon and the whole Committee for giving us this opportunity to testify this afternoon.

I'd like to just take a moment to acknowledge a couple of my Board members who are in attendance who are actually not up here with me at the panel. There's Jihad Ali, if they could please stand, Jonathan Stein, and Jos Duncan are here in the crowd and I just would like to acknowledge them.

And now I'm going to offer my testimony.

So PhillyCAM is born out of a 27-year struggle to make public access television a reality in Philadelphia. It

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rests firmly on the shoulders of a coalition of artists, community leaders, activists, and social justice groups who fought hard for the creation of a space where people can openly exchange creative -- their experiences through media.

We have a really amazing story to tell, and it's about City government and community advocates working together to create something very special back in 2007 when City Council approved a landmark amendment to the 1998 Comcast franchise that made it possible for PhillyCAM to come into existence.

On October 23rd, 2009, PhillyCAM began providing residents of Philadelphia the opportunity to produce and share their own non-commercial television programs on cable channels Comcast 66 and 969 and Verizon 29 and 30. Fast forward five years, PhillyCAM premieres on average 13 hours of new, locally produced programming each week.

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It's on PhillyCAM that you can see stories of young people from the New Sanctuary Movement share their thoughts and personal experiences of deportation. It's where Germantown's Mike Dennis, host of Reelblack TV, talked with the director of Selma, Ava DuVernay, about African American film culture. It's where Grady Jones, producer of Unsolved Philadelphia, was able to find an audience for his program that gives families the opportunity to remember loved ones lost to violent crimes. By airing on PhillyCAM, Unsolved Philadelphia resulted in Philadelphia Police receiving tips, aiding in arrests in three cold case murders.

A recent study from the University of Texas answered an important question, who watches public access television.

The researchers found that public access television tends to be more important to poor and minority

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communities, but that all members of the community can and are served. When the researchers looked at the impact of public access television on frequent viewers, they discovered that minority and less educated viewers had significantly more social capital as compared to those who didn't regularly view public access television.

This research makes sense to us. Because our programming is delivered over cable TV, PhillyCAM is positioned to provide important and popular content to many lower-income Philadelphians who don't have other media options like the Internet to choose from.

PhillyCAM's impact extends beyond our members to the entire City through the community collaborations with cultural organizations, non-profits, and City departments by amplifying their work through media.

We support Liberty Resources on the production of a program called

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DisLabeled that uses media by people with disabilities as a conversation starter to address issues facing their constituents.

For the past few years, we've collaborated with the Moonstone Art Center on a live monthly poetry program that is part discussion and part slam and has featured Sonia Sanchez, along with the City's first youth poet laureates.

Since 2011, we've produced the Video Voter Guide as a way of providing Philadelphians the opportunity to learn more information about the candidates running in local elections. And in the past three years, we've emerged as a hub of youth media activity, with over 500 young people participating in our programs and resulting in 57 hours of content that has been aired on our channel just in the past year.

For three years, we've partnered with West Philadelphia's People's Emergency Center to train their staff and young people. In 2013, PEC

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young people interviewed students and teachers for a 30-minute talk show about the closing of University City High School.

In the past four years, over 1,500 people have participated in our video production workshops, resulting in over 400 people becoming certified producers. A mother, Ruby Beckett, and her daughter, Andrea Spruill, came to PhillyCAM in 2012 and enrolled in our studio production class. Since then, they've taken every workshop and are now, three years later, Mother Daughter Productions. They're a skilled production outfit being hired by other non-profits to create content --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Gretjen, just to be fair, we're trying to hold everybody. So if you could wrap up. And if you have written, you can certainly submit that and we'll have it --

MS. CLAUSING: Yes. And you should actually have folders that we

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prepared that has my complete testimony.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

MS. CLAUSING: And so what I'm just -- we have a lot of plans for growth, which you can see over on our chart over there, but under this agreement negotiated by the Administration and Comcast, it's only agreed to 9 million in funding for PhillyCAM over the next 15 years. Nine million is a 28 percent cut in funding from the level of support required to give -- that they were required to give under the past franchise.

If this funding level stays, PhillyCAM operations will be significantly impacted. We'll need to cut budgets, eliminate staff, reduce our member support, and will not be able to maintain and upgrade our equipment --

COUNCILMAN HENON: Ms. Clausing, I hate to ask you again. Please, can you wrap it up. We have your testimony on the record and appreciate

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your presence.

MS. CLAUSING: All right. So that's my big close. Hashtag, fair franchise.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Next witness, please identify yourself and proceed with your testimony.

MR. MASSIAH: Good afternoon, Councilman Henon, other members of City Council, friends of public media and public access, cable media providers, television users and watchers. My name is Louie Massiah. I'm the Co-Chair of the Board of PhillyCAM, Philadelphia's public access corporation, as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Scribe Video Center. I very much appreciate Councilman Henon's kind invitation to make this presentation to the City Council's Committee on Public Property and Public Works in regards to Bill 150809, the Comcast franchise agreement.

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My election as Chair of the Board of PhillyCAM has been relatively new, although my connection to the struggle for community media goes back many decades. This movement springs from a belief that in this current age, the ability for ordinary citizens to share their visions and opinions with each other is a necessary part of a democratic discourse. This is in fact my second tenure on the Board of Philadelphia's Public Access Corporation, having served as the founding Board Chair in the initial years of the institution, even before we first went on air.

In those intervening years, I have seen PhillyCAM develop as one of the very few places for ordinary citizens to share their opinions, their visions and analyses with other Philadelphians. PhillyCAM is our community forum, our public square, our speakers corner. In an age with hundreds of cable channels and an Internet with what seems like an

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infinite number of voices, there are very few places where citizens of Philadelphia, without a corporate gatekeeper, can talk to each other about what is important to them. It is paid for through our cable fees. Because cable providers are allowed to make use of public facilities, the streets, the underground rights-of-way, City Council and the Mayor have wisely negotiated to make sure that the citizens also gain a direct benefit in awarding franchise agreements.

In its initial six years of cable casting, PhillyCAM has trained hundreds -- thousands really -- hundreds of citizen producers in media production, working with both individuals, members of community groups, with schools, churches, and public institutions. We have worked with a constituency that includes young people, adults, seniors from all parts of the City.

Each week we provide almost 15

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hours of new local programming. We should compare that to the programming produced by public television stations. It's more.

Ordinary citizens are allowed to present their opinions about issues of the day. PhillyCAM has been one of the few places that consistently provides exposure to Philadelphia's rich cultural offerings, including jazz and spoken word artists, from cooking shows, programs produced by faith communities, exploring women's issues, issues of youth. The programming produced and cable-cast on PhillyCAM runs the gamut. The studios are bursting at the seams, and now according to the strategic plan developed by the Board in consultation with the City, it is a time to help PhillyCAM grow. The vision and plan is to develop mobile production capability, to launch production hubs with partner organizations in other parts of the City, specifically North, Northeast, South,

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Southwest, and West Philadelphia.

When we consider the public benefit of the strong public access facilities serving all the citizens of Philadelphia, particularly keeping in mind the profitability of cable and the franchise, we very much hope that City Council will work for a franchise agreement that will allow for substantially more funding to allow for the facilities and the equipment that public access should have.

I'm almost finished.

The initial funding proposal of Comcast in this draft agreement would mean not growth, but a diminution of services and access. Based on the City's own Needs Assessment, not our assessment, the assessment done by the City, we ask for funding at the level of 22.5 million over 15 years, which would allow for us to expand the amount of television programming produced at facilities around the City, allow for greater collaboration

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and partnership with the School District and other entities, and increase training of community reporters. This level of funding is more than warranted for a robust cable system to benefit all citizens.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you so much for your testimony.

MR. MASSIAH: Thank you very much, Councilman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: We appreciate it.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Next witness, please. Identify yourself and you may proceed with your testimony. And please as well be mindful of the time.

MR. WASSENAAR: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Mike Wassenaar. I'm the President of the Alliance for Community Media, the non-profit association that works to advance the achievements of public educational and government access

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channels and community media centers across the United States. For the sake of disclosure, I have not received money from Philadelphia, but in my career I have received money from Comcast. I'm actually very pleased to say that as a public and educational access provider in the City of St. Paul for some 13 years, a city which actually has stronger and more vibrant support than Philadelphia has for the hometown of Comcast.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to give you some perspectives of the proposed franchise and provide you some context for what you could achieve if you bettered this deal for your residents and your constituents.

As the President of my association, I've had the benefit of seeing the work of PEG channels in advancing across the United States and the benefits of community members that they derive when they have the ability to produce local independent programming and

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distribute it to their neighbors, their church groups, their political supporters, their allies, and to the broader community.

When my colleagues in the field look at the proposed monetary benefit for PEG, not just for public access, we believe that this is not a good deal for the people of Philadelphia. Let me say that again. It is not a good deal.

Significant programming to meet the needs of Philadelphians could be expanded under a new franchise with Comcast and would provide Comcast viewers with viewing opportunities of local cultural, political, and religious programming that they do not receive today.

Let me give you one concrete example. I had the pleasure of meeting a Philadelphia resident, PhillyCAM producer, Matt Clark, this week at the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, DC. Clark works for the

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disabled communities in Philadelphia, and he noted in his testimony to the FCC that deaf and hard-of-hearing communities in Philadelphia could benefit from captioning and other audio assistance services on public access television. Those expanded services are beyond the means of PhillyCAM if this deal is enacted as it stands today. Expanded captioning alone would cost approximately $150 per program hour. If support of public access were expanded, disabled communities and non-English-speaking communities in Philadelphia would reap the benefits of this form of inclusion.

Think as well about the possibility of creating more meaningful content for the non-profit and religious sector in Philadelphia. In other cities across the country, Comcast franchises support significant original local content creation, hundreds of hours of programming produced by professional producers who are housed at public access

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facilities. Such benefits are actually easy to craft and support.

In other communities, public access facilities supported by Comcast generously provide expanded workplace training, workforce development, and development opportunities for youth that go beyond what you currently have in Philadelphia. The support, for example, of staffing costs and stipend support for youth could easily be accommodated in a proposed deal.

And, further, when one examines the comparable support in major metropolitan centers for this very work that we say we support, it seems to me that Philadelphia is being shortchanged. When one looks at the per customer statistics for support for community services in, say, New York City, the $18 million provided over a ten-year period in this franchise seems paltry. It appears Philadelphia is not just leaving money on the table, but you're

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shortchanging your residents if you don't get more in benefits here.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: If you could --

MR. WASSENAAR: So I hope you find ways to strengthen this proposal and expand services for all your residents. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: You mentioned St. Paul?

MR. WASSENAAR: I beg your pardon?

COUNCILMAN HENON: You mentioned St. Paul?

MR. WASSENAAR: Yes.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I think a new agreement was just reached out in St. Paul. I think they had --

MR. WASSENAAR: Yeah. They

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just solidified a ten-year deal, I believe, and it has significant --

COUNCILMAN HENON: A robust senior discount, unlimited data, and a lot of attention to PEG.

MR. WASSENAAR: I think specifically for my perspective in terms of the PEG provisions that they provide, it is significantly higher on a per customer basis than you have here in the proposed bill.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

State your name for the record and proceed with your testimony. Thank you.

MR. RIDDLE: Good afternoon. My name is Anthony Riddle. I'm the Director of Community Media for BRIC, the community access operator for the Borough of Brooklyn in the City of New York, and I'd like to thank the City Council of Philadelphia and the members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak to

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you about the importance of PhillyCAM.

I should point out that the first time I spoke before you was more than 20 years ago. At that time, I spoke on behalf of a public access organization that was promised to the people of Philadelphia in the franchise agreement, but had not yet been delivered by Comcast. In the time since then, I have run access organizations in New York City while paying close attention to developments in Philadelphia and the nation. I'd like to share a brief tale of two cities.

Every quarter more than 500 volunteers submit programs to BRIC that we broadcast on four cable channels to 550,000 homes as well as internationally over the Internet. This year we have had almost 100,000 viewers of our live stream alone.

Over the past 25 years, BRIC has broadcast an estimated half million hours of programming. These programs

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represent every culture, language, nationality, and political viewpoint found in Brooklyn. More importantly, we have been the only forum for many who have never seen or been fairly represented in mainstream media.

Over those 25 years, New York and Philadelphia both have had franchise agreements. When I came here to speak before this august body in the mid 1990s, Philadelphia was the largest city in the nation not to have a public access facility. Ten more years passed before the people, the Council, and the Mayor came together to give birth to PhillyCAM. In those ten years, BRIC programmed the creations, the deep-felt beliefs, and the dreams of tens of thousands of Brooklynites. We supported the work of innumerable non-profits offering direct services to citizens in need. We have helped bind a diverse city into a unified community. We have launched professional careers and we've changed lives. Think

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of the lives that could have been changed here in the decade that was lost.

Generally BRIC is supported by Time Warner, Cablevision, and Verizon at about $3 million per year in a 550,000 subscriber system. That works out to $5.40 per year per sub or about 45 cents per month per sub. Forty-five cents out of a cable bill of well over $100.

We understand that PhillyCAM receives about 25 cents per sub. Comcast wants to slash even that to 17 cents per sub per month. And that after decades of not fulfilling the promise of the early franchise agreements.

And I should point out that BRIC's franchise support and that of many other access operations went up in the last agreement renewal, just like cable bills and practically everything else.

A couple of years ago when PhillyCAM hosted the national public access conference, hundreds of access workers had the privilege of seeing the

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tremendous innovative work that is being done here in Philadelphia. It hardly seems possible that so much has been done in such a small handful of years.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, if you could wrap up, because we're trying to keep that three minutes to everybody. Okay?

MR. RIDDLE: Okay. It was a long drive down here. I'll wrap up in a moment.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I understand. I understand.

MR. RIDDLE: PhillyCAM is recognized as the national precocious child of public access services. PhillyCAM and the people of Philadelphia deserve more support, not less.

In closing, the franchise agreement is one of the single largest contracts the City manages on behalf of its citizens. You are not allowed to control the dramatic increase of cable bills. You are not allowed to control

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what channels Comcast offers. What you can do is make sure that the people of the City get a fair and proper rent for the use of its public right-of-way to make a tremendous profit, and support for PhillyCAM is one of the only ways allowed by federal law to collect that rent.

City Council approval of the Comcast franchise should be conditioned upon written agreement to provide modern and reasonable support for PhillyCAM. We hope that the City of Philadelphia and Comcast will partner to ensure that if this renewal goes through, it helps close the digital divide. You can do this by increasing PhillyCAM's ability to develop partnerships with schools and libraries, to train young people in the latest technology, and to ensure that Philadelphia continue to gain access to high-quality local and community programing.

Thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

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you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I think there's some other people in the panel. Ms. Haynes, are you speaking? Trudy, you want to come up.

MS. HAYNES: When I'm called.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It's your turn. Come on.

Beth, you're there. If you want to start, please. Just identify yourself and proceed.

MS. McCONNELL: Good afternoon, members of City Council, Chairman Henon, I think if he's still here, and other members of the Committee. Mr. Lederer, it's great to see you again. Welcome home. My name is Beth McConnell. Members of Council are used to seeing me in this seat with my professional affiliation, but I'm here representing myself today.

I was appointed by Mayor Nutter to the interim Board of PhillyCAM in 2008

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and served on the Board just until this past spring, including several years as Co-Chair, and it is one of my proudest accomplishments to have been part of the team of the Board, the staff, and the volunteers that have built PhillyCAM into a world-class public access facility in just six short years. But I understand that Comcast is proposing cutting PhillyCAM's support over the next 15 years by 28 percent, and I say no way to cutting PhillyCAM.

(Applause.)

MS. McCONNELL: In fact, I urge the Administration, Nutter Administration, and Council to ensure that the franchise agreement provides PhillyCAM with the resource to grow over the next 15 years. A city as large as ours requires a PhillyCAM that has the resources to reach people in every neighborhood, in multiple languages, and to offer them the highest quality equipment, training, and cable channel

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platform to share their stories.

The public has provided significant subsidies to Comcast in the form of property tax abatements and development subsidies, and I think adequately funding PhillyCAM is the least that we should get in return.

In its six short years, PhillyCAM has become a vital anchor institution, one that Philadelphia needs to create a more equitable city. PhillyCAM gives young people who may not even have Internet access at home the training, equipment, technical support to tell their own stories. Rather than being told to sit down and be quiet, PhillyCAM gives them the tools to stand up and be heard.

(Applause.)

MS. McCONNELL: PhillyCAM gives artists a platform to share their work - music, films, poetry. In a society that we are saturated with mass-produced artistic content, PhillyCAM helps artists

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saturate us with creativity and diversity.

And, finally, PhillyCAM gives non-profits the ability to share our work with a broader audience. I recently organized a mayoral candidates forum on equitable development and I turned to PhillyCAM to live stream the event, play it on the cable channel for weeks leading up to the mayoral primary. This gave Philadelphians who could not attend in person a chance to hear what the candidates said about really important issues affecting our neighborhoods, our commercial corridors, affordable housing, local participation in development. Without PhillyCAM, that simply wouldn't have happened.

A cut to PhillyCAM means less civic dialogue, less local art, less youth training, and less civic engagement. That adds up to a weaker Philadelphia, and I know that's not the business that this Council is in. So I

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know you'll tell Comcast no way to cutting PhillyCAM and that you urge for more support.

Thank you in advance for your leadership and opportunity to comment.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you so much for your testimony.

Ms. Haynes, you may identify yourself for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. HAYNES: My name is Trudy Haynes, and greetings to all of you, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for the opportunity for me to be able to say I am proud to be a member of PhillyCAM.

(Applause.)

MS. HAYNES: And I say that with a lot behind it, because I had to pay to be a member. I was not invited because of my name. So it's the quality that we have at PhillyCAM and diversity.

And as you know, PhillyCAM is the only venue in Philadelphia which

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affords our average and under-serviced community an opportunity to not only express but to develop talent and to learn the intricacies of communication by sharing a volume of ideas and opinions with each other.

So without the continued, and I say this, increased support by a monopoly company, a large segment in our community would be left unattended and unnoticed.

Communications, as you know, is going to be our future, and we should be able to use it effectively and professionally. Comcast makes this possible for its public to professionally be involved, how to use it, and how to be the right arm of Comcast. PhillyCAM has the ability and the interest to do this, and we can be the right hand of Comcast. We need you, but you need us.

And I'd like to say in closing that even though I served at Channel 3, now CBS 3, for 33 years, I found that I had to go back to school and I had to

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learn and pay for learning at PhillyCAM, and that made me very proud. And I haven't passed all the tests yet, so I'm still learning.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Ms. Haynes, thank you so much for coming in. I'm sure people not just of this Committee but people here appreciate what you've done in your career, and thank you for still being a part of what we do here in Philadelphia. Thank you.

MS. HAYNES: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Oh.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much, Chairman.

Just to the Administration, in terms of the current agreement, at least where it is at this time, the testimony is that there's a reduction, that it's 9 million over 15 years for PEG; is that

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correct?

MR. EBEID: The franchise agreement that just expired provided PhillyCAM with 6.7 million. If this agreement moves forward, it would provide PhillyCAM $9 million.

COUNCILMAN OH: But over what period of time, 6 million over what period of time?

MR. EBEID: Fifteen years.

COUNCILMAN OH: And then this is 9 million of over 15 years?

MR. EBEID: Nine million over 15 years versus 6.7 over the last 15 years.

COUNCILMAN OH: Is that specifically for PhillyCAM or does that money come into kind of a pot and then it's allocated by the Administration to different pots?

MR. EBEID: It was a total of $18 million that have been negotiated to date. Fifty percent of that would be allocated to PhillyCAM.

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COUNCILMAN OH: I'm sorry. I didn't hear that.

MR. EBEID: So of the $18 million that have been negotiated to date, 50 percent would be allocated to PhillyCAM.

COUNCILMAN OH: What happens to the other 50 percent?

MR. EBEID: So I think you're going to hear after this, you're going to hear that an additional 25 percent, which is 4.5 million, would be allocated to the School District for their channel and 4.5 -- the remaining 4.5 million would be allocated to the government channel.

COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Thank you.

I'm sorry. Would you add your comment to that.

MS. CLAUSING: Yeah. I just wanted to make one comment about that. In the original franchise, that was basically only eight years. So if we look at that over an eight-year period,

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PhillyCAM at that point was actually getting $827,000 a year. So that's where I perceive there to be a cut when I look at an agreement that's extending over 15 years.

COUNCILMAN OH: I'll just add that we're just asking questions to understand what everybody's positions are. They don't indicate that we're okay or not okay with anything. Just trying to get answers. Thank you.

MS. CLAUSING: I appreciate it, Councilman. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you.

I wanted to take advantage of Mr. Anthony Riddle who came up from New York. One of the -- again, this is an area where I think there's so much growth. Does New York City have different access stations with different

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languages, with local content?

MR. RIDDLE: Well, yeah. And I'm from Brooklyn, but I can speak about the whole city. I know that at one point when I was working in Manhattan, we had over 95 different Spanish-speaking programs alone.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Local content stuff?

MR. RIDDLE: All local content. In fact, we did a survey that showed that Spanish-speaking households in New York tended to turn to our channels first before going to Univision or any of the international channels to see if there was any local programing on.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And what other languages in addition to --

MR. RIDDLE: Oh, my God. Every language. We at one point during one of the wars, we had -- the Coast Guards were coming in and doing a show in their language and then the Serbians saw that and they wanted to come in and do a show

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in their language as well. So we've had everything -- all of the Asian languages that you can think of, many different versions of Spanish. We've got Haitian Creole. We really matched the communities that we serve, and we find that these communities are really dying for programming in their own culture and their own language, and we're the only place that they can find it.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: It would be good if you could share the budget and the investment by those constituencies, because I think, again, we have not utilized our access stations, and if we're really talking about being a global city and being able to talk to people in their language and in their culture, I think this is an area where, again, you have a lot of growth potential. So if you could share that with us, we would appreciate it.

