

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Wednesday, April 26, 2023
10:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILWOMAN SHARON VAUGHN

BILLS: 230144, 230145, 230146, 230147,
230148, 230149
RESOLUTION: 230162

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Good morning to all. We will start
4 our process of our FY24 Budget
5 hearings. But before we begin the
6 public hearing, I would like to make
7 the following announcement:

8 Due to the continuing threat
9 to public health from COVID-19, City
10 Council Committees are currently
11 meeting remotely. We are using
12 Microsoft Teams to make these remote
13 hearings possible. Instructions for
14 how the public may view and offer
15 public testimony of public hearings
16 of Council Committees are included in
17 the public hearing notices that are
18 published in the Daily News, the
19 Inquirer and Legal Intelligencer
20 prior to the hearing and can also be
21 found on PHLCouncil.com. I'll now
22 note that the hour has come.

23 Mr. McDermott, please call
24 the roll. Members that are in
25 attendance, please indicate that you

1 are present.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember

3 Bass.

4 (No response.)

5 THE CLERK: Councilmember

6 Brooks.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
8 morning. This is Councilwoman Bass.
9 I am present.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
11 Good morning.

12 THE CLERK: Good morning,
13 Councilwoman.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank
15 you.

16 THE CLERK: Councilmember
17 Brooks.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Good
19 morning. I'm present.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
21 Good morning.

22 THE CLERK: Councilmember
23 Driscoll.

24 (No response.)

25 THE CLERK: Councilmember

1 Gauthier.

2 (No response.)

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember
4 Gilmore Richardson.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Good morning, Council
7 President. Good morning, colleagues.
8 I am present.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
10 Good morning.

11 THE CLERK: Councilmember
12 Harrity.

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Good
14 morning, everyone. I am present.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Good morning.

17 THE CLERK: Councilmember
18 Johnson.

19 (No response.)

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember
21 Jones.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
23 morning, Mr. President, colleagues.
24 I am present.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 Good morning.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember

3 Lozada.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

5 Councilmember Lozada is present.

6 Good morning, everyone.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

8 Good morning.

9 THE CLERK: Councilmember

10 O'Neill.

11 (No response.)

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember

13 Phillips.

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Good

16 morning, everyone. Councilmember

17 Phillips is present. Happy morning,

18 Philadelphia.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

20 Good morning.

21 THE CLERK: Councilmember

22 Squilla.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good

24 morning, Council President and

25 colleagues. Present.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Good morning.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember
4 Thomas.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
6 morning, Council President. Good
7 morning, colleagues. Good morning to
8 the listening public. I'm present.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
10 Good morning.

11 THE CLERK: And,
12 Councilmember Vaughn.

13 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: Good
14 morning, everyone. I am present.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Good morning. We've established a
17 quorum of the Committee and this
18 hearing is now called to order. This
19 is the continued public hearing of
20 the Committee of the Whole regarding
21 Bill Nos. 230144, 230145, 230146,
22 230147, 230148, 230149 and Resolution
23 No. 230162.

24 Mr. McDermott, please read
25 the titles of the bills and

1 resolution.

2 THE CLERK: Bill No. 230144,
3 an ordinance to adopt a Capital
4 Program for the six Fiscal Years
5 2024-2029 inclusive.

6 Bill No. 230145, an ordinance
7 to adopt a Fiscal 2024 Capital
8 Budget.

9 Bill No. 230146, an ordinance
10 adopting the operating budget for
11 Fiscal Year 2024.

12 Bill No. 230147, an ordinance
13 amending Chapter 19-1500 of The
14 Philadelphia Code, entitled --

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: We lost
16 you, Bob.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Mr. McDermott, you cut out. You
19 dropped.

20 THE CLERK: I'm joining from
21 my phone. Can you hear me?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: We
23 can now, yes.

24 THE CLERK: Bill No. 230148,
25 an ordinance amending Chapter 19-2800

1 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
2 "Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
3 Cooperation Authority Tax on Wages
4 and Net Profits," to provide for the
5 continuation of the tax and to make
6 other conforming changes, all under
7 certain terms and conditions.

8 Bill No. 230149, an ordinance
9 amending Chapter 19-2600 of The
10 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Business
11 Income and Receipts Tax," by revising
12 certain tax rates, under certain
13 terms and conditions.

14 Bill No. 230162, providing
15 for the approval of the Council of
16 the City of Philadelphia revised Five
17 Year Financial Plan for the City of
18 Philadelphia, covering Fiscal Years
19 2024 through 2028 and incorporating
20 revised changes with respect to
21 Fiscal Year 2023, which is to be
22 submitted by the Mayor to the
23 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
24 Cooperation Authority, pursuant to
25 the Intergovernmental Operation

1 Agreement authorized by an ordinance
2 of this Council approved by the Mayor
3 on January 3, 1992, by and between
4 the City and the Authority.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Thank you, sir. Today we continue
7 the public hearing of the Committee
8 of the Whole to consider the bills
9 read by the Clerk that constitute a
10 proposed Operating and Capital
11 Spending measure for Fiscal 2024, a
12 Capital Program and a Forward-looking
13 Capital Plan for Fiscal 2024 through
14 Fiscal 2029.

15 This morning we will hear
16 testimony from the Office of
17 Community Empowerment and
18 Opportunity, the Office of Homeless
19 Services and OIT. This afternoon we
20 will hold public testimony on the
21 budget. As of this point, I think we
22 have approximately 40 people that
23 have indicated an interest in
24 testifying.

25 Mr. McDermott, the first

1 person to testify this morning is?

2 THE CLERK: Our first witness
3 is the Executive Director and CEO --
4 the Executive Director of CEO, Mitch
5 Little.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
7 Thank you. Good morning, sir.

8 MR. LITTLE: Good morning,
9 Council President.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
11 How are you? You can please proceed
12 with your testimony when you're
13 ready.

14 MR. LITTLE: Okay. Thank
15 you, sir. Sorry, I am out of town
16 and having a little bit of technical
17 difficulty. Please bear with me.

18 Good morning, Council
19 President Clarke and members of City
20 Council. Mitchell Little, Executive
21 Director of CEO and I'm pleased to
22 provide testimony on behalf of the
23 Office of Community Empowerment and
24 Opportunity for Fiscal Year 2024
25 operating budget.

1 The Office of Community
2 Empowerment and Opportunity supports
3 the economic growth of Philadelphia
4 by providing leadership on issues of
5 economic justice and advancing racial
6 equity and inclusive growth so that
7 all Philadelphians can share in the
8 City's future.

9 CEO carries out its mission
10 by funding and piloting new programs,
11 engaging in advocacy, supporting
12 policy, research and analysis,
13 convening local and national
14 stakeholders. The work of CEO is
15 guided by a strategic framework.

16 Our plans for Fiscal Year
17 2014(sic) is to increase public
18 engagement efforts, expand trauma-
19 informed community engagement and
20 develop equitable community
21 engagement tools to increase access
22 to basic needs and most vulnerable
23 communities, connect families,
24 individuals to resources and serve as
25 a connector between communities and

1 City government.

2 Through the integration of
3 Philly Counts and other citywide
4 programs, CEO will expand the City's
5 approach to trauma-informed community
6 engagement by collecting critical
7 outreach programs that successfully
8 engage the most marginalized
9 community. This work includes CEO's
10 existing benefit access work as well
11 as new programs such as election,
12 vaccine, water access and other basic
13 needs and benefits available to
14 support those in need.

15 By the integration of this
16 work into existing City departments,
17 we'll be able to multiply the impact,
18 and more importantly connect
19 communities with a broader scope of
20 resources. The launch of Debt
21 Collection Representation Program
22 will support the work of the newly-
23 launched Consumer Protection
24 Financial Protection Task Force.
25 It's modeled after the Philadelphia's

1 Eviction Prevention Program, and this
2 program will directly impact Black
3 and Brown communities to whom we have
4 seen repeatedly be victimized by
5 racially-driven targeted wealth-
6 stripping of the most vulnerable
7 communities.

8 And complete the GROW Pilot,
9 CEO will conduct a GROW study that
10 aligns with similar studies around
11 guaranteed basic income working with
12 ETANF participants. CEO believes the
13 study is significant given the
14 limited research that currently
15 exists on TANF populations,
16 notwithstanding ETANF. While TANF
17 enrollments have decreased
18 nationally, poverty has increased or
19 remained the same in many areas
20 across the country, and Philadelphia
21 remains the number one city among the
22 top 10 largest cities by the
23 population of the highest deep
24 poverty rate.

25 Therefore, Philly Works and

1 the WorkReady program will do a
2 research study on providing
3 guaranteed basic income for 50
4 participants over the next year.
5 That concludes my testimony and I'm
6 happy to answer any questions you
7 have for me today.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

9 Thank you. Thank you very much. I
10 know Councilman Jones had asked for
11 the callback, but I had one quick
12 question before I turn it over to
13 Majority Leader.

14 MR. LITTLE: Yes, sir.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16 What is your -- and I kind of know
17 part of the answer to this, but I
18 just want to put it on the record.
19 What's been your relationship with I
20 guess used to be the poverty
21 reduction entity now called the
22 Promise Fund. Can you tell me what
23 relationship and working relationship
24 that you've had with them over the
25 years because I know the goal, both

1 of you, is to reduce poverty?

2 Some guy stood on the stage
3 and threw out a number a couple years
4 ago. They want to reduce poverty by
5 a significant number but the pandemic
6 kind of got in the way, but we
7 haven't slowed up. Can you talk to
8 me about that?

9 MR. LITTLE: Yeah, sure. So
10 I sit on the Board for The Promise
11 helping to guide their work, and
12 certainly both the family
13 sustainability portfolio and then the
14 jobs portfolio. We also have a
15 standing meeting with staff from The
16 Promise around coordination. That's
17 the Mayor's Policy Office, Promise
18 staff and CEO staff. And so, there's
19 a level of alignment and coordination
20 there around really working in
21 partnership to create long-standing
22 change in Philadelphia.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 And can you say that we are seeing
25 some incremental reductions? I know

1 we still have that unfortunate
2 designation being the highest level
3 of people at or below the poverty
4 line of the 10 largest cities, but
5 are we seeing an incremental
6 reduction?