MR. RIDDLE: Certainly will.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank

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you.

MR. RIDDLE: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

I agree with everything Councilwoman Quinones just uttered. And we have only one group represented in multicultural affairs, and when they hired another person, they let her go. So we've got a lot that we need to do that we're looking forward to, where we're looking forward to expand in the new year. I mean, we can't be number one in tourism and then not allow people to be able to communicate because we don't have language access.

And we wanted to say too a special thanks, because we owe her that, for all the history and kindness and the excellent work that Trudy Haynes has done. Thank you. God bless you.

(Applause.)

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COUNCILMAN HENON: The Chair recognizes Curtis Jones, Councilman Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the work that you put in, you and your staff, to kind of bring this issue before Council at the right time.

My question would be to other municipalities where people have worked, similar to the question about language but what about school access to learning platforms. It seems to me that we have certain predictable schools that have underperformed and that Google platforms and others exist where you can pipe in educational content. Was that negotiated in either New York or other municipalities?

MR. WASSENAAR: Perhaps Tony Riddle can speak of the New York instance.

That form of educational support has been negotiated in other

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franchise agreements. However, because of some federal restrictions of interpretation of how the Cable Act can work, it severely limited the types of benefits that schools now can derive simply by statutory ability. I think the question is whether or not there can be a volunteer agreement between a city and a corporation to support that educational work as opposed to simply saying, Oh, it's out of our hands, the federal government limits us from doing it.

There's no barrier to a volunteer agreement to say that you'll be supporting that educational work.

MR. RIDDLE: This is actually a really important thing that you're bringing up. We find that, for instance, in the public schools, there's a great interest in media literacy. There's a great interest in training for the youth, but there's almost no money ever put forward for that in the school system.

(Applause.)

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MR. RIDDLE: And I'm not blaming the school systems, because they have a very difficult charge. So in Brooklyn and some other places, what we do is, we actually send instructors into the schools with equipment. For instance, right now we're in 22 different public schools in Brooklyn alone, serving something like three or four thousand students throughout the entire school year. So that's three or four thousand continually throughout the entire school year. One of the reasons we're able to do that is because we have enough funding to provide some extra equipment and to provide instructors to work with them. The teachers really want this to happen, but they don't have it within their bandwidth to do it. So we sort of act to provide that for them. In addition to which we found one of our greatest partners for moving technology understanding out into the community is the Brooklyn public libraries, because

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they're in every community and they reflect those communities. So we actually go and we teach classes at four or five libraries scattered around in order to spread our footprint. But, again, we wouldn't be able to do that if we couldn't send some stuff and if we couldn't send some equipment.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Councilman, if I could just tell you also, the next panel will be specifically on the education channels and education funding. So they could expand on your question.

COUNCILMAN JONES: There are over a dozen television stations within City schools now. Where the connectivity needs to happen with communication specialists, PhillyCAM and others, connecting with these individual stations to create a format where we can produce the next Spike Lee's of our own that can be trained through this process. So I'm

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really excited of the possibility.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Greenlee.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Real quick to the Administration, if I could ask, I see -- and I know all these are negotiation points, but I see the Comcast offer is a consistent 600,000 each year, right, for the 15 years; is that correct?

MR. EBEID: So if you take the 9 million for PhillyCAM and you break it into the 15 years, it amounts to -- if you normalize it, it's about $600,000 a year.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. But how did they get -- let me tell you the reason I'm asking this, because obviously --

MR. EBEID: There were no restrictions put on how that money comes

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in.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Pardon me?

MR. EBEID: There were no restrictions put on how that money comes in.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. I guess the reason I ask that is, 600,000 obviously in 2016 doesn't get as much or gets a lot less -- a lot more than 600,000 in 2030. That's the reason I raise that. So I didn't know if this was something they get annually or is this just how you're splitting it up when you say $9 million.

MR. EBEID: So Comcast left it up to the City's discretion to divide the 18 million and also to figure out the payment schedule. So it could be a single payment. It could be over the 15 years in equal payments. It's at our discretion to do that.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And you haven't made that decision yet?

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MR. EBEID: I think that would require more conversations with PhillyCAM and what is the right payment schedule to accommodate their needs.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So that's still part of the negotiations. Because like I said, the 600,000 now and 600,000 in 15 years buys a different amount of stuff. That's the only reason I'm asking that.

Okay. So that's still under discussion, it sounds like. All right. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Any other questions from this Committee?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: That will be great. I thank you all who testified on PhillyCAM channels, and we are going to take a 15-minute recess.

(Short recess.)

THE CLERK: Will the Education Channels and Education Funding panel

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prepare to approach the witness table: Dave Culver, General Manager and Director of Engineering, DUTV and the Paul F. Harron Studios Teaching Professor Cinema and Television Department, Drexel University; Allan Kobernick, Director, Multimedia Services Provider, CCPTV, Community College of Philadelphia; Paul Gluck, Associate Professor of Practice, Department of Media Studies and Production, Temple University School of Media and Communication, General Manager TUTV, Temple University Television, the Kal and Lucille Rudman Media Production Center; Melanie Harris, Chief Information Officer, School District of Philadelphia; Hillary Linardopoulos, Philadelphia Federation of Teachers; Adel Ebeid, Chief Information Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications, Incorporated; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Kathleen Sullivan, Vice President of

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Government Affairs and Regulatory Relations, Comcast; Mark Reilly, Senior Vice President of Government and Regulatory Relations, Comcast. Thank you.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: You can state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony. Thank you.

MR. GLUCK: My name is Paul Gluck. I'm the General Manage of TUTV, Temple University Television, and with it the Kal and Lucille Rudman Media Production Center at Temple. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Committee members for your time and allowing me to be here today.

Our station, which can be seen on Comcast Channel 50 and Verizon 45 within the City and online everywhere at Templetv.net, is fortunate enough to have celebrated its fifth anniversary just this past October 1st. We're a 24/7

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educational channel. The mission of TUTV is to serve on the air as a multi-media showcase where the best work done by Temple students, faculty, alumni, and content created in partnership with community groups and with professional broadcast organizations, we've done our best to meet that commitment.

In terms of pedagogy and how we relate to our university, the station and its home facility, the Rudman Media Center, are housed in the School of Media and Communication, and TUTV serves there as a laboratory for students to engage in experiential learning and to apply the theories and techniques to which they've been exposed in our studios and in our classrooms.

We have worked very hard to create an environment where the creation of smart content leads to the development of smart multi-media professionals. The landmark we can point to is just a few weeks ago. Our students were able, with

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the support of the Rudman Foundation, to prepare 15 hours of live coverage of the Papal visit to Philadelphia. That was supplemental to the eight to nine original hours of programming we do every week in semester.

We are very fortunate. We do not come to the City for funding. We do not ask Comcast for funding. We have since 2008 received funding from the Kal and Lucille Rudman Family Foundation. That has been over $2 million in support we have received from them. We also receive support from the University itself to supplement the Rudman money.

We have been able to buy professional-grade technology. We have been able to attract instructors and staff who come from practice and can educate our students in the practices and protocols of professional media. We have gone from a room in the middle of Annenberg Hall to a multi-media center where we create content that goes on our

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cable channel, content that goes on our various social media sites, that goes on our website. And the live stream on our website allows students who are studying in Rome, Tokyo, and London to see the work we do and to participate in live broadcasts.

Our highlights have been we sent five students to the London Olympics and did five half-hour live shows with them. And I have to say, our partner for that was NBC10. No Comcast money changed hands. But they were kind enough to share the content our students created.

We have done live interviews as a function of a relationship with our College of Education with Space Station astronauts. The Papal coverage is our zenith to the moment.

We have invested several hundred thousand dollars in the conversion of our existing facility from standard definition broadcasting to high definition broadcasting. Students create

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their work in high def. Students create programs that are in high def. Our downside right now is that the bandwidth available to us from Comcast and Verizon is standard definition. So that material is then down-converted to standard def. We do believe --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: As a Temple graduate, I hate to cut off somebody from Temple, but if you could wrap up.

MR. GLUCK: Well, we're persistent. We waited 74 years for football.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I know. I hear you.

MR. GLUCK: So all I can say is -- I'll put this as succinctly as I can. Our issue is now getting high definition bandwidth. We've asked the folks at Comcast to consider that. They have in this case, as I must say they have been in other issues we've brought to them over the years, interested and

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they've given us a fair hearing. They've indicated that high definition bandwidth for our channels is within grasp and perhaps within a year. And as I said, we're patient.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you very much, sir.

We'll go through the panel, and then if there's any questions.

Sir, please identify yourself and proceed.

MR. KOBERNICK: Hi. My name is Allan Kobernick. I'm Director of Multimedia Services at Community College of Philadelphia and I'm producer of CCPTV, Comcast 53, FiOS 21, and we are the educational channel of Community College of Philadelphia.

I've submitted my formal statement to you for your perusal and I'm going to go off book a little bit just to keep it short and not take too much of your valuable time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

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you.

MR. KOBERNICK: What I do want to say is, I want to let you know what we do, and I think you're going to find that with the college stations, each college brings its own character to the kind of material they broadcast. And what we've done with our channel is because we're a smaller two-year entity, funded completely differently than four-year schools, what we've done is, we've created shows that are hosted by our faculty, and the faculty then bring to the community the unique things that the college can offer in the form of very interesting programming. So we have programming that ranges from DIY auto show, cooking shows, academic shows, and they're done on a more programmatic basis, so you can pretty well count on them at the same time every day coming on and seeing the new shows as they occur.

We also have a digital video production curriculum, which I teach in,

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and we bring our students into the station and they work with us. They also have their own show. So we have two student-produced shows, and this year we were nominated for an Emmy for our combination show called "Drop the Mic," which we're all very proud of.

I just want to say in relation to this hearing, because I do agree with my esteemed colleagues. Matter of fact, we send our students to them, and many of them do very well, and we're very happy to have our relationship with the other four-year schools. In the City Needs Assessment that was developed by you folks, it says regarding higher educational access, the higher educational access channels operated by Temple, Drexel, and LaSalle are funded by their universities and through grants and donations from the foundations and other funders. Accordingly, we have not projected specific capital equipment or facility needs for these channels.

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The Community College of Philadelphia is in a different situation, however, and we may require -- and may require capital equipment and facility funding for a production studio which we do not have. So I'm really requesting that you consider us in that. And we're also in support of high definition for our channels, and we would also like stereo, because we can't even get our programs out in stereo.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

Who would like to be next? Some folks back there. Who is next? Have a couple people come -- sir, if I could ask you to -- yeah. Who else? Hillary? Okay.

Please identify yourself and proceed, please.

MS. HARRIS: Good afternoon. Melanie Harris, Chief Information Officer for the School District of Philadelphia.

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I also will try to keep my testimony brief since I believe you have my written testimony in front of you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

MS. HARRIS: So good afternoon, Chairman Henon, members of the Committee of Public Property and Public Works, and other Councilmembers. My name is Melanie Harris and I'm the Chief Information Officer for the School District of Philadelphia overseeing all aspects of technology, a role I have been honored to serve in for the past eight years. I'm also a new Board member for PhillyCAM and proud to serve.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today about our exciting ongoing work with our educational cable channel, Philadelphia School TV, or PSTV as it's more widely known, and our corresponding live stream, and also describe our broad vision for the use of technology, providing all

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Philadelphia students a great school close to where they live.

To provide some history, during the franchise process that took place in 1998-99, the School District received $1 million to assist in the upgrade and sustainability of PSTV. And my written testimony provides the details on the use of these funds, so in summary, funding was used to make the needed infrastructure investments to support a 21st century broadcasting and programming.

Now, while these investments were needed, the content over the past 15 years has not engaged the broadest audience possible. It was stale at times and did not represent the best a public access channel could offer its constituents. With this new infusion of educational funding and the addition of an HD channel under the franchise renewal agreement that is before City Council for consideration, we can execute on our plan

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to relaunch PSTV as a powerful, student-centric communications medium focused on content generated by and relevant to our students. Our vision is to provide a platform for student-created content, news programs, school sporting events, and concert broadcasts and, at the most basic level, a medium for students to voice their experiences about their individual schools and their education.

Equally important, the transformation of PSTV will provide a valuable and viable program for the performing arts as well as career and technical education in areas such as music, acting, filmmaking, media production, studio operations, and so many related trades that could launch students directly into successful jobs post graduation.

With the modest funding investment proposed under the franchise renewal, we plan to supply over 100

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schools with the medium and filming equipment needed to become a mobile broadcasting hub. Students will no longer have to travel to 440 North Broad to share the limited resources and space of a single television studio. Instead, our schools will become remote satellite affiliates. And we are thrilled about this opportunity to open the doors to the vastly creative abilities of our students, teachers, and schools, allowing them to create their own programming, televise sporting events or develop informational programs for parents right from their own schools.

As passionate as we are about the new plans for the cable station, we're equally committed to supporting and growing our apprenticeship program. The School District already has a very successful and the longest running registered information technology apprenticeship program in the nation, a program that can be expanded to include

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the apprenticeship tracks for media production and the broadcast arts.

And our vision does not stop there. We see the power of technology in the hands of students being transformational. We have much in place to encourage the use of technology in the classroom. And while we have adopted items such as Google Apps for Education and other free content such as CK-12, we would love to once again offer NBC Learn, which is now owned by Comcast, to all of our schools, which is high-quality archival footage to enhance the classroom experience.

But, however, we still lack the necessary computer hardware to grow the next generation of computer programmers and engineers. We need to refresh outdated computer equipment and have a reoccurring line item in our budget to allow for the cyclical replacement of classroom technology. Additional resources from any source to support this

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investment would be welcomed and put to use by serving our students.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Ms. Harris, can you conclude with your written testimony, please.

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

MS. HARRIS: So I hope my testimony has conveyed our excitement about how and with adequate resources we could take a powerful media resource and evolve and transform into a system and series of instructional and career opportunities for our students on par with that which is taken for granted in most of our surrounding district counterparts.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Can you state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

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MS. LINARDOPOULOS: Good afternoon, Councilmembers. I'm Hillary Linardopoulos --

COUNCILMAN HENON: Can you move the microphone a little closer.

MS. LINARDOPOULOS: I'll use my teacher voice.

I'm a staff representative at the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, and before that, I taught for nine years at Julia DeBurgos Elementary School. And I mention my time in the classroom because it drives the work that I do every day. And truthfully, the experiences of 3rd grade students at Julia DeBurgos and high school students at Mastbaum, high school students at Benjamin Franklin, those should be the experiences that are driving the decisions that we make every day as a society.

(Applause.)

MS. LINARDOPOULOS: So I'm about to get cheesy for a minute, so I

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apologize, but I think that Nelson Mandela said it best when he said there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. So it might seem strange that hearing about Comcast is an odd time to wax philosophical, but just think of this juxtaposition, the image of a gleaming tax-exempt mega Comcast tower, with all its bells and whistles, as compared to stories of literally crumbling buildings such as the Solis-Cohen School, which was found to have such severe structural damage that it was unable to house all of its students this year. And the situation in Solis-Cohen is not unique. Too many of our schools are infested with rodents, mold, broken heating, and non-existent cooling systems. Can't even name them all.

The technology concerns are equally problematic, ancient machines, forever freezing computer screens,

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incompatible technology. And yet Comcast thrives.

While 5th and 6th graders at Solis-Cohen are carted off to Wilson Middle School for the year, the Comcast team is envisioning and building a second shiny tower. I say that's a pretty troubling representation of society's soul.

So I bring us back to this: What are we collectively doing to make sure that the children attending DeBurgos, Solis-Cohen, Ben Franklin High are afforded the opportunity to grow up in a society where their worth is so valued that we would not dream of building a brand new skyscraper while their school is crumbling?

(Applause.)

MS. LINARDOPOULOS: I'm not here to place blame or point fingers, but rather to offer perspective. This is truly what is at stake with our school system, living, breathing human beings.

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And when an opportunity to shape the discussion about what our societal priorities should be, you can bet that at the PFT we are going to be there defending our children and their educators.

This franchise agreement presents just that, an opportunity to help redefine ourselves as a society. It's lofty, yes, but it is very true. And perhaps the organization with the biggest opportunity here is Comcast.

Instead of looking at a contribution from Comcast as a charitable endeavor or as something that has to be done in order to secure a lucrative agreement, why not shift the thinking behind it. There are a number of real concrete ways where this can happen, and they can happen now. PFT supports fully the demands outlined in this powerful op-ed published in today's Inquirer. In it, Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez and Councilwoman-elect Helen Gym call for an

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investment in literacy, especially digital literacy, an investment in career and technical education through avenues such as an IT academy, and expansion of youth workforce development beyond the summer WorkReady program, and a commitment to expand Internet Essentials.

These are just some of the ways that Comcast can commit to ensuring that children that walk into our classrooms every day know that they are valued and know that the grownups who are calling the shots are committed to their well-being.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Is there anyone else here that is on the panel that wishes to testify?

Again, please identify yourself for the record.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Let me just ask for a second. Professor Culver

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was supposed to be testifying. If he's here, we didn't want to miss you.

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. Go ahead.

MR. REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, my name is Mark Reilly. I'm Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for Comcast.

So while I understand the real intent of this panel is about educational access, clearly there is interest at the table as well as in the room about the broader story with respect to education. And I think to look at the construction of shiny buildings is one way to look at who Comcast is. I think it's much more than that, and it's much more than that for the children in this city.

So when we construct an $800 million building, that's going to help the City, and it did. So if you look at the past seven years, our presence in this city and what we do, including

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building shiny buildings, has meant $100 million to the School District in the City. And when you look prospectively over this franchise term, it means $269.1 million to the School District of Philadelphia.

And I'd be remiss if I said so that's our story with respect to financial input. It is not. When you look at what our employees do, whether it's on the Boards of non-profits throughout the City that focus on the needs of the children in the City, we do that. Whether it's the 333 employees who work in the shiny building and go out and adopt a school to be involved in spreading the message of Internet Essentials, we do that. And if you look at the philanthropic support to non-profits that support the children in this city, we do that. It's been $240 million to support non-profits that do good things in the community. And we're not saying that we're done.

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So you look at something like Internet Essentials, remember that we started out in this process in offering this service and it was at one and a half megabits. We heard from people that that's not fast enough, and we doubled the speed to three megabits. We did that. People said we want it faster. We then brought it up to five megabits. People said it should be faster, and we brought up to ten megabits.

When we first offered this service, it was only to public schools, and the parochial schools said to us, What about us? We included them. The charter schools said, What about us? We included them. The cyber schools, the home schools came to us and said, We want to be able to participate, and we changed eligibility all along the way.

I think there's more that we can get done when we work together, and I think we've got a track record, not of doing things in the last year before

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there's a big contract. This is decades. Remember, Ralph Roberts more than 50 years ago started this company, believing that we need to give back in the cities in which we live and work, and I think we've got 50 years, not a year or two leading up to a contract, 50 years of commitment to try and make a difference, and we're here tonight and we will be here tonight through all of the public testimony to again listen. And I don't think there is anyone in terms of a company with the kind of presence that we have that has done more to try to make a difference in the City. We're here in a positive looking-forward way to talk together, not just about what's going to go into this cable franchise but what can we do. There's so much more that we do in the City that's not even part of any franchise. And we're here to listen to the public about what your needs are and find out what is it that we can do to partner together.

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Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Anyone else has any testimony?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Anyone from the panel wishes to ask a few questions?

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yes. Thank you.

Again, we appreciate everything that Comcast has put on the table. I think when we look at this panel, it's about growing the relationship and strengthening it through some of the issues that were brought up.

Can you in a yes or no situation -- this is for Comcast. Do you agree that we need a more robust program at the School District for literacy, and is Comcast committed to that?

MR. REILLY: We are. So we're committed to that in a few ways. I mentioned a moment ago that we've got 333 employees who volunteer, they adopt a school to try to improve digital literacy

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in the City. So they're going out, and we support them going out during the workday to try to make a difference in that school. And so we do that through our people. We do that through the financial support to digital literacy programs, and we're also doing that in this proposed franchise. So we have put forth half a million dollars for a Digital Inclusion Fund.

So we're very interested in having a conversation with the City about what we can do, but, again, not just in this renewal of the franchise. We are present in the City in so many ways above and beyond what a franchise --

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: No. We get that. I think what we're looking for is, many times when we're talking about these programs, these adopted programs, it's sort of like very selective schools, and what we're looking for is for Comcast to say that every school in the School District of Philadelphia will get the

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same type of investment and access. That's what we're looking for. So we're looking for a little bit more.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And, again, we appreciate what's on the table, and some of us actually think that the School District should be asking for more, and I'll get to Melanie in a minute as it relates to that.

When we talked about the workforce development and particularly youth workforce development, I think this is a huge area where career and technical education, a graduate of such program, we can do so much more. We should prepare every child like they can go to college, but the fact of the matter is, the reason we have CTE programs like the one I attended was because first-generation college student, wasn't sure I was going to go. But we want to strengthen those programs so that the kids like in SEPTA and other places are on that Comcast

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shiny tower, right, so our kids can go up to the 60th floor, whatever the floor is going to be, that they're in there every day and that that becomes part of their norm, the ability to access that kind of experience. And we want Comcast to say, We're going to go further and we want to look at and think outside the box about what those possibilities are. And, again, I think this is an area where Comcast has been moving. I just think that we have an opportunity through this agreement for Comcast to -- for our business community to really say, Philly is not just home for us. It's not just about home. We're going to make Philly a great city, and I think Comcast has the opportunity to do that.

The other thing that I wanted to mention, obviously CTE, the whole library and access to technology at the schools. This is one real concrete area where we can make a difference.

My son attends an elite public

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school. He goes to Central, and somebody writes a check every year and Central's library is open. But that's not the case for the schools in my district.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And, again, this is not a burden that should only be shouldered by Comcast, but we appreciate Comcast's investment. But if we're going to create that world-class workforce so that you're not the only Fortune 500 company here, we need Comcast to help and we need Comcast to step in in a major way. And we want to work with you both at the federal level and at the state level to look at what things we can do as government to incentivize and work at that.

I mentioned earlier the issue of a senior being able to call their doctor. How about a student being able to participate in his classroom because he's long term ill or has some other issues and he can plug up and be in that

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classroom through Skype. The possibilities are endless and we just want for us -- this is no longer about pilots. This is about how do we institutionalize the technology and really make Philadelphia students, irregardless of their poverty, have access to the world, and I think Comcast could do that for us.

(Applause.)

MR. REILLY: Thank you, and I appreciate that, and I think if you look at what we're doing today, not prospectively, we've got more than 700 accounts all throughout the City at schools, libraries, municipal buildings where we are providing in-kind services, unlike our competitors, and we certainly welcome others coming to the table.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: We will get them. They're next. We'll get them. Are you listening, Verizon? Are you listening? We're getting them.

MR. REILLY: And I'm going to

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come to that hearing. I'll sit in the audience.

But in all seriousness, we're doing that today. It's a million dollars worth of in-kind services that we're trying to make the schools' libraries and other municipal locations a little bit better as a result of giving those services.

But on to the workforce issue. So I think this is one that is worth us talking about. If you look at the way in which we hire today, we are often using our internal recruiter HR personnel to look for the right people for a job, and what inevitably happens is, you've got an empty slot for a position that goes unfilled until they find that right person. I think if we can partner with the education community in the City to work on curriculum as we examine -- maybe not every job, but what are the big buckets of jobs that we hire on a regular basis. We've got analysts who look at

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the type of hiring that we do and we do it with frequency, and we've got delay until there's the person in the role doing the job. I think there is an opportunity to talk about what are the kinds of jobs not only that we're filling today, but when we're complete with that shiny building number two, it will be new kinds of jobs that we're going to need to fill, and it's going to create new kinds of opportunity with whatever the people in that building dream up for new products and services.

So for us to partner with the education community so that they are tweaking the curriculum and helping to develop the right candidates for the kind of positions that we see in the future, we would love to do that.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And that's why it's important that the library and digital access be there. Because you're not going to create that workforce if we don't create them at the

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schools. And the universities, they're able to leverage their channels and their access to their own communications department. We don't have that at the School District. And I know for the School District, getting out of crisis mode and really thinking about all the different ways to use technology, it's hard to ask staff to be creative, because you're thinking about you have a $10 million a day bill to pay and no state budget. We get that. This is an opportunity to really put forth the best franchise agreement in your hometown that you can be proud of and that we all can be proud of.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, Councilwoman.

I'm not sure if this question would be directed at Comcast or to the City Office of Information and Technology, but does the franchise agreement proposal include terms on

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upgrading the SD connections to HD for PEG channels? And furthermore, would we have that kind of high-quality connection and advancement, the quality for technology for -- not waiting for 15 years from now? Are we going to be ready and available for the change of technology, so when a child needs to Skype or when we need to virtually connect kids or have that digital literacy in our libraries, are we going to be prepared for that?

MR. REILLY: So a couple of things. What we're doing with respect to the network, so we are continuing to invest and as we speak there's more fiber that's going right into the City as we speak. And so that will have a benefit for everybody in the City, residential community, business community. And so you've got that platform that can support the next generation, which I think is part of your question.

As for HD channels, we already

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have two of them in HD and we've said that we are more than willing to work out a reasonable plan to convert the remainder of the channels.

So part of our challenge with doing this, like flipping a switch, is that we are doing a multitude of things at once. So you think about making those who want more speed happy. So we've got to invest in the network and deliver more speed. But that takes up bandwidth in the network, as does HD programming.

So we're saying we are going to continue to invest in the network and we are committed to deliver faster speeds to the consumer to meet that demand, and we will get on a schedule for more of the conversion of HD programming. That's one of the issues that we've got to finalize.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. And I do understand that some of these conversations deliver the high-quality fiber and speed would also kind of transition into the network panel, which

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is going to be next or two after that. So we can further that conversation with the I-Net when it comes to quality, so we can have the fiber to our libraries and our schools and making sure that we're ready for that advancement in technology.

Anyone else have any questions?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you for your time.

Clerk, would you read the next panel, please.

THE CLERK: The next panel is Government Channels and Funding: Mark McLaughlin, Cable Television Administrator, City of Philadelphia; Adel Ebeid, Chief Information Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Kathleen Sullivan, Vice President, Government Affairs and Regulatory Relations, Comcast; Mark Reilly, Senior Vice

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President of Government and Regulatory Relations, Comcast.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Good afternoon, Chairman Henon and other members of Council. My name is Mark McLaughlin and I am the Cable TV Administrator for the City of Philadelphia.

I'd like to take one second to give recognition to my amazing staff of four who on a daily basis do a tremendous job of broadcasting these public hearings on the City's government access channel. So Ed Harris, Willie Williams, Anthony Greco, and Joe Aquino, good job, and you'll hear more about them now.

The Cable TV Unit performs two main functions for the City. It oversees the daily operation of the government access channel and it houses the Cable Franchise Authority, which is responsible for regulating the cable franchisees in

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the City.

In July of 2007, the Cable TV Unit was moved from the Department of Public Property and made part of what is now known as the Office of Innovation and Technology.

The franchise agreement between the City and the cable operators determines the degree of regulatory oversight, which generally takes the form of review and analysis of mandatory reports and submissions that the operators are required to submit on various schedules. One of the submissions that our office tracks is the payment of quarterly franchise fees sent to the City by the cable operators.

Cable TV Unit staff also manages cable customer complaints. If a resident or customer cannot resolve a complaint by contacting the cable provider, they may contact the City's Cable Franchise Authority. As per the current franchise agreement, when a

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complaint is submitted by the City on behalf of a resident, the cable provider must attempt to resolve the customer's issue within three business days. Our office receives complaints by phone, standard mail, and from an online complaint form that can be found on the City's website.

Channel 64: The City's government access channel is one of the PEG channels allocated under the current franchise agreements, and the channel has been operated by the City's Cable TV Unit since it began being cable-cast in Philadelphia. Philadelphia's government access channel is used by the City to convey important information to the citizens of Philadelphia regarding their City and City government. The majority of our programming consists of live broadcasts and replays of public hearings, press conferences, and City meetings such as PhillyStat and Planning Commission meetings. Our channel can be

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viewed over both Comcast's and Verizon's cable systems, and we also stream the channel from a link that could be found at the City's website.

We also use the channel as a means for the City to convey any emergency information to the citizens of Philadelphia. The Cable TV Unit is planning to add a second government access channel capable of providing the City's residents with additional unique programming and information.

The Cable TV Unit is also in charge of the daily audio and video setups for the Mayor and City Council in City Hall. This includes all meetings, public hearings, events, and press conferences.

On the 7th floor of City Hall, our television studio offers all our clients the ability to create videos or even produce live broadcasts for the government access channel. The government access studio provides all

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City departments means to create training or promotional videos, public service announcements and/or videos for multi-media presentations. The studio recently underwent an upgrade that converted all broadcasting equipment to high definition standards.

I thank you for your time and interest, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

Anyone from the Committee have any questions?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: I have a few questions. You had mentioned in your testimony about not just the operation of the government channels but the role of the Cable Franchise Office, and you said that you receive complaints and/or questions and then you pass it along to Comcast or the franchisee. Do you have that documented on the types of questions

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and the amount of questions?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: That's a great question. We have been gathering some data for this meeting. We were able to get complaints and resolutions for 2,015 up to the present. So I have numbers on that that I could share with you. I could either hand them in as a document or mention them right here and right now.

COUNCILMAN HENON: You can answer the question.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: The cable complaints for this year so far for Comcast cable total 722. Of those, 531 were billing, 54 were cable, 18 were Internet, 17 phone, 5 property damage, 26 miscellaneous, 33 services, 15 CSR, customer service representative/technician involved, and 23 unknown. The person didn't mention what the actual issue was when they left a message.

COUNCILMAN HENON: So those numbers, do they fit the trend and match

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the trend with the Needs Assessment?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. Yes. They've been steadily going up, but, yes, they've been going up over the last couple years, but the types -- the breakdown we've seen over the past few years has followed the same trends, billing being the most.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I have a question for Tom. How do those numbers match or is there a disparity at all or a gap in between what was just read and the Needs Assessment?

MR. ROBINSON: No. I think the Needs Assessment -- because it's a representative sampling. So, in other words, you're getting percentages of types of complaints -- is fairly consistent, though, with what Mark is seeing in actuality, a very high number of billing complaints. That was a big chunk of the complaints. We, however, also saw a number of complaints related to calling, call answering, long hold

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times, wait times. And then the other big area -- and I think Mark has experienced this as well -- is communications with subscribers. So programming changes, rate notice changes, those kinds of things, the promotional discount issues that you were talking about earlier, complaints about those areas. So I think, again, fairly consistent with what Mark is saying, with billing being very high, but we saw a wider smattering of complaints.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Do you also have Verizon complaints?

MR. ROBINSON: We did not within the Needs Assessment --

COUNCILMAN HENON: Tom. I'm sorry.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. For this year, we do have complaints compiled for Verizon, and the total was 40 for this year up until this point. They don't have as many customers. Fourteen of those were billing, 3 were cable, 2 were

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Internet, 4 were phone, 3 were property damage, 4 were miscellaneous. Services was 4, 0 under tech, and 2 unknown.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. What is the official -- maybe this question is to Adel. What is the role of the Cable Franchise Office, and is it adequately funded to fulfill the expectations of its role?

MR. EBEID: The official role of the Cable Franchise Office is to oversee how the companies are complying with the terms of the cable franchise. In addition to running the government channel, log-in complaints that are being received by the public where the public doesn't seem to have no place else to go, and also you're going to hear later on is ensuring that cable providers follow through on code violations and that they're fixing those violations in a timely fashion. All those things lead to quality of the signal, better customer service. So the office that's in place

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today is supposed to have oversight over the terms of the cable franchise.

It is not staffed adequately obviously. It's lost quite a few folks over the years, and we're committed to building up capacity so that we can do an adequate job, a satisfactory job every year, year over year, and not necessarily wait until 15 years go by and then we have to conduct a Needs Assessment.

COUNCILMAN HENON: And a question for Tom. I'm going to go back to him. Are there programming plans for Channel 63 and 64 and are the funds allocated enough to meet those plans?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. We have a plan. We have a plan to, as I mentioned in the testimony, to start offering a second channel with unique programming. We're still working on the branding of that and how that will play out. We've looked at best practices in other cities, and we think we know what way we want to go with the two different

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channels. We're going to need a little ramp-up time, because operationally, we will -- and we'll work on that, negotiate with Comcast, because we're not going to start a second channel until it's also in HD. So we'd like to have two HD channels with unique programming at the same time, and that may take a little bit of ramp-up time.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. Great.

Anyone else?

The Chair recognizes Councilman Oh.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you, Chairman.

Just for my curiosity, what do you mean by a second channel with unique programming?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Okay. Well, what we have in our plan -- and it could change. It's still in negotiations amongst ourselves. We're thinking of having a City information channel, would

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remain Channel 64, and a City legislative type channel would be Channel 63, or 1163 and 1164. We're currently broadcasting as is right now both combined. So we're doing City information and legislative information like this on 1164 as an HD channel and we'll continue to do that until we have the means in place both on our end and Comcast's to be able to do both in HD.

COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. So what I understand is you're going to broadcast hearings like this, legislative stuff, maybe press conferences?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: And any other programming that City Council can -- I think City Council has already offered some ideas on different programming that they'd like to start to offer on a more regular basis.

COUNCILMAN OH: Is that like music programs and initiatives and readings? Is it like regular TV programs that City Council comes up with?

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MR. McLAUGHLIN: It's still being talked about.

COUNCILMAN OH: So it doesn't seem clear to me. That's what I'm just trying -- I'm trying to understand what you're saying.

MR. EBEID: So I think what we tried to do in the agreement is -- the Comcast agreement that expired had reserved two channels for government, Channel 64 and 63. In continuing for the next 15 years, we've heard that Council expressed an interest in being more in control of their own content and programming. So what we did was to give them a path to do that. So we've negotiated with Comcast to keep the 63 channel as opposed to having it revert back to Comcast and then have that channel be reserved for whatever content and whatever programming that Council wants to come up with. So Council would be in complete control of what that content and the program would look like.

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COUNCILMAN HENON: I'd like to, if I could, add to that. I know that the Council President and other members of City Council and leadership have been in some of those discussions and conversations, not just inquiring but trying to initiate a better way to communicate, because we're kind of aggressive. I mean, this is an aggressive 2015 Council and I think they have a lot of great ideas, and we are trying to communicate in 2015 -- with 2015 technology, because it works. And although the programming, to my knowledge, is still in the state of being put together, there is a high interest in using technology to our advantage and a better way to communicate with the citizens of the City of Philadelphia in its entirety.

So I do appreciate those conversations with Comcast and OIT as a part of negotiating, moving forward as you have been. So it is an interest of

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City Council moving forward for the next 15 years.

MR. REILLY: Mr. Chairman, again, Mark Reilly.

And we want to work with you. I think the room that we're in right now is evidence of our good-faith efforts. We have high definition cameras in front of me and in back of me, and the microphones that we're using are all part of $1.3 million that we had fronted, if you will, even though the current franchise didn't contemplate that and had outfitted where we are right now to accommodate the desire to have upgraded technology.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I think it's one of the bright spots and positives of the government channel as you guys continue to negotiate, providing that better high quality broadcast right here in our Chambers, whether it's PSAs and initiatives and programs that each member of this body wishes to project and inform

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the public. So thank you.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Sanchez.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: This is for the IT component. This franchise agreement and the authority, how did we communicate our oversight to the general public? Do we post? Are we transparent in saying Comcast submits its fees? Do we have the capacity to audit? How do we communicate? Because essentially you're charged with ensuring compliance.

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Yes. We regulate and we get submissions from Comcast and --

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Do we post any of that publicly?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Not a lot of it right now, no. So it is something that Adel and I have talked about for the very near future, and that's something we're planning on implementing.

MR. EBEID: Councilwoman, the official request for funding would go to

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provide the transparency that folks are looking for and wouldn't necessarily be the sole responsibility of that office. Comcast also would have an obligation to be more transparent about the bill and explain to their customers.

What we are trying to put -- just to give you a flavor of what this might look like perhaps a year or two down the line, is Seattle seems to have a very robust website that is very transparent about any changes, any notifications. They collaborated very well with the local cable providers, and we're using them as a model of what we might look like in a year or two.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay. In terms of, again, the financial submissions and stuff, how is that kept and how is that shared and when is it shared?

MR. EBEID: Are you talking about the 5 percent franchise fees?

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yes,

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when reports are submitted. I think it's real important. Again, I think that as we move from this agreement or Verizon and other folks, how does that get reported out?

It appears to me that the level of complaints, given what even Comcast has publicly acknowledged to be some challenges around customer service -- although if you're getting millions of calls, I guess it's really hard to make everybody happy.

Those numbers seem low. How are we letting folks know that they can come and file a complaint with us, and when they do, how do we respond? What's the communication between our offices and Comcast?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: Complaints that we receive in our office are generally by phone, and there's a number on the back of the bill explaining -- both bills, Verizon and Comcast -- explaining that if you can't get

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resolution with your complaint, to call this number. We have an automated voice mailbox set up that we check daily. I have a staff member who records that information and sends it as a separate complaint, and that's where we get these numbers to Comcast that day. And that begins the clock where they have three business days to attempt to resolve the complaint with the customer, which means they need to reach out to them. So then we get resolution sent back from us, because it goes to an escalated complaint department within Comcast that we send that to, and then they send us resolutions that we compile and we have --

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And we keep that data of customer information? How do we track that?

MR. McLAUGHLIN: I don't have resources to track every single one of them, but we do have -- we do retain that information for years. That information

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is retained.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I think it's important, particularly as part of this franchise agreement, if we're going to take an allocation from that part, that we look at how do we increase transparency, accountability to the public. I'm always concerned when we just say we're going to put money here and there's not a plan. If there's not a plan, no one can measure it. No one is held accountable to it. And I want to make sure that we're very deliberate in using your authority for oversight of this and that we take that into account as part of that allocation.

I know Council is entertaining and I'm sure we're going to come up with great programming and local content, but the public transparency piece I think is hugely important. I think it builds confidence for everybody, for Comcast. Comcast is submitting stuff and people should know about it, and it should be --

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we should feel like we need to be a clearinghouse for good information as well as bad.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you very much.

Clerk, could you read the next panel, please.

THE CLERK: City Network/I-Net Panel: Adel Ebeid, Chief Information Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications, Incorporated; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Ray Hayling, Deputy Chief Information Officer, City of Philadelphia; Jim Jennings, Vice President, Business Sales Representative, Comcast; Dan Carr, VP of Enterprise Sales, Comcast; David Egan, Sr., Director, Enterprise Sales, Comcast.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

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COUNCILMAN HENON: Does anybody have prepared testimony in this group?

MR. EGAN: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN HENON: State your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. EGAN: Yes, sir. Good afternoon.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Within the three minutes, of course. If you can summarize.

MR. EGAN: Absolutely. Absolutely.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

MR. EGAN: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the Council. My name is David Egan. I'm the Senior Director of Enterprise Services here at Comcast.

Comcast continues to build and extend a robust, state-of-the-art fiberoptic distribution network here in the City of Philadelphia. Since 1996, Comcast has invested tens of billions of

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dollars in infrastructure, including almost 9 billion alone here in Pennsylvania. In the past five years, Comcast has invested over 270 million in its network here in Philadelphia.

Our core network fiber architecture in Philadelphia is redundant. It contains automated failover capacity and provides high-speed capacity service to both residential and business customers.

Currently, we have roughly 910 route miles of fiber throughout the City alone, spanning neighborhoods from South Philadelphia to North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia to the waterfront. Our ongoing significant investments in our broadband network here in Philadelphia has the most cutting-edge broadband infrastructure now and into the future, delivering speeds up to ten gigabits per second.

As part of the franchise renewal process, Comcast has agreed to

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significant measures that will help ensure Philadelphia has the most robust network to meet the City's growing needs. Specifically, the City and Comcast will negotiate a managed services agreement for the provision of managed network services by Comcast. The managed services will provide the City with a data transfer to more than 200 locations and provide for all government purposes, including mission-critical applications such as the City's police dispatch and emergency response systems.

Comcast looks forward to working with the City to flesh out the details of these important managed network services which will provide Philadelphia with a reliable, robust, and secure services that will help meet the data needs of the City. These managed services will not only provide a much higher level of performance, but will be scalable for the long term and provide significant cost reductions in terms of

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the agreement.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Does anyone on the Committee have any questions?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, I do. So thank you. And I'll be brief. I have a few, and I think from the City perspective -- and I don't know where we are as far as the term sheets or negotiations on the I-Net City network, but I am super excited about that and couldn't be more prouder of the position. From what I hear, we're close to where we are at. This gives us the opportunity to connect bandwidth to every municipal building, rec center, library where we can have the bandwidth to deal with the digital literacy at our libraries and our rec centers, offering the opportunities for --

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: -- the

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community when our children are playing in our great open space that we have laid out where we can have the wireless opportunities to really get onto the network, and this bandwidth I think is critical for a lot of our data-sharing and so forth.

So, I mean, I think that there is an extreme, extreme value and a win-win, not just for the City of Philadelphia but for everybody, including Comcast being a great partner dealing with the I-Net and City network.

I have two questions for Adel, if I could. With that theme in mind, how much -- so let me start by saying, the initial term sheet had managed services and/or managed dark fiber, and the most recent term sheet has it just as managed service network provided by Comcast. Is there an additional cost to that? So that's one. And, two, back to the City network and the I-Net, how much savings is that to the City of Philadelphia,

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providing that kind of bandwidth?

MR. EBEID: So just to provide a little more detail on the I-Net, what we've shared with Comcast is a list of over 225 sites throughout the City that need to be connected using high speed reliable connectivity.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Two hundred -- I want to clarify.

MR. EBEID: North of 225.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Two hundred in addition to what already is connected?

MR. EBEID: No. This would be the brand new footprint moving forward if we proceed with this arrangement.

So currently today when you take into consideration Fire Department locations, Police, all the remote sites, plus the central sites that provide municipal government services, park and rec facilities, health centers, we provided Comcast with a list north of 225, and what we've asked them for is a high speed reliable network, and in some

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places that are accountable for mission-critical services, that we also wanted some redundancy built into the network so that we couldn't see the type of outages that some of us have seen over the years.

A dark fiber network versus a managed services, the proposal from Comcast around managed services is starting to make quite a bit of sense to us, because we wouldn't want to just deploy assets in the ground, frankly, and then not have the manpower or the capacity or the budgeting, frankly, to kind of keep that running in a good condition over the next 15 years. So the managed services is starting to make a lot more sense to us.

It would offer higher speeds, less cost than what we're paying today. So that's another reason why it's a very attractive option for us. And it would be something above and beyond what is obviously offered today in the franchise

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agreement that expired.

COUNCILMAN HENON: So what would happen in year 16?

MR. EBEID: What would happen in year 16?

COUNCILMAN HENON: As far as the charge for the connectivity, or would that be renegotiated?

MR. EBEID: I'm sorry, Councilman Henon.

COUNCILMAN HENON: In year 16, what would happen to the expense in year 16 as far as the charge or is that renegotiated?