7 MR. LITTLE: Yes, absolutely.
8 I mean when CEO was created 10 years
9 ago, we were around 28 percent
10 poverty. We're a little over 22
11 percent poverty in the City. So it's
12 still high, but there has been
13 significant reduction over that time
14 period. I also think like CTC and
15 EITC, those initiatives that were
16 highly successful during COVID
17 reduced child poverty nationwide by
18 half. And so, we see the power of
19 federal intervention playing out at
20 the local level as being an important
21 lever for poverty reduction.

22 Certainly, the additional
23 supports during poverty -- I'm sorry,
24 during COVID helped alleviate
25 poverty, the ability for households

1 to have additional dollars in their
2 pockets and their pocketbooks to
3 address their needs in realtime. I
4 think that's why you see this move
5 towards guaranteed basic income
6 projects because we know as citizens
7 wherever you fall under the
8 socioeconomic scale often times
9 what's best for us and how to best
10 address our needs.

11 And so, issues like the GROW
12 project will help us share real
13 results about people being able to
14 make good choices about their needs
15 in their lives and address those
16 needs accordingly. And so, those are
17 just some ways in which we're doing
18 that. But I think it requires all of
19 us to work in partnerships, so that
20 means every City department and
21 (inaudible) everyone involved, right,
22 marshalling folks to move in the same
23 direction because certainly CEO can't
24 do it alone.

25 So it requires a strong sense

1 of partnership and a level of
2 coordination between the City, state
3 and federal partners.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5 All right.

6 MR. LITTLE: I think moving
7 forward I think what we really need
8 is to hold on to some of the
9 innovation and interventions that we
10 created during COVID. And so, the
11 ways that we were able to again work
12 in partnership and solve long-
13 standing issues, whether they be
14 bureaucratic funding stream
15 restrictions or unlikely
16 partnerships, if we hold on to that
17 energy and spirit, I think we'll
18 continue to move the City forward.
19 Thank you for your question.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

21 Okay. Yeah, just one little, small
22 follow-up. And I'm sorry, Councilman
23 Jones. I'll get to you right away.

24 There are some concerns, well
25 at least in my mind, that as we

1 reduce our numbers -- and I'm glad to
2 hear that we're showing some real
3 movement in those numbers -- that
4 sometimes when the analysis is done,
5 particularly in the case of
6 Philadelphia, and it's a good thing,
7 we have had a significant number of
8 people moving into the City that are
9 at higher incomes, and the concern is
10 that moving the needle calculating
11 those individuals versus looking at
12 the individuals that are at the
13 poverty level and them moving in an
14 upward above and beyond the poverty
15 line.

16 So when we do our
17 calculation, we want to make sure
18 that that number is not skewed based
19 on the upper-income people moving
20 into the City of Philadelphia, again
21 which is a good thing, but we don't
22 want that to be the only template for
23 us getting those numbers at a point
24 we need to. So I'm hoping that when
25 we do that analysis that we take into

1 account that could skew those
2 numbers.

3 MR. LITTLE: Great point,
4 Council President.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
6 Yeah. Please don't let us -- because
7 that happens. It has happened in
8 other places. All right. Thank you.

9 Chair recognizes Councilman
10 Jones.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
12 Mr. President.

13 And thank you, Mr. Little,
14 for agreeing to come back and again
15 take a deeper dive as to the impact
16 of CEO. And the purpose of the
17 callback was that in a brief amount
18 of time that we had there is no way
19 that you could adequately describe
20 the impact that your organization has
21 on alleviating poverty. From the
22 prisons where you reduced some of the
23 cost of being an inmate, that was
24 onerous for people to be able to even
25 survive inside or to have

1 communications with the outside, you
2 took that on. And to all of the
3 other funding that you do that you
4 don't get direct credit for, but you
5 wind up funding.

6 So can you take a minute to
7 tell me your total budget and then
8 some of the programs that you wind up
9 funding and then the programs you do
10 direct delivery of services for?

11 MR. LITTLE: Yeah, sure.
12 Thank you. Thank you for the
13 question and the opportunity to
14 share, Councilmember. Like I said
15 earlier, I think -- so the budget for
16 CEO is a little south of \$30 million.
17 We are a small department as you
18 know. We are the City's community
19 action agency, which we're designated
20 to receive and distribute Community
21 Services Block Grant dollars. That
22 annual award falls between \$5.2
23 million, \$5.3 million annually that
24 allows us to make some discretionary
25 investments.

1 I think a real power is what
2 I alluded to earlier is really around
3 partnership. One, the ability to
4 convene large tables or act as a
5 backbone organization on specific
6 pilots or programs. I think the
7 ability to collaborate, we have
8 opportunities to collaborate with
9 national coalitions like the Fines
10 and Fees Coalition or Cities for
11 Financial Empowerment, working with
12 other cities and municipalities often
13 times dealing with the same issues
14 but varying in scale and being able
15 to bring back, I think, innovative
16 approaches to the City, but also
17 working with other City departments.

18 We've had the benefit of
19 working closely with the Mayor's
20 Policy Office and the Managing
21 Director and our other sister
22 agencies, most specifically in the
23 Health and Human Services cabinet,
24 just to name a few. In 2019, we
25 really tried to shift our work to an

1 economic mobility framework.

2 Again, at that time the City
3 was in a stage of growth. And trying
4 to connect underserved communities to
5 that growth I think was paramount.

6 And in light of disparities, so
7 systemic and institutional sort of
8 disparities, so the fines and fees
9 work that you mentioned, we could not
10 have done it without the Commissioner
11 in Prisons to help folks communicate
12 either telephonically or through
13 video. Reducing the cost of
14 communication there is an example of
15 that level of partnership.

16 We are also working on an ARD
17 pilot. Again, looking at the racial
18 disparity and expungement rates to be
19 able to increase expungement rates
20 with the help of Arnold Ventures.
21 And so, that's not our dollars but
22 dollars that are coming to the City
23 to help. Like I said, reduce
24 disparity, allow folks to reduce that
25 tale of the justice system and that

1 criminal justice involvement and get
2 on with their lives.

3 And so, those are two
4 examples of how systems work in
5 government and systems work in the
6 criminal justice system.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I think
8 one of the superpowers is to convene
9 but another is to discern that you've
10 realized that there are certain
11 things that keep poor people poor,
12 and you try to alleviate some of
13 that. That debtors court is one of
14 them, that when people wind up with
15 exorbitant amounts of debt that
16 sometimes are tacked on by debt
17 collection agencies and others, you
18 are trying to dig your way out of
19 getting people from that yoke around
20 their neck. Can you describe that
21 process?

22 MR. LITTLE: Yeah. So again,
23 thank you for that. I mean, it's
24 just another example of just great
25 work happening in the City. And so,

1 Judge Wolf, who's the supervising
2 judge for Eviction Court, so the
3 right to counsel work, the eviction
4 diversion work and seeing success
5 there identified sort of debt court
6 as an opportunity (inaudible)
7 additional economic burden to
8 vulnerable Philadelphians.

9 And so, there are about
10 13,000 debt collection cases that are
11 filed in Philadelphia each year. And
12 often times entities buy debt sort of
13 wholesale, and then a lot of these
14 cases will sort of end up in a
15 default judgment because people don't
16 know that there's a case against
17 them. They might be resistant to
18 respond. And so, judgments are made
19 in the absence of these defendants
20 and these are on average about \$2,000
21 judgments against vulnerable folks.
22 And if that judgment happens, then
23 folks can end up with bad credit,
24 inability to rent an apartment or to
25 modify a mortgage. They are real

1 economic consequences to them. The
2 folks who are engaged in that court
3 are 64 percent Black and Brown folks.

4 So again, serving in the area
5 I'm trying to add onto the momentum
6 of good work already happening in
7 Philadelphia and always understanding
8 and trying to address where the
9 disparity exist and try to bring a
10 sense of fairness and justice and
11 otherwise sort of unscrupulous sort
12 of situation.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: So someone
14 once said the most expensive thing in
15 America is being poor --

16 MR. LITTLE: -- is
17 being poor.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- because
19 we pay more for everything, from
20 insurance rates to phone connectivity
21 to everything. It has also been one
22 of the pet peeves of my former
23 colleague Allan Domb who said that we
24 wind up leaving on average, poor
25 people, \$11,000 per household on the

1 table in uncollected benefits. Can
2 you talk about that? And what a
3 BenePhilly type program could do if
4 we had one point of contact-entered
5 information that could codify
6 everything that someone is eligible
7 for to be able to get out of
8 entitlements and/or programs? Could
9 you talk about that?

10 MR. LITTLE: Yeah, sure. So
11 a point of pride of the office is
12 working with benefits for a long
13 time. We have a multi-year
14 investment which our nonprofit
15 partners which is important, just the
16 multi-year support to be able to do
17 work and to increase that work.

18 CEO works with partners,
19 including Campaign for Working
20 Families and our Latino Coalition, as
21 an example, around tax preparation.
22 So CEO generated over \$28 million in
23 refunds for low-income communities,
24 and these refunds were timely and
25 important because of coming out of

1 COVID, right, and folks were just
2 seeing historic levels and refund
3 (inaudible) cross-reference similar
4 to our Financial Empowerment Centers
5 as an example that provide one-on-one
6 financial counseling to help folks
7 make decisions around driving down
8 debt savings and making long-term
9 financial choices for like an
10 automobile, a homeownership or
11 something like that.

12 Again, with our sort of
13 benefits-related work in our
14 community engagement, CEO's working
15 with the Health Department and DBHIDS
16 around the Medicaid wind down as an
17 example, so that's something timely
18 assisting residents with Medicaid and
19 CHIP recertifications. That ramped
20 up in April and will continue over
21 the next 12 months.