MR. EBEID: We would have to renegotiate that, but you also have to understand that whatever I-Net is put in place, the technology will have a shelf life. So Comcast has factored in a replacement cost at year 7, and we do need to do that, otherwise it might be great today but by the time we get to years 8, 9 or 10 or beyond, it's going to be outdated technology. And if it's not

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negotiated within the next term, within the next cable franchise agreement, then the City would have to look for another pathway to get those communication services.

COUNCILMAN HENON: One of the other questions is, what are the savings that we have in the City as a result of that by not paying?

MR. EBEID: We don't have a final cost proposal from Comcast yet. So we do know that there would be significant savings on a monthly basis, but we don't have a final proposal yet on the cost.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. Anybody?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: I have no further questions. Thank you.

Clerk, can you read the next panel, please.

THE CLERK: Compliance and Violation Remediation: Adel Ebeid, Chief

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Information Officer, City of Philadelphia; Tom Robinson, President, CBG Communications, Incorporated; Michael Athay, Chief Deputy Solicitor, Commercial Law Unit, Philadelphia Law Department; Tony Speller, RVP of Technical Operations and Engineering, Comcast.

(Witness approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: You may state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony. Thank you.

MR. SPELLER: Good evening. I'm Tony Speller, Regional Vice President of Technical Operations and Engineering for Comcast's Freedom Region.

Safety is a top priority for Comcast. We're proud to report that we do not have any major safety issues or infractions in the City of Philadelphia or elsewhere.

As a result of our commitment to compliance and remediation, Comcast has not had a single notice of violation

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from the Federal Communications Commission in Philadelphia from 2012 to the present.

Vandalism, cable theft, and property renovations are among the leading causes of cable damage, plant and drop network damage. Drops that are properly installed can intentionally be disturbed by individuals or accidentally damaged by property homeowners, tenants, and other service providers. Drops that are properly installed and grounded are also modified and removed without notification to Comcast.

Our employees and business partners are highly trained on property installation procedures, and they're expected to address any service opportunities and ensure that grounds and clearances are properly maintained.

To the extent we have improper drops or grounding that's a result of craftsmanship issues, we work with our employees and our business partners to

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resolve those immediately to make sure that we are -- to make sure that we're providing a consistent installation, policies, and practices.

There was a report that was provided by the City outside consultant, CBG Communications. It identified several issues with plant and safety issues for Comcast. Many of those findings were based on addresses that either did not exist or could not -- or we could not get access. Comcast visited all 190 addresses and inspected them all, and we found that 26 of them had grounding issues, 14 had attachment and clearance issues, and 24 had minor network issues. And I do want to state that those would have been resolved in the course of -- normal course of business.

And just to add a couple of things here on the infractions, the number of infractions that was stated by the outside consultant was obviously a

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lot lower than what was reported, but I do want to call out that Comcast did go out and immediately address all of these issues, and we did not find any safety violations.

Comcast continues to do -- we continue to do our drop remediation project, and one of the things that slowed us down just a little bit is just the backyard easement. It's the challenge of getting in back of some of the homes. But we have come up with a number of solutions and actions to be able to get -- to mitigate these issues. And so we'll continue our drop remediation efforts throughout the City of Philadelphia, and we expect this to continue to be a successful project.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

I'm just a little confused about not having much violation, but yet we have a remediation plan. So what I'm

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going to do is, I'm going to ask Tom to come up.

Tom, can you explain, is there a remediation agreement and what it is?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes. As part of the franchise negotiations, it was one of the earliest things addressed in our discussions with Comcast. We're substantially concerned based on what we found and places --

COUNCILMAN HENON: Tom, can you speak into the mic a little more, please.

MR. ROBINSON: Sure. This chair is a little low for me.

We were substantially concerned. We've done these all over the country, and it was the largest single number of code compliance issues with the National Electric Code and National Electric Safety Code that we had ever found. We also did it based on a representative sampling and we projected it out, and it projected out to a substantial number of violations

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citywide.

So it was addressed very early on with Comcast in the negotiations, and they came forth with a plan for a remediation effort, which we thought was an excellent idea. That then went through a number of evolutions, and we are now, I believe, very close to an agreement that would within 18 months allow them -- or enable them is probably the best word to remediate the plant throughout the City, every single address in the City. It would be the largest remediation effort of its kind, as far as we're aware.

So I think it is a cooperative effort at this point between the City and Comcast. It's very well laid out, it's very well defined, and it will be a part of the franchise agreement.

At this point, it's really -- what we're looking at now to try to establish are milestones on a quarterly basis, the final format for monthly

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reporting, which is critical, and Comcast has already provided several iterations of a monthly report, and we continue to go back and forth on that, and then finally, some penalties for not meeting the 18-month schedule, because, again, it benefits everyone, Comcast, the City, the resident subscribers, to have these issues remediated.

We during August went out and did a day-long audit of what was being done, and the difference between the infrastructure before and the infrastructure after was phenomenal. Afterwards it looked excellent. And so that's what we want for the City after this 18 months, is for it to look excellent throughout the City. And I think based on the work that they've performed so far and the ramping up is really part of the critical piece, doing it within that 18-month timeframe, that's what you will get.

COUNCILMAN HENON: All right.

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Well, thank you for that. It was a lot more in the form of -- Tony, don't take this the wrong way. I would dispute some of your testimony when it comes to hardly not much violations. The next thing you know, we're having the largest effort to remediate. But I'm glad there is an agreement to do that in the fashion with the City and Comcast and the right people that are involved to remedy and to make corrective measures, to do it in an expedient fashion. So hopefully once you come to that agreement, you will share that with us, in addition to the timelines, and hopefully there will be licensed contractors. Maybe we could talk offline at another time to see where we failed in the remediation along the way and why we ended up to this point to remediate. I mean, was it -- I'd hate to say was it because people couldn't afford it or if people were shut off or people moved. I don't know, but I think there's a telling story in the data that we

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haven't really touched on yet on why we need to remediate, and I certainly would like to have that conversation at some point, down to whether the contractors were licensed and were paying prevailing wages to fulfill their obligations to remediate.

So thank you for your testimony.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yes. I just want to emphasize how this is such a huge issue for me and I really don't -- I'm a little concerned about the fact we've been asking for this 18-month plan, and I can tell you that I've traveled all over the City and what I see in poor neighborhoods around the cabling is unacceptable. Let me repeat that. What I see with those lines in poor sections of the City is unacceptable.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And I

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think, to the Chairman's point, the protocol about contractors having been -- I am a Comcast customer. I am aware that many times the contractors come in and they want to do a split versus a direct line feed because of access points and the excuses that they use, so they -- so the services get shoddy.

I think it's important that we identify as part of this franchise agreement and this maintenance plan what the protocol is, when the violation happens. And for us as a city, we have to revisit strict penalties around lack of compliance. I have a problem with 18 months. I think we need to do it sooner.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: But if it's going to be 18 months, I want us to agree on some strict penalties around that. Again, I can't stress how horrible it is. And this is not only a case for Comcast. It's Verizon. We've had the issue with the disc and other things. I

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just think it is unacceptable the type of cabling and wiring that happens in our commercial corridors and our poor neighborhoods.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: One last question on this panel, more for Comcast. Comcast, did you agree with the remediation plan?

MR. SAMAHA: Yes.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. We're going to move on. Thank you for your time.

We have our last two people that I'm going to bring up right now that missed the opportunity. That was an oversight on myself. The Chair will call Howard Epps. Can you please approach. And John McConnell. And Emily Bittenbender. Is Emily here?

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: When you guys are seated, please state your name

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for the record and proceed with your testimony. If you could, keep it -- I know you've been waiting. If you could keep it to three minutes, I'd appreciate it. Summarize it. Thank you so much.

MR. EPPS: Good late evening. My name is Harold T. Epps. I am Vice Chairman of the Board of PRWT Services and past CEO. And let me say that I serve on Comcast's Advisory Board. I'm Vice Chairman of their Advisory Board, which is also part of their Joint Diversity Council.

But before I get to that, let me just make one comment having been a CEO of a company, and, that is, corporations can always do more, but that's got to be balanced with communities always expecting to do more, and I'll leave it to you all to figure out where that happy balance is. What I'm here to talk about today is what Comcast is doing and why I think they are such a great corporate citizen.

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I talked a little bit about their Joint Diversity -- and you should have this written testimony, so I'm not going to read it. You can read for yourself. I'm going to make a couple comments from it. And, that is, there are few companies in the nation that have external advisory boards. Comcast is one of those, and as I said to you earlier, I serve on it. It spends time focusing on five areas to strengthen what they have a strong commitment to, and that's their diversity and inclusion components. Those five areas are their governance, their people, supplier diversity, programming, and community investment. I'm going to speak to three of them very quickly.

In the area of workforce, Comcast has 22 percent of its full-time Comcast workforce, and 40 percent of the workforce is comprised of people of color.

Secondly, as it relates to

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their Vice President level, between 2010 and 2014, it increased by 22 percent at the Director level and 28 percent at the Vice President's level.

Another area where Comcast is a strong national leader is in the area of supplier diversity. There is a club called the Billion Dollar Roundtable where it measures how many companies spend over a billion dollars with minority companies. We're not talking about women at this point. We're just talking about ethnic minorities. There are only 20 in the country that do that. Comcast just became the most recent member about six months ago, and it is noble that any company can figure out a way to do that. Comcast spends over a billion dollars with minority-owned companies, and a good chunk of that is with companies headquartered here in Philadelphia.

Finally, there are very few companies that have an investment fund

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set up for start-ups of women and ethnic minorities. Again, Comcast is one of those. It's one of the first to have that. And we keep track of all that as a part of this Diversity Council.

So the bottom line -- again, you can read -- is that when I look at Comcast, I always ask the question, could they be a better corporate citizen? My answer is, again, having sat in that seat, corporations are always expected to do that, but Comcast is stellar and they are world class, and as you consider what should happen going forward, I hope you take all that into consideration.

Thank you very much for your time.

MR. LEDERER: Thank you.

Sir.

MR. McCONNELL: Thank you. My name is John McConnell. I'm the Founder and the President of Cristo Rey Philadelphia High School. Cristo Rey is a new high school in Philadelphia. It's

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four years old. We're in the Logan section in North Philadelphia. And as you consider the impact that Comcast has on the community, I want you to understand the impact that Comcast has on the students at Cristo Rey Philadelphia.

A word or two about the school. We're one of 30 schools in the United States. So when I tell you how the school works, it's not my idea and it's not a new idea, but it is for Philadelphia. We're a new model in Philadelphia. We're a very rigorous college prep program for boys and girls in grade 9 through 12 who want to go to college, but what's unusual about us, we are exclusively for the lowest income kids in the City.

Now, why are we that? We are that in Philadelphia and we are that in 30 other schools throughout the United States. The people involved in the Cristo Rey network believe that the most reliable escape/solution from the trap of

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poverty is high-quality education. We believe that high-quality education is available in the City of Philadelphia and in many other cities around Philadelphia, but mostly to very high-income and middle-income people and not easily accessible to low-income people. So our schools are exclusively for the low-income families in Philadelphia.

We're not a charter school. We don't get any money from the charter system. We're not a church school. We don't get any money from the church. We're certainly not a tuition-based school, because if a family could afford to pay a tuition, we wouldn't accept their students to the school.

So where do we get the money for a school like that? Actually, we don't get the money. The students get the money by their own work. Our students go to school four days a week and they go to work in Philadelphia's finest companies. They do real work and

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they earn real wages, and the money that they earn goes back to the school to pay for the cost of their education.

So today there are 446 students in Cristo Rey. We actually will graduate our first seniors in June of this year. And all 446 of those kids have a job, and they have a job in companies like FMC, like Beneficial Bank, like all of the accounting firms in town, eight of the law firms in town, non-profits like the Zoo, the Franklin Institute, the Mayor's Office, the Police Department, the District Attorney's Office, CHOP, Jefferson Hospital. You name it, big companies all hire our kids.

Comcast was the very first foundation sponsor of our school when we opened in 2012, and today they remain the largest employer of Cristo Rey kids. They employ 40 Cristo Rey students.

So what does that mean? They go to Comcast once a week. They work real jobs in interesting roles surrounded

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by college-educated people who mentor them, who coach them, who help them understand their own potential to be part of the workforce of tomorrow. So Comcast has had a huge impact on our school and our students, and they have also influenced other businesses to participate with us too.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you both for your testimony. Thank you very much.

Before we go into public comment --

COUNCILMAN OH: Could I ask a question? I'm sorry.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I'm sorry. The Chair recognizes Councilman Oh.

COUNCILMAN OH: I have a question on that. It's a wonderful concept. I will say that Councilwoman Blackwell and I held a hearing on the programs they have in Switzerland,

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Austria, Germany around four days of school, one day of work. It's a great program, but are you saying that a child who is going to Cristo Rey four days a week and goes to work one day a week is paying the full foot of the bill to their education?

MR. McCONNELL: The job pays for about two-thirds of the cost to educate a student. The rest of it comes from good old-fashioned begging, which I do.

COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. So from the fundraising side?

MR. McCONNELL: Yeah. So I fundraise for one-third of the cost for every student in the school.

COUNCILMAN OH: So what is the total cost that you're spending per student?

MR. McCONNELL: The total cost per student per year is about $12,500.

COUNCILMAN OH: So you're saying that about $8,000 is earned by the

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student?

MR. McCONNELL: By his work or her work, yeah.

COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. McCONNELL: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your time.

Last, can I call back up to the table Adel and Comcast, please.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. I'm going to close with you two, and if you stay around for public comment, it would be appreciated. This way you can hear the community at large in two-minute increments. We're going to hold everybody accountable for it.

But I just want to state for the record in closing, one, thank you. Thank you both for the hard work over the last three years to get to this point. We still have a lot of work to do, and I

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urge as Chair on behalf of the Committee and Council President and the rest of this Council body to continue to trudge through some of the last remaining issues that are out there, and hopefully we can have a document in its entirety, as Councilman Goode so eloquently relayed to us earlier today. So I'm appreciative of that.

So I just wanted to go -- I have the term sheet in front of me and I also have the latest term sheet on the letter agreement. So I'm just going to go down quickly and ask a question on a number of bases on the renewal here.

So the term is 15 years. The customer service standards, do we have that? Is that resolved at this point or are you still working out issues? I don't need to know the details. Are you still working it out or is it resolved or is it still open-ended?

MR. EBEID: I think we're very close on that. We're almost complete

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with that.

COUNCILMAN HENON: So can I put that down as it's going to be resolved?

MR. EBEID: Yes.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Franchise fee, that is already set. So are there any issues with the franchise fee?

MR. EBEID: With the franchise fee?

COUNCILMAN HENON: Yes.

MR. EBEID: No.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Definition of gross revenue resolved?

MR. EBEID: That's on the table, and Comcast has not objected to that.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I'm sorry. I missed that.

MR. EBEID: That's on the table, and Comcast has not objected to our position.

COUNCILMAN HENON: So confident.

The PEG funding, I don't know

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where we are with that. Is that resolved, unresolved and/or still open for conversation?

MR. REILLY: We agreed that we would increase from the 8.2 million in the current franchise to $18 million in this franchise. So we consider that we have resolved our PEG commitment.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I don't want to get into -- you can respond to that.

MR. EBEID: I've gone as far as I can.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. So City Council has different opinions on the level of funding for PEG, so we will continue on that.

Number seven, PEG Video on Demand, VOD?

MR. EBEID: No issue.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. I-Net, any outstanding issues?

MR. EBEID: We need to have a final proposal, but I think we have a good understanding in place. Once we get

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the final cost estimate, the engineering folks together, we're going to be fine.

MR. REILLY: We've agreed that we would have our engineering people. So part of what took time, we sent our engineers out to the more than 200 different locations to do site surveys.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for that.

MR. REILLY: So they had to calculate what the actual cost would be to do the work. So they just completed that body of work. We're now going to have engineers start talking to engineers about what are the different needs at each location.

COUNCILMAN HENON: That should be a linear conversation.

MR. REILLY: That would be a conversation that I would be not attending and delegating.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Is there a service level agreement that is done that is comparable to the commercial users?

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MR. EBEID: We have a draft service level agreement from Comcast. We need to make sure that the right folks are on the table to beef that up, frankly, but we have not gotten any pushback from Comcast.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Great. I'm going to move to outside the scope of the franchise agreement and onto the letter agreement. Internet Essentials.

MR. REILLY: We're in agreement that we will launch a pilot here in the City for seniors, and we'll do that independent of the franchise.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: And I know that this Council had been relaying the importance of including more low-income Philadelphians in the Internet pilot or program when it comes to eligibility. So hopefully that is still something that the two parties can --

MR. REILLY: Well, in terms of eligibility, there are two other

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locations in the country that we have launched this, and it would be the same eligibility as where we have launched it in the two other locations.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Three, including Boston now?

MR. REILLY: Well, Boston has -- they've announced that there will be one in Boston, but it has not launched yet.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. I'm going to put that as unresolved as to this date when it comes to what Council would like -- the qualifications and eligibility I think is important to every single Councilmember here.

Digital Inclusion Fund?

MR. EBEID: No issue here.

COUNCILMAN HENON: No issue. Customer service, resolved?

MR. EBEID: I think we went through that one already, but, yes, that's been resolved.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Great. And

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the wireless access?

MR. EBEID: So we have agreed Comcast will not place any limitations on how we use the I-Net. So we will provide WiFi, for example, in municipal buildings where municipal services are being offered. The intent is not to compete with the commercial sector, but rather provide services to the City's residents while they're visiting a municipal building or receiving municipal services.

COUNCILMAN HENON: When it comes to -- I'm going to back up. One of my colleagues asked about the virtual service, customer service. Has that been resolved?

MR. REILLY: Yeah. We've made a commitment that we would hire between 150 and 200 virtual agents that will be located within the City of Philadelphia.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I'm sorry. Are we talking full employees of Comcast or are we talking 1099's?

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MR. REILLY: No. These are full employees of Comcast.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Great. Again, from my myself, my committee and City Council, I want to thank you all for getting to this point, and hopefully we can get this thing finalized as quickly as possible for all the parties in the City of Philadelphia. So thank you for your time today.

MR. REILLY: Thank you.

MR. EBEID: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Clerk -- Councilwoman just reminded about the mapping of the 700-plus complimentary locations. Is that order being processed right now? It's going to be provided? Is there a timeline on that?

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: We're talking about the 700 complimentary accounts as well as the locations of the 200, because we wanted to see them across the City by district.

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MR. REILLY: So you're referring to the 200 sites for the managed services and --

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: The 700 complimentary accounts.

MR. EBEID: The 225 sites I have with me and I can certainly leave with the Chair and --

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Can we overlay map those? Because we want to be able to show the City what they look like and who has access to them.

MR. EBEID: I think it's something the City and Comcast can work on together.

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you. Sorry.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your time.

MR. REILLY: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Clerk, can you lay out the process for the public comment. We're going to start now. And thank you for your patience, everybody

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that is here. We ask that you keep your public comment to two minutes. It will be timed, and we're going to call everybody five at a time, so we can come up in panels of five and proceed with your testimony. Thank you.

THE CLERK: The first panel to speak, Darryl Bundrige, Burton Caine, Menle Moss, Stephen Salgaller, Andrew Lofton.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: While people are taking a seat, the Chair just wants to recognize the presence of the former Chair of Public Property but now Council President, Council President Darrell Clarke, for joining us here today.

Good evening, sir.

(Applause.)

THE CLERK: The next panel of five after this panel will be Morgan Smalls, George Stevens, Niayla Murray, Steven Feldman, and Nina Fay.

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MR. BUNDRIGE: Good afternoon or rather good evening, members of he Committee on Public Property and Public Works. My name is Darryl Bundrige and I proudly serve as the Executive Director and Vice President for City Year Philadelphia. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Comcast's support of City Year began in 2001 as a leadership development program in Detroit and then spread to the Philadelphia area and nationally. We have leadership represented on the national Board through David Cohen and the City Year Co-Chair of our Board locally is Art Block, the Senior Vice President and General Counsel and Secretary of Comcast. Their guidance has certainly been invaluable, and they represent a strong passion for service which is embedded in the work of our partnership.

We partner each year for the Comcast Cares Day, which is the nation's

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largest single corporate volunteer day, and we also partner in recruiting and Comcast supporting us in recruiting young people to provide 11 months of service through hands-on support of students in the school and inside and outside the classroom.

Our core members when they complete their year of service are hired in many cases by Comcast, who supports them in an HR development day as well, which prepares them for success in the workplace and other job opportunities.

Comcast employees give of their time to work one on one with our core members to run various workshops, job interviews and things of that sort, with the goal of helping retain them in the City of Philadelphia.

So I would just like to share that with you and note that we have worked very closely with Comcast to support students who attend high needs schools to reduce the nation's dropout

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crisis. We work in partnership with them daily as our core members serve as role models to keep our students in school and on track.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir. I want to keep that two-minute thing.

Who would like to go next, which one? Go ahead, sir.

PROFESSOR CAINE: My name is Burton Caine. I am Professor of Law at Temple University School of Law. I major in antitrust law and also constitutional law. I have traveled around the world on behalf of the United States government lecturing on this subject and trying to tell the rest of the world how great our country is.

I have also had long experience with Comcast. I was a partner in the law firm of Wolf, Block, Shorr and Solis-Cohen, which was counsel when Comcast was originated, and I was a personal friend of the founder of that

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company. I am sorry to say that that's the last affirmative word I can say about that outfit, because the last contact --

(Applause.)

PROFESSOR CAINE: Because I became a customer of Comcast until Christmas two years ago when they sent me a registered letter terminating all services in retaliation for the fact that the only way I could get them to come to my house and fix the telephone because my wife was having a medical emergency, the only way I could get them to come, can you guess what it was? I had to call the police. And they were so angry about that that they cancelled all services completely, and they also sent me a notice saying that they want me to surrender all the equipment that they had here and I should not touch it, and if I didn't surrender it when they're coming to pick it up, that there will be trouble for me. That was two years ago. They never showed up.