22 Next month we'll start in
23 earnest really connecting to
24 communities in community around the
25 need to recertify and helping folks

1 get those benefits that they need.
2 So again, like big dollar amounts to
3 put money back in Philadelphian's
4 pockets is an example of the CTC and
5 EITC work, but also timely and
6 working with City departments, big
7 departments like DBHIDS and the
8 Health Department to help mobilize
9 our efforts in community because of
10 our expertise in sort of working in
11 community and with community members.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES:

13 Mr. President, I don't see why we
14 couldn't in all of our offices have
15 that BenePhilly apparatus connected.
16 The virtue of it is if I come in for
17 LIHEAP help, I can put my income
18 demographic information where I live
19 and it will spit out everything that
20 I'm qualified for. That's a lot of
21 reduction of steps that all of our
22 staff wind up having to fill out
23 individual applications for people,
24 when we could have one central
25 application in.

1 I would like, Mr. Little, if
2 you could advise us on how we can
3 have that so that we can do outreach
4 from our particular offices.

5 Thank you, Mr. President.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 You're welcome, sir. Councilman, we
8 actually are in the process,
9 particularly with The Promise Fund
10 then called the Anti-Poverty
11 Initiative. There was a decision
12 made to actually solicit community-
13 based organizations to do the bulk of
14 that work because they were, one,
15 obviously front line. They were out
16 in the community every day.

17 And a number of them actually
18 had done assistance on taxes, tax
19 preparation as an Executive Working
20 Families party -- Mitch, what's the
21 name of the group up in --

22 MR. LITTLE: Campaign for
23 Working Families.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

25 Campaign for Working Families, I know

1 that they did tax preparation, so we
2 actually contracted with them and a
3 couple of other organizations to do
4 that frontline work as a one-stop
5 shop, and they've been relatively
6 successful.

7 But I agree, the more the
8 merrier. The more opportunities that
9 we have in our offices that are in a
10 position to provide service, just
11 like you said earlier in the
12 beginning of your conversation, the
13 amount of money we're leaving on the
14 table continues to be ridiculous, I
15 mean at the end of the day
16 particularly those most in need. So
17 whatever needs to be done, we should
18 figure out a way to get it done. I
19 concur.

20 You're done, Councilman?

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: (Gestured
22 thumbs up).

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 Okay. I think we had Councilwoman
25 Lozada.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thank
2 you, Council President.

3 I just have a question. My
4 question is related to what you were
5 just talking about. I work for one
6 of those community-based
7 organizations that provide that
8 one-stop shop type of service. But
9 often times we would hear from people
10 who would say I've been to multiple
11 community-based organizations that
12 were supposed to offer this type of
13 service but I didn't get it.

14 Do we know or are we able to
15 track the number of organizations who
16 are supposed to be these types of
17 spaces? And if we do, is there a way
18 for us to measure the services, how
19 many people are they seeing, what
20 types of services were rendered and
21 how do we determine whether they
22 actually went through the whole
23 entire process of what someone was
24 qualified for or not?

25 MR. LITTLE: So for the

1 BenePhilly centers, it's a computer-
2 based application that folks are
3 taken through to assess the
4 availability of benefits. I think as
5 we expanded both the definition and
6 the types of benefits made available
7 to sort of what Council President was
8 speaking to, to community members, I
9 think the idea is to lean on the sort
10 of the trusted relationship that
11 community groups have in their
12 community and the ability to expand
13 both how we connect folks to benefits
14 and what we call benefits, so
15 everything from housing-related
16 benefits or federal benefits and
17 anything in between.

18 So I think that there are
19 mechanisms in place to sort of track
20 and to assess those results. I think
21 one of the struggles have been the
22 impact of COVID. And in my opinion,
23 Councilperson, we have not seen the
24 full impact of COVID psychologically.
25 There have been a lot of folks

1 isolating and social isolation, and
2 bringing organizations back online to
3 do the bulk of their services in
4 person has been a process. And I'm
5 just speaking more generally about
6 the nonprofit community. And then
7 vacancies within the nonprofit
8 community.

9 And so, I think that things
10 are getting better as we understand
11 what the new normal is. But I think
12 it's a process of connecting folks to
13 opportunities. And that's why CEO
14 has partnered to be able to go where
15 people are and do everything from
16 knocking on doors to digital outreach
17 to phone banking to get folks
18 connected to the services that they
19 need.

20 As an example in a survey
21 conducted by Philly Counts, residents
22 said that utilities was high on their
23 list in regards to the most pressing
24 issues. Now, we see really -- and
25 kudos to the Water Department and

1 other partner City agencies to really
2 coalesce around reducing strain and
3 stress around the water obligation
4 for communities and working in
5 partnership around that. So that's
6 just an example of how you get
7 realtime information, inperson
8 information from community members
9 and that turns into real broad-based
10 efforts from the Administration and
11 partnership with multiple
12 departments.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: If it's
14 possible, I'd like to know who the
15 community-based organizations are who
16 do that service in the 7th Council
17 District, and how are they
18 performing. They're all very close
19 in proximity to each other. And so,
20 I'd like to see how they're
21 performing, what services are they
22 offering, how are they able to
23 connect with folks in the community.

24 We're also out in the
25 community every Wednesday and we

1 provide that wraparound service as
2 well as an office. And so, if there
3 are others in the community when we
4 are out, I'd like to be able to say,
5 hey, X organization is here and they
6 offer this type of resource, so I'd
7 like to be able to do that on a
8 regular basis, if possible.

9 MR. LITTLE: Sure.

10 Absolutely. Thank you for the
11 question.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

15 Sorry about that. I was muted.

16 Thank you. Thank you, Councilwoman.

17 Any additional questions by
18 members of the Committee for this
19 witness?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

22 There being none, I want to thank you
23 very much. Thank you, Mitch, and
24 continue your good work. We look
25 forward to --

1 MR. LITTLE: Thank you, sir.

2 I appreciate you --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --
4 bringing that number down to below 20
5 percent so we can say we did it,
6 right?

7 MR. LITTLE: Yes, sir.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 All right. Thank you.

10 MR. LITTLE: Appreciate your
11 leadership.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 All right. Thank you, sir. Have a
14 good one.

15 Mr. McDermott, next witness
16 is?

17 THE CLERK: Our next witness
18 is the Director of Public Safety
19 Technology for the Police Department,
20 Michael Vidro.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 Good morning, sir.

23 MR. VIDRO: Good morning,
24 Council President.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 Good morning. Hey, Deputy. How are
2 you?

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

4 Good morning, Council President. How
5 are you? And good morning to all
6 Councilmembers. I'm John Stanford,
7 First Deputy Commissioner of Police
8 Department here standing in for
9 Commissioner Outlaw. Just wanted to
10 introduce as has already been done
11 Michael Vidro, the Director of Public
12 Safety Technology for Police.

13 I know there were some
14 questions around the acoustic gunshot
15 detection system. And so, Michael
16 here is the expert so I wanted to
17 make sure that we presented him to
18 yourself, Council President, and the
19 members of Council, so that you can
20 address any issues or concerns you
21 may have.

22 I'll be on the line along
23 with Staff Inspector Fran Healy,
24 Special Advisor to the Commissioner.
25 So it's all yours, sir.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Thank you. Thank you a lot. We
3 appreciate it. Thank you, Deputy.

4 Yeah. I just wanted to do a
5 follow-up to set a little background.
6 We have been having conversations
7 over the last several, actually the
8 last several years, about whatever
9 technology we can use to enhance our
10 public safety initiatives. We in
11 City Council have traveled to a
12 number of municipalities and have
13 looked at various options.

14 We went to Chicago years
15 ago -- looking forward to another
16 trip out there -- to figure out a way
17 to do what we need to do to make us a
18 safer, safer community. And the most
19 recent conversation that we've had,
20 and I want to thank you all, Mike and
21 your team and the Police Department,
22 working with us to talk about two
23 particular initiatives.

24 One was ShotSpotter,
25 something that has been in place in a

1 number of municipalities across the
2 country, and then the most recent I
3 guess homegrown product talked about
4 recognition, Acoustical Recognition,
5 which was something that I understand
6 that was possibly a better or a more
7 productive or more efficient or less
8 costly strategy.

9 So we wanted you to come back
10 and just kind of give us your
11 perspective on where we are, just an
12 analysis of both. Ultimately both we
13 may end up using. But most
14 importantly, as we are in this budget
15 process where we'll go. We were
16 fortunate enough to unveil a number
17 of realtime security cameras around
18 recreation centers.

19 As you know, a couple of
20 weeks ago had an unfortunate incident
21 the following week, but they did
22 their job. They caught the alleged
23 perpetrator in full view with a high-
24 def camera. So as we move forward,
25 we obviously will continue to budget

1 money for whatever type of
2 technology.

3 But, Mr. Vidro, if you could
4 just kind of tell us a quick snapshot
5 of the conversation that we've had
6 about the two and then your
7 perspective on where we either need
8 to go or what we need to be looking
9 towards as we make decisions on the
10 budget process. I know that was a
11 long statement, but I just wanted to
12 lay some background.

13 MR. VIDRO: Yeah, I think I
14 got it. So first thing we have to
15 understand is the technology. So we
16 have ShotSpotter, we have our system.
17 At the very lowest rung of that
18 technology is the sensor itself. So
19 what we developed in between 2015 and
20 '18, we did an extensive pilot. We
21 did an extensive study in partnership
22 with Temple University and Dr. Jerry
23 Ratcliffe who collected all the data
24 and published a study after our
25 pilot.

1 So one of the very first
2 things we understood was that any
3 type of gunshot technology is not
4 going to deter crime. That was
5 pretty evident. So the study led us
6 down the road of, okay, what can we
7 do with this technology. So what I
8 developed in that time period was a
9 self-designed system that took
10 advantage of the sensor itself rather
11 than the process.