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About the only time they did show up was a time when in the middle of the night in my bedroom it looked like my television had exploded and a big flash came in, and we had to call the police to find out whether our house was being blown up. And it was Comcast. And they finally came and they fixed the TV set.

I don't have enough time to show you all of the things that they've done. I have much correspondence, which I gave to the Philadelphia Inquirer, because they were so eager to publish all this until one day you know what happened? They called Comcast, and that was the end of that. As a result, we can see Philadelphia is a Comcast city, unless this City Council does something to stop it.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

Mr. Caine, I'm going to have to -- so we keep to these two minutes, but we appreciate what you were saying.

(Applause.)

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COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, please identify yourself and proceed.

MR. SALGALLER: Thank you for giving me the chance to talk. My name is Steve Salgaller. I'm just an ordinary citizen. In fact, I'm considered disabled by Social Security, and that's partly why I'm here. I understand that Comcast is trying to do more, which I do appreciate, and especially Internet Essentials for seniors. I'm only age 60, so I don't know if I quite qualify for that, but I would qualify if they had something for very low income or fixed income or people that are considered disabled. I'm sure they can do that.

As an example, something that they could do -- I just printed it off my computer today from the Denver Post. About two months ago, the Governor of Colorado asked Comcast to provide Internet Essentials for community college students. I assume this is for people that either are off campus or some kind

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of WiFi service that's available that they were able to sign up for. It wouldn't be free. It would be the standard $10 or whatever a month, but it would be for community college people while they're in college. So I'm sure it could be enforced and only utilized for Comcast people that are actually in college, but this would be a great addition for Pennsylvania. It would help the workforce and also it would help the esteem of Pennsylvania, our home city for Comcast here in Philadelphia.

So if you need this information, I'm sure you can print it out, but if you need any of it, it's appreciated. But, again, I would hope they would improve Internet Essentials not only for seniors but for anybody else they can possibly add on. And just to give you an example, as I said again, somebody they did add on, thanks to the Governor of Colorado, is the actual people in community college. I'm sure

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everybody would support that. I don't think that's a big issue, but I'm just putting my two cents in.

And thank you so much for your time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, one second. Comcast wanted me to announce that they have two customer service supervisors here tonight to help with any individual who has a service or billing problem. Where should they go? There's one. Don't knock them over. There they are over there. Okay?

And, again, before you start, ma'am, the next five people that Mr. Creelman announced are ready. They're here. Okay.

Ma'am, please.

MS. MOSS: Good evening, everyone. Can everybody hear me?

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes,

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ma'am.

MS. MOSS: My name is Meryl Mura Moss. A few months ago I had like a nightmare with Comcast. And after I went down to 19th and Locust Street for a Comcast review, I got pretty good satisfaction, and now I'm sort of like a preferred customer. I like that. Thank you, Comcast.

However, I am a senior citizen. I want to pull along all my other senior citizens so they can enjoy what I am finally enjoying. Pull us into the harbor. Make us all safe.

I came from a family of nine. All for one and one for all.

(Applause.)

MS. MOSS: And if you do unto others as you have them do unto you, you wouldn't have a problem. It would be so easy, so simple. Because that skyscraper that you're building at 19th and Arch, is it? And you're going to put Billy Penn on top of it? I don't know the

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significance of that, but if you don't help these schoolchildren who will be --

(Applause.)

MS. MOSS: They will be our seniors. They will be our students that don't go to college, that don't finish high school. Welfare doesn't pay for Comcast cable.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you.

MS. MOSS: You're going to have a bunch of poor, poor people. If you help them now, help the children.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you all. Thank you all for your statements.

MS. MOSS: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr. Creelman, why don't you call those five names again.

THE CLERK: Morgan Smalls, George Stevens, Niayla Murray, Steven Feldman, Nina Fay. The next panel up

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will be Carol Duncan, Paula Paul, Mark Spiller, Andrew Broden, and Miranda Garcia-Thompson.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Those five people, are they here?

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That second five that Mr. Creelman called, if you could just be close by here so we can try to move as quickly as possible, because there's a lot of people who want to testify.

Sir, you're first up. Why don't you have a seat and state your name and make your statement, sir, please. Into the microphone.

MR. STEVENS: George Stevens.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Proceed, please.

MR. STEVENS: I come here to represent -- I am a senior citizen and also I am the President of -- like I said, I have a business association and I

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come here this afternoon to talk about twofolds. One is that I live in a senior citizen facility at 38th and Market Street and we do not have -- we have access, but we could not afford it. Like so many of us in the City of Philadelphia who are senior citizens, we are on a fixed income. So we cannot afford some of the prices that Comcast has to offer.

The other thing is that we are -- I'm a business -- we are a business association, and a lot of our business on Lancaster Avenue cannot afford to have Internet access, because they're looking at the bottom line. They're trying to bring in more revenue.

So I'm here to ask you to grant -- not grant Comcast unless Comcast is going to offer 30 percent discount for senior citizens and for those residents who are in the community who cannot afford those kind of prices.

We have complaints about Comcast is always going up. Their prices

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are always being -- it's over and above and not be able to afford it. So we're asking you to help us so that we can help more diversified business on Lancaster Avenue and also to be able to work with the senior citizen. Who else are you going to have as a customer service representation? We are your sales rep. If you give us opportunity to give us a discount, then we can tell you how good Comcast is. You know what I mean? So we want to be able to have a decent discount, at least 30 percent, for senior citizens.

Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

Whoever would like to go next, please identify yourself and proceed, please.

MS. FAY: My name is Nina Fay and thank you for letting me speak. I am a Philly mom of a Philly school student

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and teacher. My son is a student at SLA where he is fortunate but still without certain necessities like an on-site technology teacher, which every school needs. We raise our own money to make sure all the kids have laptops. Again, what every kid needs. The Internet is like water, and no one would send their kids out for eight hours each day without water.

My older son teaches 7th grade science at Stetson Charter School literally in the hood, B and Allegheny. These kids have no accessibility to computers, let alone Internet. Imagine your own kids going into a classroom and opening up a book and quite possibly an out-of-date book. How do you think a child can get excited and eager to learn opening up a book?

I attended the first hearing in May at the library at Rittenhouse Square. I went with a sign that said "Tax Comcast, Not Teachers." I misunderstood

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and thought I was just going to hold my sign and boo, but I had to speak. So I just -- I know, I didn't -- yup. So I'm prepared a little bit today. But I spoke from the heart. By the way, I am not a Comcast customer anymore, and I requested off today without pay because that's how important this is to me.

I just want --

(Applause.)

MS. FAY: And the only thing that I ask for is Comcast to pay their fair share. Why is it okay for them to pay 4 percent state income tax and we pay 10? And then apparently the word on the street is that Comcast doesn't pay property taxes, which directly supports the schools, which doesn't make any sense.

But anyway, here we go. In closing, besides the two shiny towers that Comcast will soon have completed, there is no obvious sign for an outsider who comes into Philly to see that Comcast

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is headquartered here. They would never know it. And as David Cohen calls it, home. Philly should be a WiFi wonderland.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, ma'am.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir. Or who would like to go next? Sir?

MR. SPILLER: Yes. My name is Mark Spiller. I've been teaching special needs hospital students in the School District of Philadelphia for the past 43 years and counting. I have raised two public school -- proud public school graduates who have grown up in the age of the Internet where they are surrounded by myriad screens.

The previous teacher spoke about how Comcast is paying less than 3 and a half percent state tax, state income tax, when we're paying 10 percent. I want to know why there is too much time

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spent in front of classrooms for students without advanced technology. There's no itinerant tech support. It's spotty or non-existent. The situation, of course, has been compounded by the brutal slashing of education funds through all levels of education by the previous Governor. School buildings are being closed or turned over to for-profit charter organizations that further rob the school system of scant funds, also robbing neighborhoods of community anchors. Teachers, by the way, working for the past three years without a contract, spending out-of-pocket minimal money for basic supplies for their students, outdated or ancient textbooks being shared, no full-time nurses or counselors in the disturbingly high percentage of schools in a city home to an obscenely wealthy mega corporation. My question is why.

Yes, Philadelphia is the poorest big city in the country, and they

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also have the third lowest worst broadband penetration rate, leaving up to 25 percent of our citizens offline. Just imagine if Comcast would pay their fair share, which is a veritable drop in the bucket to them. Instead of closing school buildings that are underserved or so-called under-enrolled, they could become multi-purpose community centers, housing space for seniors, early childhood learning centers.

(Applause.)

MR. SPILLER: Which, by the way, dovetails with our Mayor-elect's pre-K universal learning.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, I'm going to have to call you to two minutes.

MR. SPILLER: This would also enable buy-in from every segment of the population so that they would really support their neighborhood public schools.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I understand. Thank you, sir. We want to

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try to keep everybody equal here.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, please.

MS. GARCIA-THOMPSON: Good evening. I am also a public school teacher. My name is Miranda Garcia-Thompson, and I've been a public school teacher now for 18 years and the last ten of those years I have been a technology teacher leader. I'm also the proud graduate of Morrison Elementary in Olney and Central High School, where at these locations I first learned programming back in the '80s. Unfortunately, in the 30 years since I learned programming, technology has been at a standstill or has fallen.

In my role as the technology teacher leader at Constitution High School, another public school here in Philadelphia, I have had firsthand interactions with Comcast and with Internet Essentials with the program. My

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school was the site of the party celebrating year two of Internet Essentials in the fall of 2012. It was attended by several Comcast executives and Philadelphia leaders, including Mayor Nutter. It was a beautiful thing to see government, commerce, and public education working together and agreeing that access to Internet is necessary and digital literacy is a right of students regardless of income.

As a thank you, Comcast donated ten of the refurbished laptops that were offered to participating Internet Essentials families. However, none of the donated laptops lasted more than a year. Our students remain largely unaware of the program, and families I know that have tried to apply have failed.

When one of my former students and the leader of the technology club at our school complained about these laptops in an article with the Washington Post

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two years ago, Comcast was interested in my school again. Over the spring and summer of 2014, I met with representatives, some of them are here today, several times about creating partnerships with the School District of Philadelphia. They recognized, said they recognized, the dire conditions in the District and claimed they wanted to help me help them create a replicable model for a partnership with our schools. I worked for months with the District's Office of Technology and Comcast, pushing for one computer per child as a model. In the end, Comcast partnered with Samsung and delivered one cart with 40 Chromebooks last winter, after several months of delays, and assisted in a short-lived partnership with one local non-profit.

While aspects of their program were abandoned, I am extremely grateful for that computer cart. They are the only new computers we have at my school,

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which is a special admission, college prep school. Our students use these to practice Spanish, to take their benchmark exams, to practice labs in biology, and to access online tests. Students beg me to borrow them to take home for the weekends, but they are literally irreplaceable and it breaks my heart to tell them no.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, I'm going to have to call you on the two minutes, but I appreciate that. That's useful information.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Before you go, Councilwoman Blackwell.

One second.

MS. GARCIA-THOMPSON: Council, please, as our political leaders, hold them accountable --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, ma'am, ma'am.

Councilwoman Blackwell.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

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you.

I wanted to say a special thanks to George Stevens. Not only is he speaking for seniors, he's one of the main leaders in West Philadelphia. He's President of the Lancaster Avenue 21, Lancaster Avenue Business Association and is a part of every major development in that area. So we thank him for his leadership in coming here today to speak on behalf of seniors.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, Councilwoman.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you all.

Mr. Creelman, who's next?

THE CLERK: Carol Duncan, Paula Paul, Andrew Broden, Milena Velis, Marc Train.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Who is here?

Okay. Come on up.

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(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Are the other people that were called -- all right. Sir, you were up there first. Please identify yourself and proceed.

MR. BRODEN: Hi. My name is Andrew Broden and I'm a resident of Philadelphia.

There's two things I want to talk about quickly in my two minutes. One is that there is a digital divide that is especially apparent throughout the low-income and low socioeconomic communities of Philadelphia. Many of the residents of these communities attend the infamously underfunded Philadelphia public school system, and this would be a perfect time for Comcast to continue their work forging the digital divide in our local community by offering funding to our financially strapped public institutions. This funding could be used for things such as hiring of technology

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advisors, updating school and personal student computer systems, and even coding and programming classes to prepare students for a computer-oriented workforce, such as is being rolled out in New York currently as we speak. This is an opportunity for Comcast to give back to the community in the best and most important way possible, through the education of future generations of Americans as well as the education of their potential future employees.

Internet access is no longer and should no longer be considered a privilege in 2015. In fact, the UN just declared Internet access a human right. We need the City to hold Comcast accountable and bridge the technological divide in our community.

(Applause.)

MR. BRODEN: And, lastly, action of community initiatives like these discussed would help Comcast's low level of public opinion, as revealed by

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the Needs Assessment report.

Of the 64 percent of customers that called Comcast support, 61 percent of those calls were not answered within the first 30 seconds, and that is greater than the 10 percent tolerance allowed under the franchise and FCC customer service standards. That's straight from the executive report of the Needs and Assessment report.

Lastly, I would just like to say, Comcast, please provide service that's quality assured and provide top-of-the-line speeds. Do not price gouge Philadelphia residents. Please continue PEG funding in your cable packages to keep citizens connected with their local government. Please pay your employees a fair wage equal to the regional standard of living, and do not continue to block attempts of their employees to unionize. This is what we as Philadelphians want. This is what we as Philadelphians are asking of the

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company, and we ask you, the City Council of Philadelphia, to hold Comcast accountable for the service they provide, the people they employ, and the taxes they should be paying.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Who would like to go next?

MS. HERRIN: I'm Dena Herrin, the Executive Director of Girls Inc. of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. Girls Inc. serves 140,000 girls around the country annually. We've been working to empower girls in Philadelphia since 1961. We deliver life-changing programs that inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

In the Philadelphia region, we will serve nearly 2,000 girls this year. We are in the schools, the community centers, and the juvenile justice system.

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Comcast has been a critical partner to Girls Inc. for nearly a decade. The relationship with Comcast took root at a time when massive changes in public funding required dramatic reorganization of our staff, our delivery model, and our strategy. We were barely financially viable, a significant risk of not surviving. Comcast raised their commitment in important ways.

First, they matched Cherie Cremer, Vice President of Planning and Operations with us, for a Board position. Our Board now includes a second Comcast employee, Jacqueline Smith, Senior Director of Platform Technologies, and they have both played important roles in strategic development, funding awareness raising, and in connecting us.

Second, an important component of our program involves career exploration, with a focus on STEM careers. For years, Comcast women have been inspiring our girls by speaking at

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their schools and in the exciting Comcast building about their personal journeys of possibilities that are open to girls of the City.

Third, Comcast has been an important financial supporter. Six years ago when it appeared Girls Inc. in Philly might not survive, Comcast stepped up because they believed in our work, and every year since they have been granting our curriculum-based STEM programs.

Finally, Comcast has not just supported us locally but nationally. Last year, Girls Inc. National created a new PSA about the unique challenges girls in this country face. Comcast donated millions of dollars of air time, enabling us to show our PSA over half a million times, and this contribution of communications assets was transformational for Girls Inc.

Thank you for taking the time to hear the story of our partnership with Comcast and how together we're working to

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inspire the girls of the City.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Perfect timing. Thank you so much.

Next testimony.

MR. TRAIN: Members of the Council and gathered citizens of Philadelphia, my name is Mark Train, a six-year resident of the City and a veteran of the country's Army.

I come today to testify as a citizen that has been forced to choose between the Comcast monopoly or no home Internet service for over a year now. Besides steadily rising costs, the deplorable customer service by Comcast drove me to forsake having this increasingly important resource in the 21st century.

When I moved into a new apartment over a year ago, I called the company to inform them that I was seeking to change my service to the new residence. I was informed that because of a debt owed by a previous tenant of

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that very apartment, that I would have to come to a service center and bring my lease to prove that I wasn't the previous tenant. No offer to send a technician or any other representative. Nothing. They treated me like I was a criminal, a con artist for simply seeking to move my service to a new home.

Now, I feel that the City of Philadelphia deserves better than to grant such uninhibited access to a company like Comcast that makes promises of cheap and easy access to the Internet for working families, only to treat the citizenry with contempt and bleed the City dry, avoiding paying the same taxes like every other working Philadelphian.

The City Council and the Mayor have a choice to make. They can either take the concerns of the citizens that have been laid out here today and represent the constituents with honor or they can continue to allow monopolies like Comcast to buy them off and dictate

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where, when, and how the rest of us can access the Internet in this city.

In September of 1773, the people of Philadelphia chose to run a similar monopoly, the East India Company, out of town, when the British parliament refused to hear the concerns of their subjects being crushed under the weight of an enterprise that used its clout to force the people to choose between an overpriced treasured resource or go without or turn to the black market. The Internet today is no less valuable than tea was in the 1770s, and I hope that the City Council and the Mayor stand with the people and represent them in good faith.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Clerk, can you read the next panel, please.

THE CLERK: Duran Goodyear, Kenya Nation, Koby Murphy, Keantre Malone, Noah Winer, Keith Brand.

COUNCILMAN HENON: And while

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the folks are approaching the testimony stand, I just want to state for the record at the end of tonight's public comment, we will be recessing this hearing to the call of the Chair.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

MR. GOODYEAR: My name is Duran Goodyear. I'm a citizen of Philadelphia. I'm a business owner. I have two employees. We build websites.

I represent a population of young business owners in Philadelphia who rely on an open, vibrant Internet that provides fast and reliable communications across the City, region, and the world. The Internet is the most transformational technology in the world since the Gutenberg press.

Comcast, if granted the de facto monopoly of the franchise agreement, should ethically participate in our city in ways that profit our culture as much as their shareholders.

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Comcast has an opportunity to be the leader in the world by investing in the City beyond exciting new architecture or shiny new buildings, as we're saying. I'm asking Comcast to invest in our schools, invest in our children, and provide real access to poor and disenfranchised populations in the City.

(Applause.)

MR. GOODYEAR: I was at the public hearing in South Philly early this year and the person who spoke in front of me told me -- well, told all of us a heartbreaking story that I think other people said here tonight. She had lost her job and she had been unable to pay her bill for about two months and had to cancel Comcast, logically. She then heard of Internet Essentials, and when calling to try to sign up was told because she owed money, she couldn't get Internet Essentials.

Our children in this city are

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your next customers. Our children are the workforce of this city. If not out of the profit interest only, do more to help and do more to be a citizen like the rest of us here in this room.

I ask City Council to represent its constituency and to protect our customer rights, to protect our arbitration rights, to demand the most from Comcast as possible, and to do the most for our future generations.

Maybe a little bombastically, the School District has a 2015 deficit of approximately $80 million. The quarter one, first three months of this year, $2.1 billion. I'm not expecting Comcast to pay for everything, but I think there's some room and maybe it would be kind of nice if they just wrote a check.

(Applause.)

MR. GOODYEAR: I like to think of myself as a business owner as also a neighbor, not just someone trying to make more money than the next guy. If my

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neighbor's house burns down, I'm going to offer him a place to stay. And I'm watching our city burn in ways that break my heart, and I'm asking Comcast to be that neighbor and a citizen of the City to help us out.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

MS. NATION: Good evening, Council. My name is Kenya Nation and I live here in Germantown. I am a parent of two beautiful children, Zachary who is five and Jacob who is seven, and like every parent here in Philadelphia, I want them to have the best opportunities in life.

My children currently attend John Wister Elementary School, who is now facing a charter school takeover, and on top of that, they have a serious lack of resources and overcrowded classrooms.

Our neighborhood is also facing cuts in the library and our senior center

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is due to close. Meanwhile, Comcast is the largest media company in the world, making $500 million in revenue in Philadelphia alone last year.

Now, if I didn't live here in Philadelphia, I would have never known that their headquarters is stationed here, with the deplorable conditions their technology is in schools today.

I'm a stay-at-home mom. I work hard at home. When I'm not at home, I'm at my children's school, because I like to be involved in every aspect of their life, including their education. My children should be able to have something that every child should have, and that's a great public school education. I myself am a product of public school, and I think that that experience shaped me into the person you see in front of you.

My children, who already have to struggle out there because the world isn't fair, deserve everything they need to be and be able to do whatever they

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dream.

In the next 15 years, Comcast -- in the next 15-year franchise agreement, I would like to see them successfully negotiate that Comcast funds for a tech teacher to nurture digital literacy in school, because you see, my children are very digital literate, but not every child has a tablet, has a laptop, has a PlayStation, has a smartphone, and that's why they need these kind of resources in the school.

With the profits that Comcast makes, they can also fund career and tech education programs and provide up-to-date technology for classrooms. I would like to see Comcast pay their fair share in taxes so my children's teacher doesn't have to Xerox pages out of a workbook because there's not enough to pass around.

COUNCILMAN HENON: I understand. Thank you for your testimony. Unfortunately, the two

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minutes is --

MS. NATION: That's okay. How do you say your last name?

COUNCILMAN HENON: Henon.

MS. NATION: Thank you, Mr. Henon.

COUNCILMAN HENON: You got it. Thank you for your time and patience.

(Applause.)

MR. BRAND: My name is Keith Brand. I'm the Co-Chair of the Board of PhillyCAM and also the Chair of the Radio, Television, and Film Department at Rowan University.

(Applause.)

MR. BRAND: I've researched community media and I've written extensively about community TV and radio for the past 20 years, and I observed firsthand how these community TV and radio services have significantly added to the fabric of the communities, both large and small, across the entire United States, and many of these centers are

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under siege as cable companies have attempted to shrink their support. Every day that I walk into the PhillyCAM facility here in Philly, I see a building that is vibrant with people of all socioeconomic strata engaged in the making of media. These people aren't passive consumers. They're actively contributing to the dialogue of the City. People are creating talk shows, editing programs for distribution, and checking out equipment to make their own media.