12 So what we did is we start
13 with a sensor. And the reason I
14 designed it this way is because we
15 don't want to be beholden to any
16 manufacturer or any type of vendor of
17 any kind. So one thing that I
18 understood very clearly is the
19 technology in the very beginning is a
20 gunshot sensor is a gunshot sensor is
21 a gunshot sensor. Most of these
22 sensors rely on microphones, some
23 form of smarts and a board to take
24 those sounds in, those ambient noises
25 in and pick out gunshots or what they

1 think are gunshots.

2 So one thing that you don't
3 really have to be a really smart
4 technologist to understand is that
5 when you have these types of sensors,
6 they're only using one sense, you
7 know, one thing. So basically
8 they're using ears, if I could put it
9 really simply, to here's a bunch of
10 ambient noise and pick out the
11 gunshot based on a predetermined
12 algorithm that's programmed into the
13 board. That's how every single
14 sensor works.

15 So one thing I intimately
16 understand is that one single sensor,
17 one sense is not going to be enough
18 for anything to determine what is a
19 gunshot and what is not. And I can
20 kind of make the analogy, as you're a
21 human being and you have a brain. So
22 you deploy at least three sensors
23 when you hear a gunshot or you think
24 you hear a gunshot. You've got
25 eyeballs, you've got ears and you can

1 feel a percussion when a gunshot goes
2 off, and we can't possibly expect a
3 gunshot sensor with only the ears
4 part to fully determine that. So
5 that's where the human factor comes
6 in.

7 So ShotSpotter technology
8 relies on a human being somewhere in
9 a call center receiving that, looking
10 at an oscilloscope stream and rubbing
11 that up against their algorithm to
12 determine, yes, that's a gunshot or
13 not a gunshot and sending their
14 alert.

15 So what I set out to do was
16 to take our existing technology, our
17 video technology, and try to add a
18 set of eyeballs, and at the same time
19 add a set of ears to our cameras. At
20 the time and still today, those
21 cameras are on a blind tour. You
22 know, they're just kind of touring
23 and looking around, but it's a
24 camera. So my idea was to put a set
25 of ears on that camera. So that

1 gunshot sensor now became a lot less
2 important than it be accurate. All
3 it has to do is at least almost as
4 accurately as the human ear decide
5 maybe that's a gunshot. So what that
6 does is it stops our camera and spins
7 toward the location of that sound.

8 So at the very same time
9 within a second that alert comes
10 through our VSS system, so the Watch
11 Center at the DVIC they get alerted
12 in realtime exactly when the shot
13 happens and they have eyeballs now.
14 There's your second set of sensors.
15 The human being now is looking at the
16 camera and being able to determine is
17 it a gunshot with at least the
18 eyeball, right, because he's now
19 looking around deciding is there
20 people running. He may not even see
21 a gunshot, but he can determine or
22 she can determine that something is
23 happening there. So therefore, we
24 dispatch. So there's no automated
25 dispatch of any kind, reducing the

1 resources we require to go out to
2 false alarms basically. So that's
3 the sensor package we put together.

4 And making it very important
5 to understand that the sensor is
6 irrelevant. As long as the sensor is
7 as accurate as a human ear or maybe a
8 little bit more accurate, we rely
9 more heavily on the process by which
10 that operator looks and determines,
11 yes, that's a gunshot or, no, that's
12 not a gunshot.

13 And that whole process right
14 now we were able to get that down to
15 about a 15 second, 15 to 30 seconds
16 on an unfounded gunshot. And it
17 happens -- it's a very automated
18 process. He doesn't have to touch
19 anything. The screen pops up, shows
20 him realtime video versus the gunshot
21 video. And within 10 to 15 seconds,
22 he can do a tour manually, look
23 around. And if he sees anything that
24 he determines, okay, that's
25 suspicious, then he can get on the

1 radio right from Real Time Crime and
2 dispatch a police officer to that
3 scene.

4 So a couple things that did
5 for us is, again, we're not married
6 to any specific vendor. So we've
7 tried to get ShotSpotter over the
8 years to provide us a sensor so that
9 we can do a side-by-side comparison.
10 And in my mind I already understand
11 what that's going to look like. You
12 know, that's going to be their sensor
13 is probably just as good as our
14 sensor. Their process is different
15 than our process, and that's where
16 the trick comes in. So they've never
17 volunteered a sensor.

18 And quite frankly, their
19 model doesn't allow you to access
20 that raw data. My sensor, I can dig
21 into that sensor, I can look at every
22 single event that happened, every
23 noise event and make an analysis on
24 that. Any data that I get from
25 ShotSpotter would be provided by

1 ShotSpotter, and that's a problem.

2 I can't have them wrap their
3 data in a nice pretty package and
4 say, this is our data. And we have
5 no ability to dig into the raw data,
6 so we can only go by what they tell
7 us. So I'm pretty sure even today if
8 we ask them to just give us your
9 sensor and let us take a look at the
10 data that's coming out of the sensor,
11 they probably wouldn't let us to do
12 that.

13 So any side-by-side
14 evaluation, Coke-Pepsi challenge is
15 not going to get us anywhere. I feel
16 that we've done a very comprehensive
17 over two years study on the
18 technology as a whole, as a program
19 as a whole, and developed the most
20 efficient way of using our sensors.

21 So where we sit today is we
22 were constantly evaluating these
23 things. So just like we do the
24 cameras, we just don't pick a camera,
25 stick it up there. We're constantly

1 evaluating different types of camera
2 technology and sensors go right along
3 with that. So right now we're
4 evaluating two additional sensors,
5 and the difference with these sensors
6 and ShotSpotter, those vendors are
7 going to allow us to access the raw
8 data and they're also going to allow
9 us to do a side-by-side sensor
10 comparison. And that's not to say
11 that we're always going to be using
12 Century IP. I guarantee at some
13 point probably in the next year or
14 two that we're going to switch over
15 to this other product. But that
16 doesn't become a huge RFP process,
17 anything like that, because these
18 sensors are just like cameras. We
19 can buy them in the same way we buy
20 our cameras. We have cooperative
21 contracts. We have City contracts
22 already in place, and this is what we
23 consider an ancillary device.

24 So if I was to want to go buy
25 a motion sensor, I don't have to put

1 an RFP out to do a motion sensor for
2 my camera system. It comes from the
3 vendor that already sells us the
4 ancillary devices. So trying to
5 narrow that back down to this isn't a
6 full-blown gigantic enterprise system
7 that we have to do a multi-year
8 subscription cost, things like that.

9 We narrow that all the way
10 back down to if the sensor -- right
11 now the sensors we -- the problematic
12 part about our sensors right now is
13 they're very expensive, the ones
14 we're deploying right now. They're
15 about \$10,000 a piece.

16 The sensors we're looking at
17 right now, the most expensive one is
18 about \$2500 a piece. So if we can
19 determine that that sensor does as
20 good as a job as our Century product
21 does now, it's just a matter of
22 ordering that product and putting it
23 into our package.

24 The package that was designed
25 is City proprietary, City

1 intellectual property. It was my
2 design. We hold all the drawings,
3 everything for it, that unitized
4 device that mounts the sensor array,
5 which would be the microphone and
6 that board, but it's interchangeable.
7 We can pick different microphones if
8 we want to. We can pick different
9 sensors if we want to and deploy them
10 as needed.

11 And these are all one-time
12 costs because the sensor is
13 unsophisticated. It's a board, you
14 know. And the problem is when one
15 breaks down, do we want to spend
16 \$10,000 to replace it, you know. I'm
17 trying to get us to a point where
18 these sensors are \$500 a piece, and
19 that's less than a quarter of the
20 cost of a camera.

21 So that's just in my opinion
22 a way more efficient way of doing it
23 than signing up for ShotSpotter.
24 ShotSpotter right now is about, in
25 talking to Rochester Police Chief a

1 few days ago, they're up to about
2 \$110,000 per square mile per year.
3 We're 143 square miles. So if you
4 can do the math around that. Right
5 now our coverage is somewhere on the
6 order of about 7 to 10 square miles.

7 The other part of our sensor
8 is it allows us to rapid deploy it.
9 It allows us to move it. ShotSpotter
10 once they "get rid of the crime in
11 that area," you can't move that
12 array. Now, you've got to buy
13 another array. But everybody in law
14 enforcement understands you don't
15 ever really, really get rid of crime.
16 It just moves.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Right.

19 MR. VIDRO: When we clear it
20 out in this area, it moves to the
21 next area. So ShotSpotter's model,
22 if I can say, to me it's unscrupulous
23 a little bit, because rather than
24 allow you to move those sensors,
25 they're going to get you to buy

1 another 10 square miles to cover that
2 area. So that just counters to their
3 message that we're going to help you
4 clear out your city, we're going to
5 help you clear the crime out of your
6 city.

7 A, our study found that there
8 is no deterrent. First of all, you
9 can't even see the sensors usually.
10 Nobody knows that there are sensors,
11 so that doesn't really deter. We can
12 put a message out, but that's still
13 not a deterrent really. So to me,
14 it's again very misleading at best.

15 So our sensor allows us to
16 put them up as we feel fit. We have
17 somewhere on the order of about 1500
18 different camera locations across the
19 City that we can -- part of the
20 pilot, we put one of the sensors way
21 up in the Northeast somewhere and had
22 our VSS crew on a timer see how long
23 it takes you to get it off that pole,
24 move it to South Philly in the 1st
25 District, and it was under two hours,

1 and that was with traffic and
2 everything else, to be able to
3 redeploy that sensor.

4 So right now we deploy 34
5 sensors that are fully deployed right
6 now. We hold back about 10 sensors
7 for rapid deployment. And then we
8 have about 5 sensors that we hold
9 back for broken sensors for rapid
10 replacement type sensors. We rely on
11 the Intelligence Bureau and the
12 Research Analysis Group to determine
13 where best to place those sensors.