It is counterproductive at a time when we should be increasing our investment in our information infrastructure that they're proposing a 28 percent cut in the allocation to PhillyCAM.

Now, I'm hoping that some of this isn't my fault. Two years ago I was having some major problems with Comcast's self-described state-of-the-art network. After spending upwards of 50 hours on the phone to customer service and having over

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15 technicians come to my house, they were never able to diagnose the problem. I immediately discontinued my subscription.

Now, I'm saying here right now that if they decide to fully fund PhillyCAM, I will reconsider becoming a Comcast subscriber again. I will only reconsider it because I had such awful service that it would be a big bar for me to cross to be able to do that. But that offer is only on the table until January 1st.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Clerk, could you read the next panel.

THE CLERK: Sherrie Cohen, Bryan Mercer, Candace Carter, Gabriel Wolf Spiller, Amy Miller.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

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COUNCILMAN HENON: And, again, I want to remind everybody to please help me out and keep your testimony to two minutes so I don't have to be the bad person and cut it off.

Now, if there is anybody here who was to testify and wishes to just submit their testimony for the record, you can see the table to my left, and we'll make sure it gets into the record. Thank you.

You can start. Ladies first, if you don't mind. We'll go from the left to the right.

MS. CARTER: Hello. My name is Candace Carter. I'm an organizer with Action United and Media Mobilizing Project. I live in Southwest Philadelphia and have for the entirety of my life. I pushed my way through high school in the system here. I graduated in 2009. During my time in school, I fought with the Philadelphia Student Union to gain better resources like

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computers, books, and libraries to house them. We needed to do that because in school, we felt very displaced. Our schools look like prisons covered in bars with piping exposed and mold growing on the walls. Not to mention we didn't have any textbooks that weren't falling apart.

Outside of this, I needed Internet at home to continue schoolwork and for access to do research for colleges and universities. I was lucky enough to have that, but I also watched my mother and grandmother struggle to pay our Verizon bill.

We are all here to address our concerns with the 15 year Comcast franchise. First let me recap a few things. In 2013, Comcast backed previous Governor Corbett on the billion-dollar cut from the state's education budget. Comcast argues that because their building makes property value go up, they contribute to property taxes. They have also made claims to paying taxes that no

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one can find records of. I think Comcast pays next to nothing in property taxes and they're not paying the average 10 percent of income taxes.

I say this to show you that Comcast doesn't care about education, and they should, because it is our young people who will one day run this country. Children are the future, a term I've heard as a child, a statement that gave me hope through school. I don't think children today hear this anymore, and that is our downfall. We need to show them that they can be leaders. Comcast has to help diminish the joy -- has helped to diminish the joy of education.

It is not wrong for us to ask that they support the upbringing of our children by funding tech teachers, programs that close the digital divide, paying their fair share in taxes for schools, and free Internet access for schools. That would improve the quality of schools, and education will again be

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great.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Please state your name for the record, and hello, Sherrie. State your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. COHEN: Hello, Chair Henon and members of the Committee. My name is Sherrie Cohen. I am a Philadelphian, a Comcast subscriber, and a recent candidate for City Council at-large. As a Comcast subscriber, I am infuriated that in Comcast's hometown of over 50 years, Comcast is charging us rates that are higher than in other cities where Comcast does business.

As a Philadelphian, I'm outraged that the wealthiest company in our city continues to seek out tax abatements and subsidies and cruelly deprives the children and youth of our city of the resources they so desperately need in our schools in crisis.

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(Applause.)

MS. COHEN: Comcast, the wealthiest company in Philadelphia, had profits last year of $8 billion in a city that is the poorest big city in the nation. The pay and benefits of CEO Brian Roberts last year was $26.9 million. Compare that with the average per capita income in Philadelphia of $22,279.

Comcast is also the largest broadcasting and cable company in the world by revenue, yet Philadelphia has the third worst broadband penetration rate of the 25 largest American cities, with half of seniors and one-quarter to one-third of us offline.

Today, in negotiating this franchise agreement, we are faced with a once-in-a-generation opportunity. What is our collective vision? How can we use this agreement to end the shameful digital divide in our city and help reduce the income inequality and poverty

in Philadelphia that is unconscionable?

First, Comcast must increase, not decrease, its support for community media. Philadelphians fought for nearly 27 years and finally established public access TV in 2009. In the draft agreement, Comcast commits only $600,000 each year to PhillyCAM for both operating and capital expenses. This is a 28 percent funding cut. Yet Comcast is far more generous outside of Philadelphia, agreeing to pay St. Paul, Minnesota's public access channel over 1 million a year and Portland's public access channel nearly 2 million a year. Why is Comcast treating Philly like a second-class city compared to what they have agreed to elsewhere?

I want to see Comcast at least meet the terms of the City's Needs Assessment, over 3 million per year for public access TV.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. We are clear over time, but thank you for

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your testimony. E-mail that to me and I'll make sure it gets put in the record in its entirety.

MR. MERCER: Good evening, Councilmen and women. My name is Bryan Mercer. I'm Executive Director at Media Mobilizing Project, who leads the CAP Comcast Campaign.

(Applause.)

MR. MERCER: And with my time, I want to talk about why our organization cares about the outcomes of this franchise so much.

So Media Mobilizing Project, we're an organization that was created by the profound impact of media and technology on how communities organize for change, and we're committed to working to face the challenges of poverty and inequality that our city faces, like so many of you on Council are. And one of our first projects almost ten years ago was supporting low-wage workers in the City to get online through

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Philadelphia Wireless. And we went door to door. We went to town hall meetings, taxi dispatches, union halls to do that. And when we saw Wireless Philadelphia on its last legs, we pushed for community voices to be heard about the need for affordable Internet.

Also, when the opportunity arose for federal investment that would go on to create the Philly KeySpots program, we were there talking to partners around the country on how Philadelphia could be a leader in that project. And now today we see that the City is still faced with the question of what are we going to do to get the 36 percent of Philadelphians at least online, on the Internet, and to have access to their human right of communication. And I think the type of solutions that were discussed today are exactly the things that Comcast should be jumping at as the opportunities to really make sure that every person in the City

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could get online.

And so that includes investing in a significant and ongoing way in our schools to make sure that every child has a librarian and access to the technology tools that they need. That means expanding the Internet Essentials program so that every low-income person in the City would qualify, without a requirement of turning off their service for 90 days. That means that PhillyCAM and all of the City's public access broadcast have the support that they need. And that means establishing a Digital Inclusion Fund that really has community stakeholders deciding what happens in investment.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

MR. MERCER: Just very quickly, last point. In May 2015, the New York Times reported that Comcast's revenue for Internet service for the first time surpassed their revenue for cable service. And so that means that this

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franchise agreement is fundamentally different from the last --

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you. We're aware of it. Thank you, sir.

State your name for the record and begin with your testimony.

MR. MERCER: And that's Bryan Mercer.

(Applause.)

MR. GABRIEL SPILLER: Good evening, Councilmembers. I want to thank you for your effort today. I'm inspired by your focus and your endurance. It's been a long day.

I just want to say my name is Gabriel Wolf Cohen Spiller. I'm here today on behalf of all my fellow Philadelphians, more specifically the Media Mobilizing Project and my mother, who is a deaf and hard-of-hearing teacher at Abraham Lincoln High School whose deaf program will be dismantled next year because of lack of funding.

I live in North Philadelphia

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for the past five years. I was raised in Mount Airy the rest of my life. As a product of the public school system here in Philadelphia, I'm fortunate to have been enrolled when they still could afford books and librarians and even nurses. Within the past 15 years, countless schools have been closed, faculty slashed, leaving thousands without education and guidance. For the past 15 years, we Philadelphians have played our roles as citizens by paying our taxes, gathering up enough money I think, like 42 million, to help fund Comcast's second skyscraper. Meanwhile, for the past 15 years, Comcast has paid just a third of our Commonwealth's average state income tax, a fraction which, if increased merely to the average amount, could single-handedly shift the direction of our failing school system.

According to the Institute of Media and Communication Policy's public media database, in the past 15 years

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Comcast has become the largest corporate entity in the world. Nevertheless, throughout the past 15 years, while Comcast has become wealthier than some nation states, Philadelphia has continued to hold its place strong as the poorest big city in this country. With almost alarming amounts of development and private investment making its way into our city's infrastructure, one can only hope Philadelphia's evolution doesn't leave its own citizens behind.

As franchise negotiations reach the final stages, I ask for the next 15 years you ensure Comcast pays its fair share of taxes and plays its necessary role to cultivate the environment it calls home.

Thank you, City Council. We are counting on you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: Good job.

Now we're getting the cadence of the two minutes. Very good.

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Clerk, would you please read the next panel.

THE CLERK: Candace Chewning, Alex Wiles, Michael Kelly, Eric Rosso, Gregory Holt, T.C. Owens.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Again, if there are folks here that are here to testify in a represented group and they want to speak on behalf of several people, feel free to do so. It would help move things along and give everybody an opportunity to voice their opinion on any issue here tonight. So thank you.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN HENON: You can state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. CHEWNING: Hello. My name is Candace Chewning and I live in West Philadelphia. I currently work for MMP and am lucky enough to be doing something I love.

I am here today as a citizen

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and community member to talk to you about the world's biggest media company in the city that I live in. Believe it or not, growing up until now, I've only had Internet in my house one time. When I did, I made $8.50 an hour in Philly and I definitely couldn't afford Comcast. I refuse to pay $100 for TV and Internet. I don't even own a TV. And I could barely afford my rent at the time. Splotchy Clear was my only other option. Paying my Internet bill literally made me want to cry. I never actually had it to use it and I felt like my hard work wasn't enough to even afford the chance in finding another job, because I needed the Internet to do it. My mother still doesn't have Internet. When I go to see her in Virginia, we go to the library so she can apply for jobs. All applications these days are online, and she's applying to Panera Breads and hotels and things like that. You know, we can't even get through even one page

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in applications at the library before we're kicked off because it's been an hour. Applications are five something pages long online now.

Comcast being the world's biggest media company, which you know, they made $5 million in revenue in Philadelphia last year alone and 8 billion in Pennsylvania and are headquartered here. And a few years after I moved to Philly, I saw parents hunger striking for schools on the streets. That left an impression on me. I know that Comcast fought paid sick days, lobbied with Corbett's $1 billion tax cuts for schools, and fought their own workers from forming a union. I myself have been involved in organizing a union with my co-workers and know how important having a voice is.

I know that only 9 percent of the people who apply for affordable Internet receive it, and this tells me that Comcast is not a friend of

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hard-working people in the City. And I'm here to say please tell me something different, show me something different. Expand affordable Internet so that mothers can get online to find jobs. Make Internet affordable so that communities have something more to look forward to than just getting by. And please make the City reflect Comcast's headquarters.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you so much.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony, please.

MR. WILES: I'm Alex Wiles. I live in North Philly. I was born and raised in the City. I attended public schools my whole life and graduated just a short walk away from here at Science Leadership Academy, which is also just a few blocks from the Comcast building.

Comcast today did a wonderful

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job presenting a false narrative in which they actually care about our city. They claim to be a process for feedback, but only change their Internet Essentials policies in the face of national outcry. They brag about the diversity and inclusiveness of their workforce, but stood in the way of their own workers' right to unionize in Philadelphia and fought to pay -- sorry. Paid to fight against paid sick days in Philadelphia. There refuse to be held accountable for their practices and stood in the way of the release of our Needs Assessment for many months.

Like many people in Philadelphia, I am a low-income worker and a Comcast customer. I'm also a member of the CAP Comcast Campaign. I know how awful and expensive their services are, especially those for Internet connectivity.

As a graduate of Philly public schools, I also know how stark the

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resources to our education system is. My younger brother currently attends high school in Philadelphia. Our young people are languishing in unfair conditions that leave them unprepared to enter the workforce and more likely to get trapped in a school-to-prison pipeline.

It is time to invest in the future of our city. Education is the most important investment we can make. Good schools are worth fighting for and they're a central pillar in the CAP Comcast Campaign.

I want to ask Comcast, are you going to hire people who graduate from these broken schools? I don't think so.

Education goes beyond schools, though. Everyone in this city needs fair, affordable access to information. Philadelphia is the poorest big city in the United States, and we have the third worst broadband penetration in the United States. Half our seniors are offline. One-third of our entire city is offline.

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In many ways being offline means being cutting off from society. It means limited opportunities. The FCC recognizes this emergency and recently classified broadband as a public utility.

Comcast claims to understand this is well, yet both they and Verizon refuse to cooperate with Philadelphia when we tried to build our own Internet service, municipal broadband Internet that could have put our whole city online.

COUNCILMAN OH: All right. I'm sorry. Thank you very much. We've gone over two minutes.

MR. WILES: I just want to say that they should expand affordable fair Internet to the entire city, and we should be treated as first-class citizens at our own table.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.

Okay. Could we call the next list of panelists. Thank you. Thank you

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very much.

THE CLERK: Next panel, Raed Nasser, Jan Chanin, Ron Whitehorn, Madeline Shikomba, Xavier Wardlaw, Steven Feldman, Rebekah Phillips.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, please have a seat and identify yourself and proceed, please.

MR. WHITEHORN: My name is Ron Whitehorn. I'm a retired teacher. I'm the coordinator for the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools.

As a teacher, I know firsthand the way computer technology can boost student learning. I just want to share one story.

At Julia DeBurgos where I taught 8th grade science, I had a student named Carlos who repeatedly failed. He was in his second year with me. He rarely did his assignments. He doodled and talked during class and seemed beyond

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the reach of any strategies I knew for getting him engaged.

Then we embarked on a robotics project where students constructed machines out of Legos, learned an elementary form of computer programming, and then wrote programs that operated the machines from computers. Suddenly Carlos came alive. He built a huge dinosaur robot that could do amazing things. He helped the other students over the difficult spots in the project. His pride in his new-found success was a wonderful thing to behold.

It's sad to say that this kind of success story with computers is not very likely in most of our classrooms today. Computers on average are over ten years old. As most people know, that's an antique in today's world, prone to breakdown and lacking the computing power to run state-of-the-art software.

Computers that get a lot of use from students need maintenance, and

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overburdened, overstretched staff can't do it without more support.

We have to ask two questions. First, why should our students be denied the same advantages when it comes to computer technology that students in affluent communities have? Why should our students be shortchanged when we know that computer literacy is important for success in school and beyond? We know the answer. It's money.

But that gets to the second question. If money is so critical, why is a corporate giant that makes record profits excused from paying school property taxes? Why isn't the technology company that depends on the City granting it a franchise expected to do more to promote computer literacy in our schools?

Many of us are tired of the same-old trickle-down economics argument that justifies subsidies for corporations and the rich, while we see deepening racial and economic inequality all around

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us.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, I got to call you two minutes. We let you go a little longer, but please.

Ms. Shikomba.

MS. SHIKOMBA: I'm Madeline Shikomba. I'm a Comcast thing. What can I say about that lousy company? Except to say that I switched. Not just switched. I've been having cable for the past couple years. They offer a special with TV. So I took the special. You know what they did? They reduced my speed to give me the cable TV and said I wasn't entitled to the blast speed that I was supposed to be getting because I asked for cable TV. Nowhere in the contract did they say they going to reduce your speed, but they did.

So now I gave them back the cable TV and I went back to my rabbit ears, because I get as many channels with my rabbit ears that I would get with them anyway.

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So now what happens? My speed is still down. And know what they tell me? Well, this is the best we can do with the WiFi, is it gives you instead of your 150 that you supposed to be paying for, it's 90 to 98. And you telling me they going to -- I feel like I'm wasting my time really talking with you, because you going to approve what they want anyway and we going to still end up with this lousy company and their lousy service. Not only that, they building a new building to get another ten-year tax abatement, and they'll probably sell the one they currently in because the tax abatement be over with with that one. And I'm sick of it.

How many times are we going to let this company get away with giving Philadelphia nothing and taking everything? It's about time that City Council did something for us.

I am tired of Comcast. I have been up the corporate ladder. I mean up

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the corporate ladder, to the Vice President, to complain about my service, and what have I gotten? Nothing. The tech has been out to my house a dozen times, and he said he can't even fix it. What the hell is going on that you got a cable company that can't fix their own problems? And I'm sitting here -- I'm not joking. I'm still with a blast at two-thirds the price and I'm paying full price. Now I should be paying two-thirds the money if I'm only getting two-thirds the --

(Applause.)

MS. SHIKOMBA: I'm sick of them, and you should be too.

Please help the people of Philadelphia. I'd rather see them leave than stay, because they ain't giving nothing. And nothing from nothing leaves nothing.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, ma'am.

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Who would like to go next?

MS. CHANIN: Well, how do I follow that? Can you hear me?

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes, we can. Go ahead.

MS. CHANIN: My name is Jan Chanin. I have lived in Philly my entire life, which is a long time. I am a retired school secretary. I was a secretary for 28 years, 25 in Austin Meehan Middle School and three years in Greenberg Elementary School, both in Northeast. And I will say I love my job.

Me and many low-income students do not have access to the Internet at home and they were not able to access it at the library easily, because the library's limited hours and limited number of computers and also because some of the kids could not get there easily.

Students need to use the Internet in order to complete school assignments and also look up information about City services or health information

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for their parents or younger siblings, which they did a lot. Students without easy access to the Internet would often turn in assignments late or their work would be incomplete. Teachers felt that they had no choice but to give bad or incomplete grades to those students, though they struggled with the knowledge that this is unfair that some students had Internet access at home while others didn't. This has nothing to do with students' ability or interest in the subject matter. They simply had no way of completing assignments and would leave the students feeling frustrated, alienated, and in too many cases a total failure, through no fault of their own. This is just not right for our kids. Our students deserve so much better than that.

The problem did not exist to that extent at Greenberg, a school in a more affluent part of the Northeast. Most of the students there had access to

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the Internet at home. All students need is easy and reliable access to the Internet in order to learn to compete in the job market, to prepare for college, et cetera.

I also saw the problems that resulted when parents did not have reliable access to the Internet. Parents who did not have Internet access at home were much more likely to miss important notices from the school. They were sent by mail. I witnessed this many, many times. Parents --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, I'm going to have to ask you to just finish up, because two minutes are up. Okay?

MS. CHANIN: Okay. Yes.

I will just say that our kids deserve so much better than this, and the Internet is just as important now as cell phones.

So I thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

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you. Thank you, ma'am.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, please identify yourself and proceed.

MR. WARDLAW: My name is Xavier Wardlaw and I am a part of the cultural history of Philadelphia in the theatre and in television. If you don't mind, if you please think back 30 years, 30 years ago, right, Comcast was a little cinderblock building under the Wayne Avenue bridge. At that time, they were a good neighbor to the community. At that time, there was a fellow named Tom who ran the place, and we would ask him if he would come out and help us film our plays, which he would go in the cabinet, get the camera, and follow us around and help us film our plays. At that time, Comcast was really okay.

Right now I'm not exactly sure. I am a customer of Comcast and that's, you know -- what I would like to say is that if Comcast is going to cut the

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budget of PhillyCAM, no deal. That's it. No deal. If you're going to cut the budget of public access TV, why don't you just forget it.

That's it. That's all I have to say.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Thank you all.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr. Creelman, who do we have next?

THE CLERK: Gregory Holston, Sam Ruben, Robert Finkelstein, Avery Dante Hinds, Steven Aronson, Alexander Napper, Marquis Lupton, Karen Collins.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Are they here? Please, whoever would like to start. Sir, identify yourself and proceed.

MR. FINKELSTEIN: My name is Robert Finkelstein. I'm a resident of

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Philadelphia, a full-time freelance videographer and I'm here just as a member and to speak in support of funding for PhillyCAM.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: A little closer to the microphone.

MR. FINKELSTEIN: Here to speak in support of PhillyCAM.

Fifteen years is a super long time in technology years. It's like a couple lifetimes. So I hope you guys realize the importance of what's going on here, especially as far as -- again, I'm only talking about PhillyCAM.

Somebody before spoke about it as part of the public infrastructure, and I do think it's an awesome part. It played a very important role in my development as a videographer every step of the way. When I needed help as far as training, it was there. I would not be working full time today if it wasn't for PhillyCAM. They have the equipment. They had sound equipment. They had

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cameras. And any time when somebody called me later on for jobs, I had that experience because PhillyCAM provided that for me.

So I think -- there's nothing special about me. There's a lot of people out here in the City. The video field is a huge expanding field, and I think you guys should look at it as a great training ground for future people who could use it as a resource for training and stuff like that. And like I said, 15 years is a super long time in technology years, so it's super important for them to get all the funding that they can in order that they can provide everybody in Philadelphia with -- it's almost like a public library in terms of giving people access to equipment and technology and experience. The schools are great, but some schools you can't access because it's too expensive, but for $25 a year, you can get access at PhillyCAM to cutting-edge equipment and

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all kinds of knowledge and, again, you can use me as an example.

Four years ago I just had an idea that I wanted to be a videographer. Today, I'm a full-time working videographer, and PhillyCAM -- I can honestly say that if it wasn't for PhillyCAM, that wouldn't be the case.

So I think, again -- and, again, you have one chance to get this right in 15 years, and if, you know -- $600,000 -- our budget cut from $800,000 to $600,000 that's currently proposed I think indicates that there's still a lot of work to do on this agreement.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Who would like to go next? Sir, in the middle.

MR. HINDS: Hello. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Avery Dante Hinds. I'm a

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Philadelphia --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: A little closer to the microphone.

MR. HINDS: I'm a Philadelphia resident and I've been a Comcast customer my whole life.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, I share my home with Comcast. So Comcast is my neighbor, as the gentleman before me has said. From the outside looking in, you could assume that would be a tremendous benefit, bringing strong jobs and an amazing tech infrastructure to the City, allowing us to say that we live with a billion-dollar corporation, which is wonderful.

However, none of this is true, except for the fact that Comcast is a billion-dollar infrastructure. Comcast has not really helped our community to the extent that it can afford to, I believe so and many others believe in this room.

According to Philadelphians

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across the City and in this very room, Comcast provides inconsistent and inefficient services and it has the country's worst customer service, all of which can be yours for some of the highest prices in the country.

Even if employed by Comcast, you will have an employer that leads the state lobbyists against paid sick days, against raising the minimum wage, and fights its own workers' rights to organize a union.

In 2013, Philadelphia was called the poorest big city in America with some of the deepest poverty levels of any big city. These days the Internet is a gateway to opportunity and information, making access an absolute necessity for everyone.

With such rampant poverty, it is more crucial than ever that those in need have access and these bare essentials just to participate in today's society.

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Comcast does not have an Internet -- Comcast does have an Internet Essentials program geared to low-income families, but it leaves out all disabled citizens, students while only offering 10 percent to the elderly. Yet in other cities, they offer 30 percent.

Unfortunately, out of those families that are somehow eligible for this program, only 9 percent have made it through the exhaustingly difficult registration process.

I think it is time for Comcast to invest in its home that has invested so much -- that needs to invest so much in securing our future here and its future here in a city that it wants to spend another 15 years in. Philadelphia is falling apart and its people are in need, and it's time for our calls for help to be answered. It is time we bring some balance to this unhealthy relationship.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir.

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MR. HINDS: Comcast is an entity and it is also a citizen of Philadelphia, and how in the year 2015 one-third of your citizens, your fellow brothers and sisters, Comcast, have no Internet?

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I appreciate that, sir. I have to call you on that time.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir.

MR. LUPTON: Hello, Councilmembers. My name is Marquis Lupton. I'm here to talk about the benefits of PhillyCAM.

One thing -- I used to be a news reporter for over eight years. One of the things that I notice and that a lot of people here probably notice about the news is that as soon as you turn it on, it's death and destruction. The whole A block will tell you how bad Philadelphia is.

One of the benefits that

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PhillyCAM has is that it's people-powered media, meaning that we focus on a lot of the untold stories, a lot of the stories that kind of slip through the cracks, a lot of the stories that don't have that if it bleeds, it leads kind of feel. And that's really what PhillyCAM offers to the Philadelphia community. It's more than just media. It's a way to really accentuate the quality that Philadelphia has to offer - food, music, fashion. We're more than just guns and bullets and death. We're more than just police brutality. We're more than just political issues.

This is a thriving city. This is one of the top cities in the Northeast, and PhillyCAM aims to really highlight those things. And, again, like I said, we really don't concentrate on the death and destruction of Philly, but we concentrate on the positivity, and something like that is needed in this time, especially this time in 2015 when

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there's so much turmoil, there's so much anger, and there's so much frustration going on in Philadelphia and in the state and in the country, and for us to offer that little bit of peace to our viewers, that goes a lot farther than what they're currently covering.

That's all I have. Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You make a good point. Thank you.

Thank all three of you.

It was pointed out you must be a reporter. You had the time down exactly right.

Mr. Creelman.

THE CLERK: Tina Marie Russell, Jermaine Morrison, Zaynah Jones, Monica Mason, Nina Fay, Audra Traynham, Karen DeCecco.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I don't see anybody getting up.

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THE CLERK: Richard McCloskey, Glenda Freeman.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Come on up. Come on down.

THE CLERK: Peter McDermott, Robin Hynicka.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please identify yourself for the record and proceed.

MS. DeCECCO: My name is Karen DeCecco.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Real close to the microphone.

MS. DeCECCO: Better?

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good.

MS. DeCECCO: Hello. My name is Karen DeCecco. Hello, members of City Council. I'm here to support PhillyCAM. PhillyCAM premieres 12.9 hours of new locally produced programs weekly. PhillyCAM is attracting a significant viewership, with 14 percent of the

responding households watching weekly. I am the producer and host of Heart of Philly, and my show airs every Thursday 2 o'clock. You should watch it. I have a following of viewers watching my show on Comcast and YouTube.

I started producing Heart of Philly in 2003 and PhillyCAM gave me the opportunity to air my show in Philadelphia. I've had -- I've featured guests such as Tony Clark, Joe Poon. And a very good friend of mine, Vince Papale, told me never give up, and I never will. I have a passion for this city. I have a passion for what I'm doing, and I will continue to do it.

My show features local chefs, artists, musicians, local sports. I featured also the first fashion week in Philadelphia, and there wasn't anyone there doing and connecting to the people like I was.

I also help support a lot of the local businesses here in

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Philadelphia. The difference that I make and that I am making, I have a way of connecting with the people here in Philadelphia. Shouldn't Heart of Philly stay in Philadelphia?

I have friends who are producers at the UN and they've hosted guests such as Michelle Obama, Michael Douglas, Beyonce, and they are supporting what I'm doing here in Philadelphia. Shouldn't Comcast continue to support me?

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, before you go, just so I get a feel, how many people in the room still want to speak?

Okay. All right.

Please proceed.

MS. FREEMAN: My name is Glenda Freeman and I'm here to represent -- my name is Glenda Freeman and I'm here to represent PhillyCAM, and I am, my son, and my granddaughter, we will -- my

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granddaughter will be attending PhillyCAM, but my son and I attend PhillyCAM. Both of us have a degree in communications, and in school we have books -- we just learn books and just how to apply the communications. So PhillyCAM, what they have done for us is allowed us to come in and to use their equipment. They have trained us. Even with our degrees, they have trained us, and since then, my son and I, we are doing -- and my granddaughter -- we are really doing what we feel like we're created to do in communications and what we love to do.

Since then, since we have joined PhillyCAM, we have now become script writers. We have shopped our scripts and we are now being observed by a television station now. This is due to PhillyCAM spending the time there, learning the trade, learning the art. Instead of just the books, we have gotten hands-on experience. And I am a -- my

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son is 36. I have eight grandchildren, and I am fulfilling my dream that I was not able to accomplish years ago when I was in college. And I just wanted to support PhillyCAM, because we are as a family, we are pursuing our dream, our careers, and they have helped us to do so. So I just wanted to say to cut the budget would really, you know, just hurt so many people and it would discourage them as far as not being able to pursue their career or their goals.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you both.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr. Creelman, who is next?

THE CLERK: Kairol Rosenthal, Agnes Bey, Shannon Fisk, Kate Goodman, Stephen Lawrence Spann.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good

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evening. Please identify yourself and proceed.

MS. ROSENTHAL: Hi. My name is Kairol Rosenthal. A lot of what I was going to say has already been said, so I'm just going to speak off the cuff.

First of all, I want to say that I'm a little bit insulted by what I heard Comcast speaking about earlier and touting about how much they give to incredible non-profit organizations that are in the City. I think that when we look at how much Comcast makes and what percentage of it they give away and I look at how much I make and what percentage of it I give to non-profit organizations, I think I probably have Comcast beat. So I think --

(Applause.)

MS. ROSENTHAL: I think for Comcast to pat themselves on the back about this is a little insulting.

And I just want to remind City Council that I went to the polls last

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week to vote for you, to vote for City Council, and while I could sit here and bash Comcast until the cows come home, it's really up to City Council to be representing those of us who are in this room who are stating what our needs are.

And, lastly, I want to say I moved to Philadelphia four years ago. I'm now a homeowner in Philadelphia. I probably pay a lot more in property taxes than Comcast does, and I'm glad for that money go to the schools. Since I moved here, I've had so many friends and family visit me from around the country. I've lived in many places around the country. I have family all around. I've probably had over 30 guests come to visit me in Philadelphia, and all of them say to me, What is wrong with the Internet in your house? And I think it's just important for you to think about the kind of impression that Philadelphia makes on the outside world when we're thinking about -- we're going to be holding the

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Democratic National Committee conference here. We're hosting things that people from the outside world are coming to, and I think that we are priding ourselves as a city on that and on how we're presenting ourselves to the rest of the world, and I think that the way that we're presenting ourselves is kind of like as a dial-up community. People I think are walking away with the impression that Philadelphia is pretty retro when it comes to technology and something as basic as Internet access.

So I'm happy to be living in the City and I'd like to be proud of how we are negotiating contracts with this huge corporation.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you, ma'am.

(Applause.)

MR. FISK: Thank you. I'm Shannon Fisk. I'm a resident and a voter here in Philadelphia. I'm also a homeowner, which means I also pay more in

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property taxes than Comcast does on its shiny building.

But this hearing isn't about me. It's about what kind of a city Philadelphia is. Namely, are we a city that acts so desperate that we beg for table scraps from a company that takes in $8 billion a year in profits? Or are we a city that requires large corporations to provide real benefits to our city and our people in return for the privilege of profiting off of our people?

For far too long we've acted as desperate beggars when it comes to Comcast. Comcast pays no property taxes on its shiny tower. Taxpayers have provided nearly $40 million in subsidies for its second shiny tower. Comcast pays an income tax rate of 3.4 percent, which is lower than the wage tax rate that I pay as a City resident. In exchange, we, the residents of Philadelphia, get very poor quality service, high customer bills, little access in poor communities,

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a company that fights against the rights of workers, and small charitable donations designed more to get Comcast good PR than to actually help the people of Philadelphia.

We can and must do better. I urge our City Council to demand a better deal from our city and our residents. Let's require this $8 billion per year company to provide up-to-date computer facilities and a tech teacher in every public school in the City. Let's demand that Comcast pay its workers and contractors here in Philadelphia at least $15 an hour and stop interfering with the right to unionize. Let's demand concrete steps for Comcast to improve service and access throughout the City.

In short, let's use the Comcast franchise negotiations to make clear Philadelphia isn't a city that begs for table scraps. We are a proud city that will demand a fair deal for our people in exchange for Comcast having the privilege

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to operate here, and that's your job as City Council, to make sure that we are that city that's demanding a fair deal for our people, not begging.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

MR. SPANN: Good evening, Council, citizens of Philadelphia. My name is Stephen Lawrence Spann. I'm here to talk on behalf of public access television.

I've been affiliated with public access television for the past three years, and it has been my experience from being associated with other access televisions in other states that this is by far the greatest public access television that we can see.

Right now, based off the experience, we heard the stats, we heard everybody talk about how much is going to be lost if they cut the budget from public access. I just want to talk about

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the experience that I've had.

I've dealt with the staff. The staff is by far the greatest staff that they can have. They have the greatest technology in which people who maybe never went to film school such as myself -- I went to school for business administration -- I never thought that I could create any type of show, ideas or anything, and they've given me that experience to be able to do so.

So with that being said, what I would like to say is, the best way to plan the future is to create it. And if you take away the creativity, there is no future. Our kids are going to be able to take advantage of this opportunity to get as much as they can out of PhillyCAM, and I think by continuing to put the funding into it, we can reach by far more and more people.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

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(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

Mr. Creelman, who do we have next?

THE CLERK: Gabriel Baldwin, Andrew Nelson, Nuala Cabral, Anis Taylor, Virginia Edmonds, Marta Guttenberg.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If they're here, please come up.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You're there first. Go ahead, please identify yourself and proceed.

MS. GOODMAN: My name is Kate Goodman. I'm a member of Socialist Alternative and a volunteer organizer with 15 Now Philly, the campaign for a citywide $15 an hour minimum wage. I'm also a restaurant worker for two small businesses in Philly, both of whom pay much higher tax rates than our friends at Comcast.

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I'll be straightforward. Comcast's proposed franchise agreement with Philadelphia is an abomination and an insult to our city. The proposal includes not a single word about guaranteeing all Comcast employees a living wage of at least $15 an hour and the freedom to form a union. Fewer than 2 percent of Comcast workers have a union contract. A huge percent of Comcast workers are subcontracted without benefits.

At Comcast there are hundreds of installers, street canvassers, and subcontractors making less than $15 an hour. While tabling for 15 Now in North Philadelphia, we've met Comcast workers signing up people for services. These workers work outdoors and on commission. They've explained to us their wages are retroactively deducted from their paycheck if the customer cancels their service or can't pay for service because of back bills. This is an outrageous

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policy which makes it impossible for workers to balance an already tight household budget, especially when workers are dispatched to canvas specifically in low-income neighborhoods.

If City Council and the Mayor want to build a city that works for working people, you must fight Comcast. Working people run the City, and it's time for our elected officials to stand alongside us and hold corporations accountable for the money they take directly out of workers' pockets and keep for themselves.

Like many Philadelphia corporations, Comcast is headquartered in Delaware, and despite paying nearly no taxes, Comcast blackmails our city with a threat of job losses if we don't give them whatever they want.

The neoliberal economic development that City Council has willfully encouraged for decades is a failed experiment. Decades after giving

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big businesses tax breaks and taxpayer-funded incentives to build high-rises and condos, Philadelphia is still the poorest major city in the country. Real economic development comes from the bottom up, not from ensuring David Cohen makes $46 million a year and lives tax free, but by ensuring that the thousands of people who do the labor to keep Comcast in business make a robust living wage.

For far too --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ms. Goodwin, I'm going to have to call you on the two minutes. Okay?

MS. GOODWIN: Okay.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

MS. GOODWIN: Thank you.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you very much.

Who would like to go next?

MR. TAYLOR: I'll go next.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please

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identify yourself and proceed.

MR. TAYLOR: Hi. My name is Anis Taylor. I am a co-founder of Higher Than 7 Production. I am a producer and I am a proud member of PhillyCAM.

I am here to tell you about the value of PhillyCAM and just the effect that it's had on my life. Up to 14 months ago all I've ever dreamed about was shooting big movies in Philly, making big television shows in Philly, recording Grammy-winning albums in Philly, but I never had a clue on how to do that. Since I've become a member of PhillyCAM, step by step every process that I dreamed about I can actually logically explain how to get there, and it's all been done through PhillyCAM with the education that I've gotten from them.

I don't have a social life. I'm 32. I don't date. All I do is think about producing, producing, producing. And it's the honest God truth. If you ever find me, you'll find me in PhillyCAM

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taking a class, volunteering, working with somebody. And really the effects and the love that you get in that community is really something that I think that people if you go in there and you're a member of, you will feel it.

I thank them for the education that they've given me, because I have been able to live my dream, and every day it's getting better, and today is an example of that. And I really hope that you guys would just understand the value of PhillyCAM and just do more, because I'm telling you, it is growing some really, really great producers in this city that can really help.

So thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir.

(Applause.)

MS. CABRAL: Good evening.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good evening.

MS. CABRAL: My name is Nuala

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Cabral and I have been living in Philly for the last seven years. I'm an educator here at Temple University and I've also taught at PhillyCAM where I'm a member. I'm also a Comcast subscriber.

There's a few things I just want to mention, and I feel like I'm representing some of my students and their families, and I just want to share some of their experiences.

One, I'm representing students, high school students, who come into our programs at Temple who go to schools where there are no nurses, where there are no libraries, and where there are few available computers. I'm representing a young man who has a learning disability. He has dyslexia. And he attends a school -- well, he was attending a school in the 12th grade at a 4th grade reading level, and this is a school that I know has very little access to the kinds of technology that students with disabilities in more advantaged areas do

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have to help them overcome.

I'm representing this young man and other families like him who have mothers who -- parents who can't afford Internet, and I just -- again, this is for students, particularly students who have learning disabilities, this is a huge need to be able to have access to the kinds of programs and software that can help them overcome, especially when they don't have those resources in their schools.

I'm also representing Poppyn, which is a youth-led news show, and we air our programs on PhillyCAM. And I'm really proud to be part of this program that presents the positive things young people are doing in the City, and I'm very grateful for PhillyCAM for providing a platform for so many people all across the City to share diverse stories, nuance stories and, again, the kinds of positive things that are missing from local news.

Thank you.

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COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir.

MR. NELSON: My name is Andrew Nelson and I can't really say that I'm from Philadelphia. I don't think I'd fool anyone. So I'll just say that I'm from Jamaica originally and I've been adopted by Philadelphia.

So I'm here to talk a little bit about PhillyCAM. And I can just very quickly tell you that in the past two weeks, I have submitted seven pieces of work, original work. I have sat myself. I've run the main studio for the first time myself last week, Friday. Last Sunday and Monday with my colleague here, Anis, we shot a short film, which he now tells me bits of which we're going to have to reshoot. We're going to have to talk about that. And tomorrow I have an interview with four Chinese students. And I say that to say that I'm not alone.

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Last year PhillyCAM taught and trained over 200 people, people who never -- many of whom didn't have any experience at all with filmmaking. And I say that to make the point that it does take time.

So PhillyCAM is actually doing what it is meant to be doing. It is producing new work. It is producing people who can produce work, and it is getting our voice out there. What it means is sustenance over the long haul. It is an incredible resource. And you have taken the prudent step of commissioning a report. This report has gone out, and I have to say I've read parts of it, and from my experience, apart from maybe not mentioning how much food we have down here when we have shows and so on, it generally reflects what happens. The report suggests that it will take 38 million over a ten-year period to keep what we have started going. To then say -- I mean, who are we kidding? To then say that you're going

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to propose that we reduce that from 38 million over ten years to 18 over ten we know is asking for trouble. So --

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, I'm going to have to call you on that two minutes.

MR. NELSON: Yes. I'm just asking you to look ahead to the future. Very simply, if we won't take steps to preserve the future and our capacity now, we'll not be judged -- we will be judged not only by this generation, but in 15 years by the next as well.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr. Creelman.

THE CLERK: Barbara Silzle, Michael Dennis, Trenae Nuri, Bradley Zaire, Joy McFadden, Helen Levins.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

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COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good evening. Please identify yourself for the record and proceed, please.

MS. SILZLE: Hello. I'm Barbara Silzle, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Cultural Fund. I'm grateful to Council to have your time today.

Comcast, as a responsible corporate citizen headquartered here in Philadelphia, whose business is focused on entertainment and technology, who delivers content that is steeped in arts and culture, has an opportunity to contribute to that ecology right here in Philadelphia, and it makes sense that they do that through arts and through the schools, with assistance from the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

We all know that our schools lack critical resources, and when budget cuts are needed, arts programming is often the first to go.

What I want you to also know is that when kids engage in the arts, it has

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a profound and lasting impact on who they are, what they learn, what kind of jobs they get, and what kind of citizens they become. Studies have shown that students who participate in art and music programs throughout their school years outperform their peers in academic success, graduation rates, and employment.

Arts education fosters critical thinking, literacy and language development, mathematics achievement, problem-solving and reasoning, self-confidence and more. It absolutely promotes academic success and workforce readiness.

When kids are engaged, truancy and dropout rates decline. According to data compiled by the Americans for the Arts, students that are exposed to regular arts programming throughout high school are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement and on average score 100 points better on their SAT.

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Nationally, students of low socioeconomic status have a 22 percent dropout rate, but the dropout rate for students engaged in the arts drops to just 4 percent. With the 65 percent overall dropout rate in Philadelphia public schools, it's clear that more arts resources will help keep kids in school. And lucky for all of us, Philadelphia has a dynamic and committed arts community, with many great organizations, arts organizations, dedicated to working with school students, and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund plays a vital role in supporting those arts organizations.

So I'm here today to advocate on behalf of Philadelphia school students, because I think there's a way that Comcast can positively impact its home city by supporting arts programming in the schools through the Philadelphia Cultural Fund. After all, our students today will be the workforce that Comcast and our city needs tomorrow.

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Thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir.

MR. ZAIRE: Yes. I'd just like to comment on PhillyCAM funding. My name is Bradley Zaire. I'm an independent filmmaker. I've been a member with PhillyCAM for at least three years. Within those three years, I've produced a program, 30-minute program, and a short film, and without funding, that wouldn't have been possible.

The importance for me with Comcast is to allocate maximum funding for PhillyCAM, because it can lead to more training, better training and exposure for those that use public media. The significance of it, it can lead to distribution for people like me, filmmakers and other artists, that could lead to investments in film within Philadelphia and it can lead to more jobs

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in the greater Philadelphia area. And I'm also a Gulf War veteran, U.S. Navy, and --

(Applause.)

MR. ZAIRE: -- I have plenty of stories to put on film, you know, and I can see the benefit of funding through Comcast. Like I said, to allocate it through the Philadelphia CAM, it would definitely be widely used, because especially as an African American in filmmaking in Philadelphia, I would love to collaborate with the funding and Comcast, because it could get a lot of our stories, independent stories, out that would normally not be televised.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. And thank you for your service, if I may add.

Please.

MS. McFADDEN: Hello, City Council. My name is Joy McFadden. I

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would like to testify today on my experience with PhillyCAM. I have been a member with PhillyCAM for two years, and it's impacted my life very greatly. And I am someone who went to school for mass communication, graduated with a degree in it from Lincoln University in 2012. And with PhillyCAM, I didn't quite know what I was going to be expecting, but I have been there and have always had a warm family environment, and I want to say that all of us, we always have each other's back, and that's what a family environment is for. I don't know any other place in Philadelphia that you will go and get that kind of experience.

PhillyCAM is community access, community access. We accept everyone and anyone who comes through our doors. I assist with the studio crew class there, and I'm very happy to help anyone that comes through the doors and comes and takes that class.

We have very significant

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organizations that take part with PhillyCAM, Project STEAM TV, Reelblack, the gentleman sitting next to me, Moonstone. All these organizations create great material which is broadcasted on PhillyCAM, and without funding, I don't know if that will be possible. I mean, we will probably try to do it, but we would need way more funding than we have right now. I just want to say that if you take it away, I don't know what creative would be able to be produced.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: All right. Thank you very much.