14 But again, just like the cameras,
15 they're not really a deterrent.
16 They're more of an investigative tool
17 and we have examples of being able to
18 catch a shot in realtime and respond.

19 But any sensor that you have
20 is not, you know, until they invent a
21 button in these sensors that allows
22 you to hit a button and drop a cop on
23 the spot, they're not going to catch
24 it. They're typically not going to
25 catch somebody in the act. The best

1 we can hope for is that now because
2 the camera was focused on that scene
3 instead of looking the other way
4 because of the dumb machine, now we
5 can say at least we -- now we see who
6 the shooter was, who he was shooting
7 at. Maybe we catch him getting away,
8 we see the car that he gets away in
9 and we can almost guarantee that that
10 camera is going to be looking in the
11 right direction.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 All right. So thank you. Thank you.
14 Just a couple of follow-ups. So I
15 just want to make sure that we're
16 clear that the ShotSpotter, which
17 you're not suggesting it's not a good
18 initiative, but it is probably more
19 expensive. The hardware and the data
20 is owned by the company, so you
21 contract with this company. They do
22 the installations. They do all other
23 aspects and they essentially report
24 to you when there's a shot or when
25 whatever happens, report to the

1 police and then the police respond to
2 that report in whatever way, shape or
3 form they deem necessary.

4 The mobility is an issue.
5 You're saying that once it's
6 installed in that location it's not
7 like we can do like with our dumping
8 cameras as an example, just move them
9 to another location. You basically
10 have to expand all the coverage in
11 the acreage in terms of being able to
12 deploy additional cameras.

13 Our ability, I think we at
14 one point I understood was called
15 Acoustical Recognition. We have more
16 flexibility in the deployment and the
17 mobility. It sounds like it's a
18 little less costly, which from a
19 budget perspective is clearly
20 something that --

21 MR. VIDRO: It's a lot less
22 costly. It's a lot less costly.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: A
24 lot less, okay. We clearly --
25 although we can't ever spend too much

1 money to stop or deal with the crime
2 of violence. With respect to things
3 other than homicides or shootings,
4 because I'm actually thinking back to
5 one of those trips that Council took,
6 we went to Baltimore, and there were
7 some realtime cameras. And they were
8 looking at known "drug areas" where
9 you literally saw drug sales in
10 realtime, and they were able to
11 actually call on the device and call
12 the person and basically got the
13 people as they were standing there
14 selling drugs. So I could see it
15 could be utilized for something like
16 that.

17 Okay. And can you -- and I
18 know, like I said, we've been talking
19 about this for a while just for a
20 follow-up as we get to the final
21 conclusions, because we're going to
22 have to put more money in our
23 surveillance systems, just something
24 we need to be doing. And I
25 understand that we have some more

1 deployment we're going to be doing
2 over the next several weeks and
3 months around schools and other
4 locations.

5 If you can just give us an
6 analysis as an example of the
7 ShotSpotter for a particular time in
8 terms of the acreage that covers the
9 pros and cons versus Acoustical
10 Recognition and some of the things
11 that we can do there.

12 And I'm not trying to focus
13 you one way or another. We just want
14 real facts because we're going to --
15 based on everything I've heard from
16 our colleagues and actually the
17 Administration and the need from the
18 police department who need to have
19 more coverage with some really good
20 cameras. That camera feed that we
21 got from the Dendy Playground
22 shooting was really, really, really
23 tight. I mean, that high-def feed
24 was awesome, and hopefully it will
25 ultimately lead into the capture of

1 the individual or perpetrator. So if
2 you could just provide that to us, it
3 would be very helpful.

4 MR. VIDRO: As far as my
5 insights on the furtherment of the
6 Playzone and the extension of our VSS
7 program?

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 Yeah. Just how much -- just give a
10 scenario on the ShotSpotter and the
11 Acoustical Recognition, because
12 that -- I mean, it's going to come
13 down to this particular budget
14 process. Like I said, we got I think
15 another month before we got to make
16 decisions. And everybody pretty much
17 said we had to put more money in
18 coverage. So as we make those
19 decisions, we'd like to have
20 something that will guide us on how
21 much and where we should --

22 MR. VIDRO: And I think the
23 concentration definitely should be on
24 the deployment of cameras, not as a
25 deterrent but as an investigative

1 tool. So we determined during our
2 study that gunshot detection was not
3 an outlier when it came to
4 investigation. If the gunshots
5 happen, somebody calls 911, our
6 nonsensored camera picks up some
7 footage of that, the detectives
8 arrive on scene, the collection of
9 the shell casings, all that stuff is
10 going to happen without the gunshot
11 sensor.

12 So again, if I can go back to
13 unless we can hit a button and put a
14 cop on the scene instantly, it
15 becomes less and less of a useful
16 sensor. So now, we've measured the
17 cost of that sensor. Is it worth
18 \$10,000 per sensor? In my opinion,
19 absolutely not. \$1200 a sensor,
20 maybe a lot more palatable, a lot
21 more digestible, because now we can
22 kind of look at that as a sensor, not
23 as a crime initiative, not as a way
24 to stop crime. It's just to help
25 these investigators solve these

1 crimes and put the bad guys away. On
2 the other hand, the more coverage
3 that we have obviously is going to
4 exponentially improve our chances.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Yeah.

7 MR. VIDRO: If we had a
8 camera on every corner, then
9 obviously we're going to catch a
10 whole lot more evidence. So
11 historically, the VSS program up
12 until very recently within the last
13 few years, and I think even as far as
14 last fiscal year, it's only ever been
15 funded for the Class 400, in other
16 words more equipment of about
17 \$300,000 a year.

18 It started off in the very
19 beginning, and when I started the
20 program back in 2012 at about 750 and
21 then it reduced to 300. So that's
22 where I think that that budget should
23 be increased definitely to allow us
24 more flexibility and more planning to
25 deploy these cameras.

1 What's happening right now is
2 we do a refresh every four years. We
3 just did a refresh last year 2022 and
4 that refresh was planned way back in
5 September of the year before for
6 budget, right. And our anticipation
7 was we were putting up cameras
8 anywhere from 50 to 100 cameras a
9 year per clip over those years. So
10 naturally when I designed an
11 architect at the refresh, I planned
12 for that expansion and I timesed it
13 by 2 at best. So that was what our
14 refresh was based on.

15 In the meantime, Playzone
16 came into play, the money came in for
17 that and that put a lot of strain on
18 the system. Now, we've got to do a
19 very rapid refresh now, and we're
20 actually about to spend about \$1.5
21 million in expanding the system out
22 to about 6,000 cameras.

23 And the reason we do that is
24 because we really can't be adding,
25 adding, adding every single year it's

1 not really sustainable that way,
2 number one. Number two, the
3 licensing and things like that that
4 go along with the video management
5 system, the Genetec system really
6 don't jive. We have to do that in
7 kind of a lump sum scenario. So I
8 plan that naturally around our
9 refresh periods.

10 So what we're trying to get
11 to right now, which thank you to
12 Council that we did receive that
13 funding, because that's going to
14 allow us to catch up. The Streets
15 Department is loaded and ready to
16 deploy somewhere on the order of 250
17 cameras, some of these are multi-lens
18 cameras. We're obviously about 150
19 cameras into the Safe Playzone for
20 rec centers and we have another 150
21 coming before the end of June -- July
22 rather to be deployed as well. So
23 that's going to allow us -- we're
24 going to hopefully be right in time
25 to do that refresh.

1 But again, where I think the
2 funding goes best is toward that
3 annual budget to allow us some more
4 flexibility and some coordination to,
5 you know, when somebody decides to
6 throw 1,000 cameras at us, we'd like
7 a little bit more heads-up so we can
8 put the technology out better.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

10 Okay. All right. We're juggling a
11 lot of balls so we --

12 MR. VIDRO: Oh, absolutely.
13 I said it with a smile on my face.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --
15 have to do a lot of different things.
16 All right. Thank you.

17 There's a couple other
18 Councilmembers that have some
19 questions. Chair recognizes
20 Councilman Harrity.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Excuse
22 me one second. Council President, I
23 just want to let you know I'm
24 present.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 Yes, sir. Thank you, Councilman.

2 How are you.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You're
4 welcome.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
6 Councilman Harrity.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Hey.

8 Good morning, Council President.

9 Good morning, Michael. My
10 question has to do with the gunshot
11 monitors. And I understand -- like
12 you were saying where the police can
13 only get there so fast once a gunshot
14 monitor goes off, and it's actually
15 hard to try to catch people because
16 they're getting away, response time,
17 stuff like that, is there any
18 research going into what would happen
19 if we actually hook drones up to
20 those gunshot monitors so that once
21 they go off, the drone could fly in?

22 We wouldn't stop the shooting
23 victims, but we would actually maybe
24 catch some more people by being able
25 to get the getaway cars license plate

1 or maybe a picture of them. It just
2 seems like technology's moving so
3 fast nowadays. I'd like to know what
4 our plan is with that. And if
5 there's other drones -- if you think
6 drones would actually help with the
7 process of catching some of these
8 shooters? Thank you.

9 MR. VIDRO: No problem. So
10 as a technologist, I'm always looking
11 out for the next best technology.
12 And right now -- by trade I'm an
13 integration engineer. That's what I
14 do. So I take the square peg and try
15 to fit it into the round hole and
16 make it work. And right now just
17 looking at it at a high level, high
18 altitude, I'm sure that's possible.
19 I just don't know if we have a camera
20 that already looks at that and
21 captures as much as it can.

22 I see what you're saying,
23 maybe more high definition, more
24 close-in views. I just don't see any
25 way that we would be able to automate

1 that process with the current drone
2 technology. Maybe in the future
3 absolutely. AI is starting to crack
4 into drone technology and it usually
5 takes a few years for that to catch
6 up. And I have to say right now my
7 entire life is in technology. This
8 is the most rapid development era
9 that we're in.