Our next witness, would you please identify yourself for the record and provide your testimony.

MR. DENNIS: Hi. My name is Michael Dennis and I am the CEO and Founder of Reelblack. Our mission is to ensure the legacy of black film, and I'm

also on the Board of the Philadelphia Independent Film and Video Association, PIFVA. I'm a founding member of Councilman Oh's Black Film Advisory Committee. So a lot of my time is spent trying to figure out how do we ensure growth of the filmmaking community in Philadelphia.

I'm also -- since they switched over to digital, I had to get Comcast, ten years of that, and in that ten years or so, my bill has damn near tripled. I think Triple Play is like code for how can we get Mike to pay like three times the money he started paying with ten years ago.

So when I found out that PhillyCAM's budget is threatening to be cut, I find that very unconscionable, because to me PhillyCAM, more than the tax credit or anything, is the most essential element in ensuring the growth of the film community here in Philadelphia. And I say that because it

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has in the -- since 2009 since they've started, a community has built up around it, and it's also providing an outlet for voices to be heard that otherwise were not, just by access to equipment, access to training. I see people's lives transformed. And to cut that budget by any amount would be unconscionable.

So I urge you to not be extorted like I am by Comcast and fight to make sure that this money helps PhillyCAM, helps us grow.

COUNCILMAN OH: All right. Thank you very much. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: Ma'am, would you please state your name for the record and provide us with your testimony.

MS. LEVINS: My name is Helen Levins. I'm a lifelong resident of Fishtown and a product of our city's public and parochial schools.

Can you hear me? I'm like reaching.

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First, I wanted to thank the Administration and City Council for taking this issue so seriously. And I did want to thank Comcast for choosing our city for its corporate headquarters and for its new locations of the Innovation and Technology Center. The investment will create new jobs and opportunities in our city. It's undeniable.

But one thing that's been missing from these talks all throughout the last year has been Comcast's own recognition of our city's concessions to its corporation. Tax abatements, infrastructure spending and other considerations that have facilitated its settlement into our downtown just have not been recognized, and it's time.

In speaking of downtown, I really can't stress enough that we have to focus on our other neighborhoods. So I'm also here to talk about people who don't have access to the Internet. At

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this point, it's an essential utility. You heard somebody say it's a human right. So there's no reason that veterans, seniors, and low-income adults without school-age children should not qualify for Internet Essentials.

And then more seriously, I think I wanted to talk about the nature of this negotiation process and the transparency, the lack of respect, and the tone of the conversation with our city's chosen representatives. Our City Council asked for written answers to 20 questions back in, I think, September. Comcast has ranks of lobbyists and legal experts on retainer with answers to these questions at their fingertips. I wish Comcast would have responded line by line to their reasonable request rather than opting to only address several broad topics raised. This method was marginal and ambiguous.

My final issue with Comcast's response was its shady math to try to

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prove that it had an impact through economic activity, tax revenue, and franchise fees. Some of their calculations were reasonable, but others were misleading, including the $54 million in real estate taxes from the company and its employees and over $40 million in additional real estate taxes generated by increased property values surrounding the tower. If Comcast can use its employees' real estate taxes and its increased property value in its figures, we could just as easily claim that all of their charitable donations are a tax on Philadelphians via their subscription prices. It makes no sense to claim credit for figures like that. It's speculative at best.

COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I'm going to ask you to wrap up now, because the bell rang.

MS. LEVINS: Oh, sorry.

I want to say that I understand Comcast is running a business, but it's

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our responsibility to make sure that our business and residential communities enjoy a fair agreement, and it starts by them respecting your and our public voice.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.

Thank you everybody.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: Would you please provide the next panel of witnesses.

THE CLERK: Christopher Frazier, Lea van der Tak, Robert Foster, Ini Ikpe, Lisa Gervasi.

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN OH: Is anyone here that was called? If not, we'll go to the next list of witnesses.

THE CLERK: Jesse Kudler, Patrick Sherlock, Anthony Maher.

COUNCILMAN OH: I see two witnesses moving forward, maybe one. Could we read some more names.

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THE CLERK: Varsovia Fernandez.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILMAN OH: All right, sir. Would you provide us your name and give us your testimony.

MR. KUDLER: Yes. Good afternoon. My name is Jesse Kudler. I live in West Philadelphia. I have been a Comcast customer for over ten years. I have not been a customer for so long because I'm a fan of the service or the company, but rather for the simple reason that there are no other options for high-speed Internet at my address.

Over the years, I've watched the cost of my broadband service rise and rise while the service itself has not improved. I've dealt with multiple billing irregularities. I recently was charged for a modem that I had long since returned. I had a sudden late fee appear because I found that the company had arbitrarily changed my billing due date

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and then claimed my bill was late and I owed a late fee.

These issues could eventually be resolved with tortious phone calls and waiting on hold for a long time, but I resent that I have to waste that time and I have no other options of competitors. I worry there are other similar problems that I'm not catching, and I'm especially concerned that other customers with less time or who don't have literacy to read their bills as carefully aren't catching these kinds of tricks.

Needless to say, I do not enjoy being essentially forced to give my money to this de facto monopoly, particularly when I know how huge and profitable Comcast is and how little it pays in taxes for the privilege.

The elementary school at the end of my block has been sitting closed for two years. Other schools that stay open lack nurses, supplies, extracurricular activities and other

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basic resources. But Comcast avoids meaningfully contributing to fixing this situation, even as it's enjoying exclusive access to our city through its lease agreement that we're discussing today.

As a citizen of Philadelphia and as a Comcast customer, I want to say I fully support the entire CAP Comcast Platform.

As part of the next 15-year deal with the City, Comcast should provide funds for education and computers in our public schools. It must expand affordable high-speed Internet access so that all residents of the City can take part in a necessary resource for 20th century living, and Comcast must not block its workers' ability to unionize and should guarantee at least $15 an hour to all workers and contractors. I believe they can afford it.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very

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much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: Sir, would you identify yourself for the record and provide us with your testimony.

MR. MAHER: Good evening. My name is Anthony Maher. I'm CEO and Co-Founder of Benjamin's Desk. Benjamin's Desk is a co-working community of start-ups, entrepreneurs, and mobile professionals. To paint the picture, we sell offices, desks, and mobile memberships. We have about 200 members in our network, and one of the things that we're most proud of is the support that we've received from Comcast.

Our three pillars that we strive to do for the community is experience, engagement, and access. When we first started our company three years ago, we knew that we needed the support of the community and the City to get behind us to spur innovation, and we have true support from Comcast.

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As you decide on Comcast's franchise renewal with the City of Philadelphia, I ask that you consider the incredible role Comcast has played to develop starts-up and to spur innovation in the City of Philly. And that word "innovation" sometimes is a buzz word, but the way we see the Comcast leadership, they showed it in a very measurable way.

We come from a space where we have about 100 entrepreneurs in our space day to day and they build very measurable products, how many users, how many downloads, what's their growth week over week. When we first met David L. Cohen, he asked us what can he do. Many of his leadership stepped up and said, We want to make sure this is measurable. So today I'm about to testify of some of the small measurable things that Comcast was able to do, not just for Benjamin's Desk but for the tech ecosystem, for Philly Tech Week, for the business competition

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that we hold regularly.

When my brother and I were founding Benjamin's Desk, we had the great fortune of being introduced. We have since developed an incredible partnership with Comcast in many departments. Comcast has made a tremendous stride to help us resource thousands of mobile professionals.

As a result of what we received from Comcast, we were put in a great position to grow our operation, benefitting many companies today.

Philly Tech Week brought together thousands of the greatest minds in technology and innovation. As part of the Tech Week, Benjamin's Desk presented a Hackathon in which one of our greatest entrepreneurs in our space was awarded the founder of -- I'm sorry; the winner of the 2015 Philadelphia Geek of the Year Award. He was able to kind of bring his idea to fruition to market and continue to make impact.

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As a former professional soccer player, I know the DNA of a teammate and of a champion, and Comcast has been that, not just for Benjamin's Desk, not just for the veterans that they help, but for the entrepreneur who is trying to make measurable impact day to day.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.

Sir, would you identify yourself and provide us with your testimony.

MR. SHERLOCK: My name is Patrick Sherlock. I'm Campus Philly's Director of Student Engagement and University Relations, and I'm testifying on behalf of Campus Philly's President, Deborah Diamond.

Today, I'd like to share the importance of Comcast and our work to recruit and retain talent in Philadelphia. At Campus Philly, we fuel economic growth by encouraging college

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students to study, explore, live, and work in the greater Philadelphia region. For several years, Comcast has been a partner in fulfilling that mission.

Based on a 2014 survey we conducted, 71 percent of respondents who intern in the area over the summer opt to stay in the area as compared to 47 percent who intern elsewhere. When students are able to secure internships in the area while they're in school, they are much more likely to call Philadelphia home after graduation.

Comcast helps to attract these students with extensive internship programs each summer, offer internships in every facet of their business, from public relations to marketing to engineering and technology. Just this past summer, Comcast hired 240 interns. One-third of these interns are hired full time by Comcast after graduation.

Not only is Comcast growing by hiring our region's college students, the

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company is fostering a stronger work and live culture for young people in other sectors. Comcast's Home for the Summer program brings Philadelphia residents back home from college to work and pays for their internships at local start-ups. These college freshmen and sophomores are also connected to a local mentor in their field, strengthening their ties to Philadelphia's business sector and our City start-up scene.

Comcast is also a partner in Campus Philly's My Philly Summer program, hosting more than 250 college interns from the City and regional employers at the largest networking event for interns in the City. The program extends a formal invitation to interns at more than 150 companies to stay in Philadelphia after they finish school.

In addition to serving as a hub for interns, Comcast NBCUniversal was also the presenting sponsor for Campus Philly's Open Arts program, which

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showcases Philadelphia's incredible arts scene by providing free and heavily discounted tickets to arts and culture venues for regional college students.

More than 7,000 regional college students are Open Arts members, and one in five report the first time experiencing a local museum, theatre or other event has been through Open Arts. Comcast has provided funds to support Open Arts for the past three years.

I know that Comcast will continue to play an integral part in encouraging college students to study, explore, live, and work in the greater Philadelphia region. As you consider everything you've heard today and throughout this process, I hope you will focus on Comcast's commitment to attracting and preparing Philadelphia's future workforce.

Thank you for your time.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.

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Thank you everybody for your testimony.

COUNCILMAN HENON: If I can, a little housecleaning. Instead of reading everybody's name out loud and then Bueller, Bueller and nobody responding, is there anybody left here that wishes to testify?

Why don't we come on up three at a time. State your name for the record and begin with your testimony. So if everybody could fit at the table, that's how we're going to end.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

MR. WEST: Good evening. My name is Larry West. I am the republican committee person for the 22nd Ward, 26th Division. I am pleased to be here tonight to testify about this Comcast franchise agreement.

A lot of the things that were on my mind were already said. So in terms of what Comcast is doing, I want to

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focus on that.

Right now they're proposing a data cap of 300 gigabytes for every customer on their -- who has service with them, and they've already stated for the record that they don't need to have a cap of any sort. So if we're renewing this franchise agreement, I'm saying that part of this agreement should be no data caps at all.

They said there's 700 issues plus that were registered so far this year on their website in terms of complaints. You've already heard tonight about 100. I think it's safe to say that there's not enough transparency on how you're able to file a complaint. I didn't even know you could file a complaint, have you guys here. If I knew that, I probably would be here a little bit sooner. So as Councilwoman Sanchez stated, there needs to be more transparency about that.

The tax abatement that we're

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allowing on their new building, I know that's a different issue. This is not exactly a franchise, but to some degree, I think we can do something with this. So we're giving them a tax abatement on their new building for the next ten years. If we're doing that, could we at least take some of that money that's being used for that abatement to use for our schools, to use for PhillyCAM, to use for all these organizations. It sounds like we can actually do that.

Other than that, I mean, WiFi for all would be great. I know we're already using their routers -- or they're using their routers to provide it for the City. I think since we've already tried it before, I think it's worth looking into it again and trying to get that implemented for the entire City without routers but through their own equipment installed throughout the City.

And that's about it. I want to thank you for your time, and I hope you

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really consider everything I've said and everything everyone else has said tonight.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LOGAN: Good evening, Council. My name is Wanda Logan. I'm from West Philadelphia, and I guess I actually am here representing a couple of senior citizens in the 190 in West Philadelphia.

It seems to me like a lot of the money that Comcast has made has been on the back of a lot of senior citizens. I'm just asking for you to go back to the table and renegotiate. When it comes to them, actually the packages, most of them buy a bundle. When they buy the bundle, they buy it for a certain amount of time. When Comcast let's them know that their time is up or the bundle no longer exists, it's three months prior to them ending it. Most of the time a senior citizen has this money coming out of

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their checking account. Once that is done, they don't realize until two or three months into it that they're paying all this extra money. The average senior citizen inside of a senior citizen home or living is paying anywhere between $120 to $200, which is utterly ridiculous. They're on set living scales. The money really isn't there. A lot of them are just paying just for television. There's one tower on top of a facility.

I'm just asking for Comcast to restructure, pay attention more to the senior citizens. I mean, I've been Action United. I know we've been fighting for our children, but the reality is, Comcast is a business. They're going to make their money no matter what. We're just asking them to share with us.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you for your testimony.

Before we go to the next

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speaker, I just want to recognize that we are joined by Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown. So thank you for coming back.

Next person who would like to testify.

MS. WILLIAMS: Hi. My name is Maureen Williams and I am from Philadelphia. I'm here today because of the poor customer experience that I'm having with Comcast. I paid my bill to Comcast and they keep claiming that I owe them money. They first told me back in April that I haven't paid my bill since April, and I proved that they've been charging my credit card until the end of June. I've sent e-mails to Comcast saying that I do not authorize them to charge my credit card for any other services or anything, and where do I return their equipment. They claim they never got that e-mail and have yet to respond -- they have responded to that particular e-mail with the link to where

to send my equipment.

They claimed I did not return the equipment, which I did. They sent people to my house twice to collect. I was not home at the time. I told them via phone that I do not want them on my property ever again and I do not owe them money. They said they have the ability to come on my property any time they want since they feel I owe them money, and they've also charged my credit card after I sent them that e-mail not to charge my credit card.

People usually pay them a month or two in advance, and I feel they owe me money. They sent me a final bill and they did not list the charges of why they were charging me. They usually have itemized charges on their bills. Now they're sending me to collections and trying to ruin my credit, when they can't explain the bills or money that I owe to them.

I used to work at Comcast for

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five years, and I reported a Senior Vice President, Jennifer Yohe Wagner, in the Procurement Department for demanding gifts and bribes for awarding multi-million-dollar contracts to vendors. I was bullied by Procurement, and HR did nothing when I reported this. They fired me in retaliation.

People talk about bullying in schools. Then why is it tolerated at work? A person in my position before me reported abuse and they reported to an attorney that the EVP and CPO, Peter Kiriacoulacos, said a racist comment to them and it was all covered up. There is a history of this within the Procurement Department.

In the media, there have been complaints of a contractor saying he was fired because he complained about his Comcast bill.

COUNCILMAN OH: At this time, I do appreciate your testimony. Your two minutes are up. I will note, however,

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that we do have two supervisors over there at least in terms of the collections and other issues that you're having. So did you get a chance to speak with them?

MS. WILLIAMS: I will.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much, and thank you for your testimony.

MS. WILLIAMS: I just basically want them to clean up their customer service and what's going on within Comcast.

COUNCILMAN OH: Yes, and I think they've heard you.

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, obviously HR never did.

COUNCILMAN OH: Would you please identify yourself for the record and provide us with your testimony.

MS. THOMAS: Hello. My name is Doris Thomas. I live in the West -- I should say I live in the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia. I am a

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PhillyCAM member and I also am an independent filmmaker, a certified TV PhillyCAM producer, and I have my own television show, the Divine Diva Talk Show.

I am very much a supporter of PhillyCAM. I am requesting that we have -- I need everyone to really look at the figures and the calculations for Comcast. If an $8 billion profit is given to one corporation and they're headquartered here in the City of Philadelphia, I don't understand. Why do we just have one studio community access media station? There should be at least five to ten studios throughout this entire city. There should be more media and technology resources coming to the citizens of Philadelphia, the residents of Philadelphia, and of course the youth of Philadelphia, because we want to create digital citizens for the future.

So I'm just here to say I am a Cheyney University alum. I believe that

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you need to work with Cheyney University in order to have some more TV studios in the City of Philadelphia, as well as work in conjunction with PhillyCAM.

In addition to that, I am a veteran, United States Army. So those of us who serve, Comcast needs to provide more funding to create more opportunities for veterans who are in transition, who are leaving the military and want to obtain new careers and entrepreneurial opportunities in filmmaking, in digital media creation or even in sports, especially in sports. Let's check the sports revenues that Comcast receives. I think if we go into the sports revenue department, we might find out where all those billions of dollars went to and where are they going, because I know it isn't helping me and it hasn't funded any of my projects.

So we want to fund supporting veterans, students, people with disabilities, as well as all of the

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citizens of Philadelphia.

Thank you for your time, Councilmembers, and I hope to hear from you as well as Comcast Corporation, and I hope that we will increase the funding, the resources, the building facilities. The vacant buildings that are sitting around the City of Philadelphia, including some of these vacant schools, I think we can utilize that in our filmmaking production process.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.

MS. THOMAS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: All right, sir. Would you provide your name and your testimony.

MR. MARTINEZ: Good evening. My name is Manuel Martinez. I'm here to represent the Pennsylvania Student Power Network.

First I want to address this notion that Comcast's attempt to provide

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more opportunities for students is something that generally helps the Philadelphia community. Comcast, like Penn, my alma mater, regardless of what it says on paper, acts as mega corporations that encourage gentrification.

As a person that has been undocumented most of my life and I grew up in a home with factory-working parents, I am not interested in working for a place like Comcast. So naturally the people that attracts these transient students come from other cities. They are not deeply embedded in the communities and the issues that brown and black communities especially face in the City of Philadelphia. That's one thing.

And another thing, it's necessary to understand the political ecology under which these decisions are made. U.S. politicians need money to be put into your positions, and you're disrespected by corporations like Comcast

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and bullied into making these agreements. You have these corporations like Comcast that push the money through lobbyists in order to have the politicians that they want in their positions. But you also have -- you have the voters which are influenced and conditioned into supporting people that are not really for their interest.

But the last part is that there are people on the street who are protesting. Last year students of Pennsylvania, the University of Pennsylvania, including myself, stopped our Board of Trustees meeting from happening because David Cohen was not present. He was in Washington, DC lobbying for his corporation, Comcast, not dealing with the issues of students at our university. He didn't care enough.

So we are going to continue. Like today, I was able to organize hundreds of students in support of

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Missouri students and also for the Million Student March to talk about access to education, and we'll continue to do this, to push. All you need to do is make the decision, and if they bully you, we got your back. But take a decision.

COUNCILMAN OH: All right. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: Sir, would you identify yourself for the record and provide us with your testimony.

MR. POOLE: Hello, hello, hello. Is everyone still awake? All right. My name is Jordan Poole. I'm an 11-year resident of Philadelphia. I graduated from Temple University, film and media graduate. I am a DJ, an entertainer, a media maker, an entrepreneur, a creative millennial. I represent a new wave of energy here in Philadelphia, so this issue is very important to me.

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I'd like to recognize all the people who have come here to speak who were not paid to be here today who care about this issue. I'm sure it's very unlikely anybody speaking for Comcast was not paid or donated money to their organization, so...

As we said before, information access is as vital as water, food, electricity in the modern-day world. If we are to expect our impoverished and undereducated city to move forward and elevate itself, then we need to treat the issue of affordable Internet access very seriously. If we are truly to function as a democratic society that makes informed decisions, access to the Internet needs to be treated as a human right.

I don't want to call Comcast the enemy, but if they hold the keys to the kingdom, then they should expect that the citizens will rally when their needs are not being met. If there were other

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companies that controlled as much of the media and Internet market as Comcast, we would be holding them equally accountable, but there isn't.

Comcast is very good at touting the money they give to charity as well as being a leader in the tech and communication arena, yet their actions and lobbying for certain policies do not support the ideals of a progressive city. They brag about job creation, but I'm willing to bet that a majority of these jobs are going to people who have recently moved to Philadelphia that don't represent the majority of low-income and middle-class families that have been living here for years.

The demands that myself and my peers are giving to you, City Council, today -- or I should say Comcast, but to pass along, City Council, expand Internet Essentials to more low-income families by eliminating barriers; free WiFi in all public places; higher taxes that go

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towards education; and more funding for non-profit media organizations, plenty of the ones that have spoken today.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: All right. Please identify yourself for the record.

TIFFANY: Good evening. My name is Tiffany. I'm here today with Fight for 15. I think it's unfair for Comcast not to pay taxes like the rest of the community. If Comcast pay taxes, it can be extra money to go to education and for the youth.

I'm a fast food worker. I get paid 7.50 an hour. I believe that it's unfair that I pay taxes to support my community while Comcast watches and knowing that we need more money for schools and 15 and a union.

Thank you.

COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very

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much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN OH: Is there anyone else here who wishes to testify?

(No response.)

COUNCILMAN OH: No? Then I'll give it back to the Chairman.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you.

Again, I want to thank everybody. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your time, consideration, and respect of this body and the process that's taken place. This is truly a monumental time as we look forward to the next 15 years.

I want to thank the Committee members and all of the staff of City Council that have been working diligently to make today a success, and I think it is a success. So before I conclude, I want to say we are going to recess this hearing at the call of the Chair, and I want to thank you all for attending here.

This concludes our meeting on

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Public Property and Public Works.

(Applause.)

(Committee on Public Property and Public Works concluded at 8:50 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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