10 A couple years ago AI was
11 kind of a waste of money. But now AI
12 is doing many, many other things for
13 us outside of video technology.
14 We're talking about data analysis,
15 things like that, that they're making
16 leaps and bounds by the minute,
17 literally by the month.

18 So I do anticipate honestly,
19 you know, if somebody gets that idea
20 in their head and wants to design
21 that thing, it's definitely feasible
22 for that to happen, but just probably
23 not at this time. And then trust me,
24 we are on top of things like that as
25 far as any type of technology that

1 integrates with video, because that's
2 my primary focus, that whole video
3 integration piece. That's the body
4 worn video, everything else that goes
5 along with that. Hopefully, that
6 answered your question.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
8 (Inaudible). All right. It's
9 (inaudible) --

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
11 Councilman --

12 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I know
13 that we're getting more and more
14 cameras up and that's a good thing
15 (inaudible) --

16 MR. VIDRO: You're breaking
17 up, sir.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 Yeah. Councilman, yeah, your feed is
20 really bad. Can you say it again?
21 Your feed was real bad. Can you
22 repeat your question please?

23 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Yeah.
24 Okay. I know we have the cameras and
25 we're getting more. That's good

1 stuff. But manpower to monitor the
2 cameras, I know that when I was
3 talking with the Commissioner during
4 the hearings, that was an issue,
5 actually having enough people to
6 monitor the cameras, the crime
7 cameras that we have.

8 For instance, in Kensington
9 where I live there's a lot of crime
10 cameras on the corners of where this
11 drug activity is, but not much
12 enforcement from what I see of
13 actually taking care of these drug
14 dealers. How short are we in that
15 aspect? And what could we do to make
16 that better?

17 MR. VIDRO: So the best way
18 that we can understand this is that
19 it's just basic math. Right now we
20 have 1750 City-owned feeds and all
21 together about 6,000 feeds that are
22 being monitored. And in order to
23 monitor those cameras in realtime,
24 you're going to need somewhere on the
25 order of about 1,000 people to do

1 that, to effectively do that.

2 So we ask ourselves is this
3 an investigative tool or is it a
4 realtime monitoring tool. So on the
5 technology end of that, there's
6 obviously very, very many scenarios
7 where a manned-monitor type of
8 situation like in building security.
9 You know, that's very effective, very
10 feasible. You're inside the
11 building, everything's contained in
12 that building.

13 When we're on a City grid,
14 that doesn't become very effective.
15 So we try to use the technology in
16 the most effective manner. And so,
17 what we've done as far as the
18 monitoring goes, I don't think it's
19 very clear to everyone, it's just not
20 the Watch Center that's monitoring
21 these cameras.

22 Every district has access to
23 their own cameras and can monitor
24 those cameras within their districts,
25 and we rely on them to pick up the

1 realtime type of stuff that happens.
2 I don't think we're ever going to get
3 to a point unless we want to stop
4 putting cameras up and stop right
5 here and say, let's go hire 1,000
6 people to monitor these cameras. And
7 even then we're back to that whole
8 sensor thing again, right.

9 So if a sensor is doing that,
10 it only cost us a fixed price for
11 that sensor, for the rest of the life
12 in that sensor, even a sensor or a
13 human even if you see it happening as
14 far as being able to dispatch in a
15 timely manner, that's always going to
16 be a problem, again until somebody
17 can invent a button that drops a cop
18 out of the sky, that's the only thing
19 in my opinion that'll fix that. I
20 can't answer a --

21 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: We --
22 sorry to interrupt you. I get the
23 line with you need the same number of
24 people to monitor the cameras as
25 their cameras. My thing is these

1 cameras are recording, correct, and
2 why can't somebody go back in these
3 high -- we know where the drug
4 corners are.

5 I mean, it's no secret in my
6 neighborhood where they are and who
7 the people are that are doing it. I
8 mean, they're there. I don't
9 understand why we can't be looking at
10 these cameras to build cases against
11 these -- and I get that maybe you are
12 doing that. But it seems to me to be
13 a slow process and I'm not seeing any
14 results, you know. And this is
15 something that in my mind I need to
16 see some results. I mean, there's
17 nothing going on.

18 I have two corners around the
19 corner from my house. The cameras
20 are right there. There's 20 of them
21 out there. It's not one or two
22 hiding in a corner. They don't care.
23 My question is just how do we get
24 somebody to go back through these
25 tapes daily on these corners that we

1 know are known drug corners and start
2 getting this information of who's
3 who, who's doing what and then start
4 trying to prosecute these people?
5 That's just what I'm trying to get
6 at. I just don't get it.

7 I understand that you're
8 short-handed all over the place and
9 all that stuff, but you don't need
10 somebody actually sitting there
11 monitoring the camera 24 hours a day.
12 You just need somebody to go back and
13 say, all right, there's so-and-so, he
14 just did a hand-to-hand, let's
15 document that, bam. Start building
16 our case towards either RICO or
17 anything like that, I understand RICO
18 is a federal thing, but whatever we
19 can do with these people. Because
20 these are very organized groups and I
21 get that, and they're hard to catch.
22 I get that.

23 But it's just frustrating to
24 see these cameras sitting there, but
25 every day I come home through 30 of

1 them waving at me trying to slow me
2 down so they can sell me shit.

3 Excuse my language.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5 Councilman, I think the Deputy
6 Commissioner wants to respond to
7 that.

8 Deputy Stanford.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

10 Yeah. Thank you, sir. I can step
11 in.

12 And so, Councilman, to your
13 point, good morning. In your area
14 just so you're aware, when you say
15 that nothing has been done, our men
16 and women are working very hard in
17 that area. Just in the last year or
18 so --

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: That's
20 not what I'm saying, Chief, and you
21 know that. But it's frustrating --

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

23 But I wanted to give you some stats
24 to kind of --

25 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I'm one

1 of the biggest supporters of police
2 that you have. It's just frustrating
3 when somebody who lives in the
4 neighborhood and drives past that
5 every single day and I have to look
6 up and see these cameras and it's
7 like a stick in my eye, you
8 understand what I'm saying.

9 And I have to go home and
10 hear my residents ask me every night
11 what's going on with that and what's
12 going to happen. And look, I get
13 that they're short-handed and the
14 cops are overwhelmed in my
15 neighborhood. My neighborhood is to
16 the extreme. It's not like most
17 neighborhoods. I get all that. I'm
18 not trying to accuse anybody of doing
19 anything.

20 All I would like to know is
21 what we on City Council can do to
22 help you guys get that done. I'm
23 just a little frustrated. I get that
24 we're having a hiring problem with
25 police officers in general, but I

1 just think that maybe if we had -- if
2 we could put some more money in there
3 for actual people to monitor these
4 high crime areas just to document
5 stuff so that we can start trying to
6 prove a case. I'm not trying to
7 blame anybody.

8 I know that the police
9 officers in my area are A1. They do
10 their job. They're out there every
11 day. I know it's got to be
12 frustrating to them too, but I'm just
13 trying to get to the root of what can
14 we do as a Council to help you guys
15 get some of this stuff under control.
16 Is there money we can put in for
17 personnel that maybe aren't police
18 officers now that we're allowed to
19 hire some civilian officers?

20 I would think that maybe data
21 analysts might be able to help out a
22 little bit more with trying to
23 compile some of this data on some of
24 these gangs because these are
25 organized gangs, it's organized

1 crime. That's all I'm asking. What
2 can we do to help you guys? How much
3 money would --

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
5 Councilman. Councilman, let the
6 Commissioner answer the question
7 please.

8 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Go
9 ahead.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
11 Thank you, sir. Just trying to give
12 you some background on all of the
13 things you're saying, we are doing.
14 In terms of we have analysts that are
15 looking each and every day working
16 very hard both in the districts as
17 well as in the DVIC, compiling
18 information, gathering data on
19 pedestrian investigations, vehicle
20 investigations to identify those
21 individuals that are involved.
22 That's part of our biggest strategy,
23 identifying those that are involved
24 so that we aren't just creating
25 collateral damage to the people that

1 are not involved, right. And so,
2 that's one piece of it.

3 But in addition to that, even
4 so much as we utilize each one of
5 those cameras in an investigative
6 tool, which is what you're
7 referencing of going back and
8 building cases, we do that now. In
9 order to have someone do that to the
10 point that you're referencing of
11 going back through those cameras
12 every day and looking at that, that
13 would kind of go to the point that
14 Director Vidro was making, that you
15 would still need a number of people
16 in order to analyze, that would be
17 almost the same of doing it in
18 realtime.

19 And so, again I think we're
20 open and would welcome civilian staff
21 and professional staff to do that,
22 because again that gives us an added
23 part to that in terms of outside of
24 police officers actually doing it
25 that can communicate. So, yeah,

1 that's an opportunity. Yes, we
2 welcome that, but a lot of that work
3 is being done now, utilizing to your
4 point about building those RICO type
5 of charges and cases. We're doing
6 that now.

7 We have the ATF, DEA, FBI,
8 the U.S. Attorney's Office, the
9 District Attorney's Office, everyone
10 is collectively working together on a
11 lot of these issues, particularly in
12 East Division. Some of those take a
13 little bit more time in order to be
14 able to do some press to let you know
15 what's being done.

16 But again, in that area there
17 are a number of gun arrests. Again,
18 I was just looking over the last six
19 months or so. 20-something guns have
20 been arrested just in that area
21 around your block, even so much as
22 130-something narcotic arrests just
23 in the area around your block. I'm
24 not talking about the entire
25 division. And so, there is a lot of

1 work that's being done. And so, the
2 cameras don't always act as a
3 deterrent, but they do provide us an
4 additional investigative piece. And
5 so, we're using them in that way.

6 I think your frustration is
7 the frustration that we have, the
8 frustration that many people and
9 citizens in this City have, right.
10 And so, we share that frustration in
11 terms of addressing the violent
12 crime, the quality-of-life issues.
13 We share that. Trust me, if we had a
14 way where we can stop this and shut
15 it down instantly, trust me we would.

16 And so, we all have family
17 that live in many of these
18 communities and are from many of
19 these communities. So your
20 frustration, your passion and your
21 commitment to that I completely
22 understand, but that also lies within
23 many men and women in this
24 organization, including myself that
25 want to make sure we're giving it

1 everything we have every day and are
2 giving it everything.

3 And so, again as far as the
4 prosecution piece, that's another
5 piece and we're working with the DA's
6 Office to try to address some of
7 those issues as well to get some of
8 these people either a higher bail and
9 again pushing it through the
10 prosecution piece and then the judges
11 as well.

12 And so, we're working behind
13 the scenes to get a lot of that done
14 and a lot of meetings coming up to
15 push on that a little bit more. But
16 I understand your frustration. I
17 just want to again just point out
18 that a lot of those things we are
19 doing now and trust me, the men and
20 women are pressing every day. And I
21 appreciate you acknowledging that,
22 but they are pressing every day
23 throughout the City trying to tamp
24 down on some of this crime.

25 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Thank

1 you, Deputy Commissioner. Only one
2 other question: How many actual
3 areas in the City are designated high
4 crime areas?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

6 So statistically, we have about six
7 districts that -- that six to eight
8 districts that drive our overall
9 crime. As you know, the beginning of
10 the year we focused on the four
11 districts that drive 43 percent of
12 our gun violence, which are the 39th
13 District, 22nd District, 24th
14 District and 25th District. And so,
15 we have compiled additional
16 resources, pulled people out
17 administrative positions and put them
18 back into those areas so that we
19 could get more police on the ground,
20 more boots on the ground, more of a
21 presence to address some of those
22 things.

23 And so, again those are the
24 four areas that make up 43 percent of
25 the gun violence that we've seen.

1 But overall it's about eight
2 districts that compile most of our
3 violent crime. Again, those other
4 remaining districts they still have
5 quality-of-life issues that we can't
6 ignore. And so, again not just
7 focusing on the violent crime but
8 making sure we're addressing what's
9 important to everybody in every
10 neighborhood in this City.

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Thank
12 you, Deputies.

13 Thank you, Council President.
14 That was interesting. Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you, Councilman. We are all
17 very frustrated about this whole
18 environment. It's really a drag on
19 our City, but we got to keep focus.
20 We got to keep moving. Can't give
21 up, can't give up.

22 Councilwoman Lozada --

23 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Exactly.
24 I'm just trying to figure out how we
25 can help. That's all.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Yeah, we got to figure this out.

3 Councilwoman Lozada, you had
4 a comment or question or either?

5 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I had a
6 comment. Pretty much I wanted to --
7 I heard Mr. Vidro mention that every
8 district has cameras that they should
9 be monitoring on their own. And I
10 want to make sure that we are
11 realistic, right. These districts,
12 two of the highest crime districts
13 are within the Pinpoint area, they're
14 in my district.

15 I appreciate and I applaud
16 the men and women of the 24th and
17 25th Police District because they
18 bust their chops every day, every day
19 to serve and protect communities like
20 mine, but it is unrealistic to expect
21 for them who are consistently short
22 to be responsible for monitoring
23 cameras when we know very well that
24 on a daily basis they don't even have
25 cars to put on the street.

1 I work very closely with my
2 captains. For years I've been
3 working closely with the captains so
4 I know what happens on the ground.
5 So when we're making requests, in
6 order to make things better, please
7 let us make realistic requests and
8 let us make requests that we know we
9 can deliver because that is an
10 unrealistic expectation of them.

11 And I don't want to be a
12 Councilperson that will set my people
13 up to fail. Because they may work
14 for you all at the police department,
15 but I believe they're part of my
16 family, right. They protect and
17 serve me and my family and the people
18 that I represent, so let's make
19 realistic requests and let's have
20 realistic expectations.

21 I'm excited about the new
22 cameras that are going up, and I
23 understand my colleague Harrity's
24 frustrations, but I don't want to
25 continue to be smoke and mirrors. I

1 want us to make real decisions with
2 realistic expectations so that we can
3 really bring change in the
4 neighborhood.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

6 Ma'am, if I could just jump in. In
7 regards to the use of cameras in the
8 districts, that's not usually done by
9 active personnel. That's usually
10 done by restricted or unlimited
11 personnel who would not be on the
12 street as well as analysts. And so,
13 again that's what that references.
14 It's usually not taking anybody that
15 would be in a car or on foot patrol
16 to have them now sit inside and use a
17 camera. That's usually done by folks
18 that are limited, restricted for some
19 reason.

20 And instead of just having
21 them sit around idly and do nothing,
22 we again try to have them trained
23 quickly and access those cameras to
24 be the eyes and ears to do the things
25 that exactly Councilperson Harrity

1 addressed in terms of being able to
2 watch it in realtime and radio that
3 information.

4 I think I provided an example
5 of when I utilized that same type of
6 technology with one of my restricted
7 officers when I was in the 19th
8 District and did just that. We were
9 able to recover three guns off of 200
10 block of Simpson Street because I had
11 an officer that was in restricted
12 capacity, couldn't work the street,
13 so he was utilizing the cameras while
14 he's inside radioing to officers that
15 were working out on the street, in
16 realtime observed someone with a gun
17 that he knew should not be in
18 possession of a gun because of his
19 prior interaction, directed those
20 officers there and were able to make
21 that recovery. And so, that's what
22 that's being utilized.

23 So again, can we have more
24 personnel or more people utilized to
25 do that? Absolutely, absolutely.

1 And again, if that is the possibility
2 of getting more professional staff,
3 civilian personnel to do that, we are
4 very open to that and welcome that
5 with open arms. It's just getting
6 them in and then getting them trained
7 to do that and absolutely being able
8 to communicate with our uniform
9 personnel to make those arrests when
10 appropriate.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thanks
12 for the clarification.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
14 Yes, ma'am.

15 MR. VIDRO: Real quickly so
16 it wasn't misconstrued, I didn't mean
17 that we had dedicated monitors all
18 the time in those districts. What I
19 meant was that we actually -- we're
20 in the first year of a three-year
21 rollout right now of mobile devices
22 for every police officer. And part
23 of that rollout and those
24 applications on those devices is the
25 monitoring of the cameras so that

1 while they're not actively
2 monitoring, but we're putting that
3 technology in the police officers'
4 hands so that now he can -- it's just
5 another set of eyeballs.

6 So that camera in the Crime
7 Center at 1800 feeds is not a camera
8 that anybody cares about or watching
9 unless something is actually
10 happening or alerting. However, that
11 officer on the street has the ability
12 now to pull up a camera right around
13 the corner from him and be able to
14 see something happening in realtime
15 and using that.

16 So while we don't count that
17 as a realtime monitor or as somebody
18 actually sitting there dedicated to
19 monitoring the cameras, it's just
20 that's the approach that we're trying
21 to take, is that we already
22 understand that the security guard
23 sitting, looking at TVs all day long
24 is not and can be an effective
25 measure.

1 However, putting those
2 cameras in front of every cop that we
3 can for the purposes of affecting an
4 arrest or whatever they may need that
5 camera view for, we give them that
6 access. And that's been happening
7 since we started the program and
8 we're able to deploy this out to the
9 districts. And it's more for that,
10 for a supervisor, if somebody like
11 that to kind of get a bird's-eye view
12 and a live-time view of what's
13 happening. And that obviously if we
14 calculate that measure and say once
15 we're fully deployed with 6500
16 devices, which we look to be in
17 Fiscal '20 -- end of Calendar --
18 Fiscal '25 -- '26 rather -- yeah, I'm
19 sorry, '25, that will probably be the
20 most effective way that we can use
21 these cameras and spread that
22 monitoring across the entire
23 department.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Councilwoman, you're good?

1 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Yes,
2 sir.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
4 Yeah. Thank you.

5 Mr. Vidro, I just want to
6 make sure I understand because you
7 brought up an interesting issue. I
8 remember, again we're talking about
9 these trips we used to take, we went
10 to Baltimore many years ago and it
11 actually had just rolled out their
12 array of cameras all over the place,
13 and they actually had these, they
14 called them footballs. And they were
15 these devices, they were pretty
16 archaic, in the car where the police,
17 the patrol person, could actually
18 pull up feed from the cameras in
19 their sector from the car.

20 It sounds like you just
21 referenced a similar version, a much
22 more sophisticated version where the
23 person, the patrol person, can pull
24 up the feed from a camera on their
25 phone; is that accurate? Did I hear

1 that?

2 MR. VIDRO: Absolutely.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Okay. So that --

5 MR. VIDRO: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 All right.

8 MR. VIDRO: We've had the
9 capability of doing it in MDT, but I
10 have to agree with the executives
11 that don't allow us to let the guys
12 on an MDT watch it. MDT is the
13 computer in the car, because it's
14 distracting. We don't want them
15 looking at cameras while they're
16 trying to drive a car.

17 So I was very excited when we
18 came up with the mobility project
19 because I've always tried to find a
20 platform to deploy this to every cop
21 and now that mobility, that mobile
22 device gives us -- we've had the
23 technology for years, just not a real
24 platform deployed on outside of the
25 districts themselves in a fixed

1 location.

2 But now, we have about 1500
3 devices deployed across the 25th, the
4 entirety of each division and Central
5 right now, and there's about 1500
6 devices that are deployed in those
7 cops' hands. So to talk about K&A,
8 the K&A District, every single one of
9 those cops are either foot or bike
10 patrols, that device is acting as
11 their eyes for the cameras, their
12 body-worn interaction with their
13 body-worn cameras as well as we're
14 about to launch the ability for them
15 to do searches on those devices.
16 Because right now as it happens, if
17 you're on a foot patrol and you need
18 to run a plate or whatever you've got
19 to do, you're going to get on the
20 radio to do that. We're going to
21 give them the ability to do that
22 right from the device.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 All right. So it expands the
25 ability, capability of that officer

1 beyond their visual, their personal
2 visual?

3 MR. VIDRO: Absolutely.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5 Yeah, that's something we thought
6 made sense back then. Okay. So now
7 you're telling us that we're in a
8 position to --

9 MR. VIDRO: I think it was
10 just a matter of identifying the
11 platform and getting the funding.
12 Thanks again to Council in the last
13 fiscal year you guys approved a
14 multi-year rollout of 6500 devices
15 over the next three years. So we
16 received the first round of funding
17 this fiscal year. Looks like we're
18 going to get the funding again for
19 next fiscal year. It'll take us out
20 to about 3500 devices next year, and
21 then that next year on to 6500.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

23 Okay. Sounds like a good use.

24 Councilman Johnson, did I see
25 earlier you first had a question?

1 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes,
2 sir.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
4 Chair recognizes Councilman Johnson.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
6 you, Council President.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
8 You're welcome.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I want
10 to thank Deputy Commissioner Stanford
11 and the Philadelphia Police
12 Department for your hard work and
13 your dedication in trying to keep our
14 city safe and also (inaudible)
15 Commissioner Danielle Outlaw.

16 My questions are regarding
17 the Homicide Unit and want to get an
18 idea of, one, how are we (inaudible)
19 in terms of solving (inaudible), two,
20 how are we doing in terms of
21 addressing nonfatal shootings? And
22 then most importantly, in terms of
23 the Homicide Unit how are we
24 interacting with families who have
25 lost loved ones to gun violence who

1 have cold cases in terms of keeping
2 them informed rather it's
3 periodically, rather quarterly, but
4 just reaching out to them from time
5 to time and addressing their issues
6 and also the level of technology that
7 we are using in personnel as it
8 relates to expanding the Homicide
9 Unit here in the City of
10 Philadelphia, particularly around the
11 issue of gun violence?

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 Deputy.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
15 Good morning again, sir, Councilman
16 Johnson. So our current clearance
17 rate for homicides is around 65
18 percent, which is up significantly
19 from last year. This time last year
20 we were around 40, 45 percent. And
21 so, we're up significantly as it
22 compares to that.

23 And part of that
24 restructuring, at the beginning of
25 the year we rolled out -- actually

1 I'm sorry. At the beginning of last
2 year in terms of combining all of our
3 Shooting Investigation Units
4 throughout the City into one Shooting
5 Investigation Group called the SIG,
6 which essentially investigates all
7 nonfatal shootings. They work
8 alongside our Homicide Unit. And so,
9 with that we've also been able to
10 increase clearance rates around
11 nonfatal shootings as well. I don't
12 have those numbers right in front of
13 me, but I can get those to you.

14 As it relates to technology,
15 again we're constantly working with
16 our federal partners with some of the
17 latest and greatest, if you will,
18 with technology as well as what we
19 have available to us through our
20 Forensics Unit. Again, I know you've
21 heard from Director Garvey many times
22 through Council hearings on what
23 we're doing there as it relates to
24 analyzing the ballistic evidence
25 that's recovered at many of these

1 scenes.

2 So all of that combined has
3 allowed us to continue to increase
4 the results, the positive results,
5 with investigations and increase that
6 clearance rate. But having again
7 those SIG detectives working
8 alongside our Homicide detectives has
9 I think in terms of again increased
10 the communication between some of
11 these shootings that are occurring as
12 well as the clearance rate.

13 With that being said, as it
14 relates to those cold cases, there
15 are dedicated detectives. Again,
16 I'll get you the exact numbers,
17 dedicated detectives that constantly
18 review those cold cases, and even
19 working in terms of putting some of
20 that information out through our
21 Communications Unit. So that's
22 information out to the public
23 constantly staying up on any new
24 leads and making requests for any
25 information as it relates to those

1 type of cases. So that's still an
2 area that we're continuing to work on
3 and trying to enhance what we do
4 there as well as the communication
5 with the families of many of these
6 victims.

7 There is a Victim Assistance
8 Officer that's assigned to our
9 Homicide Unit, and they work in terms
10 of continuing to have that
11 communication along with the
12 detectives, communication with the
13 families of these homicide victims.
14 Again, I will always say when it
15 comes to that type of communication,
16 there's always room for improvement.
17 It's never a perfect situation. When
18 someone loses a loved one, there can
19 never be too much communication.

20 And so, I will say that's an
21 area where we can definitely look at
22 any enhancements or any suggestions
23 that may be out there that you may
24 have received from even victims'
25 families as to what would make them

1 feel more welcomed as in the level of
2 communication or interaction that
3 they can receive from our
4 investigators.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: How many
6 staff members did -- you said it's
7 only one staff member that's assigned
8 to that unit? Because I think
9 probably starting there with roughly
10 500 homicides over the last three
11 years prior to you becoming Deputy
12 Commissioner kind of begs the
13 question, how come we aren't
14 expanding that particular personnel
15 team, specifically around victims who
16 have lost loved ones to gun violence
17 and making sure the lines of
18 communication are open?

19 Do all the detectives have
20 cell phones now because I remember
21 that was the issue some time ago?
22 And then last, I just want to add
23 this in here, and I'm kind of -- I
24 obviously have no problem working
25 with law enforcement and that's

1 always my track record around the
2 issue of gun violence.

3 But I don't understand how
4 you come before Council during the
5 Budget hearing and don't have numbers
6 around nonfatal shootings and
7 homicides. That kind of boggles my
8 mind since gun violence is the number
9 one issue that we're addressing here
10 in the City of Philadelphia. Can you
11 elaborate on why we don't have those
12 numbers?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
14 In terms of the numbers -- in terms
15 of the clearance rate or what is it
16 that you were asking for? I may have
17 misunderstood you, sir.

18 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON:
19 Clearance rate for nonfatal shootings
20 as well as homicides.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
22 No. So our clearance rate for our
23 homicides right now are at 65
24 percent. Our nonfatal, I believe we
25 were somewhere around starting the

1 year somewhere around 40 percent, but
2 I'll get that exact number. I just
3 don't have that right in front of me.
4 And I want to get you as of most
5 recent.

6 But as it relates to our --
7 we're increasing the victim
8 assistance. We're in coordination
9 right now of working to increase the
10 victim assistance collaboration part
11 as it relates to victim assistance.
12 Again, I just found the numbers. For
13 nonfatal, we're at 25 percent for the
14 year as far as the clearance rate.
15 So again, that was a significant
16 increase.

17 If you recall when we
18 implemented the Shooting
19 Investigation Group, we were
20 somewhere around 12 percent for
21 nonfatal shootings. So again, 25
22 percent is not something again to
23 jump through the roof with joy for.
24 But to see that we're progressing in
25 a direction that's positive going

1 from that 12 percent that we once
2 had, now we're at 25 percent.

3 Again, that work through
4 having the mobility project of having
5 those phones available to us allows
6 us to communicate. But a big piece
7 to be honest is getting community
8 members and folks that are present
9 when they see these shootings the
10 ability to cooperate with us. And
11 again, that's a big piece, not just
12 around homicides but around the
13 nonfatal shootings. I would say more
14 so nonfatal shootings than the
15 homicides of having community members
16 again give us that information and
17 work with us when they know that
18 there's something that's happening.

19 And again, some of that is
20 the relationships that we're building
21 and continue to try to build through
22 patrol with community members each
23 and every day, but that is one piece
24 of that. So that is 25 percent as of
25 today for nonfatal shootings and 65

1 percent for homicides.

2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And I'll
3 wrap up on this last question a
4 constituent asked me to ask. Can you
5 give me an idea of the unit that
6 deals with individuals who are
7 transgender and when there's a
8 homicide and how those type of
9 transgender/LGBTQ investigations take
10 place? Because I think according to
11 the constituent he was under the
12 impression that the personnel was
13 scaled back. And I don't know if
14 that's true or not true. But I told
15 him I don't have a problem asking the
16 question.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
18 As it relates to when those type of
19 incidents happen, again we're working
20 with the Office of LGBTQ liaison, as
21 that's always one of the priorities
22 of making sure that again with those
23 type of incidents that the
24 sensitivity level is at its highest,
25 because again combined with losing a

1 loved one but then the extra, if you
2 will, components and elements of
3 that, making sure that the
4 sensitivity level is at its highest.
5 And so, that is something that we're
6 constantly doing.

7 In terms of having our LGBTQ
8 liaison officers and our group hasn't
9 been scaled back, so again we're
10 continuing to work and to make sure
11 that again that community as well as
12 all other communities get the
13 resources and again the attention
14 that they deserve and that they need,
15 so making sure that that's always a
16 priority for us.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
18 you, Deputy Commissioner. All right.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
20 Yes, sir. No problem, sir.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Take
22 care.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
24 You too.

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And good

1 job on increasing those numbers as
2 well. So whatever we can do to
3 continue supporting those numbers
4 continuously increasing with
5 nonfatals, I think you're definitely
6 going in the right direction. So
7 thank you very much.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

9 Thank you so much. I'll pass that
10 information on to the men and women
11 that are investigating those
12 incidents each day.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
14 you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16 Thank you, Councilman.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You're
18 welcome, Council President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

20 Chair recognizes Councilman Driscoll.

21 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Thank
22 you, Council President.

23 So my question centers around
24 these boom parties. I represent the
25 Waterfront from Bucks County almost

1 to Center City. And so, I have three
2 boat launches and several parks. And
3 what's happening is a group text
4 would go out and maybe 20, 30, 40
5 cars show up, and then they set up
6 these monster speakers and they have
7 a lively party not caring about the
8 residents in the neighborhood or the
9 people that are just recreating in
10 the park.

11 My question is from an
12 enforcement standpoint what powers
13 are on the books currently to address
14 that other than giving them a \$25
15 citation? Can we confiscate the
16 speakers?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
18 So sir, yes, we have been in
19 communication with the District
20 Attorney's Office. In fact, Deputy
21 Commissioner Dales who oversees
22 Special Operations and Deputy
23 Commissioner Kelly who oversees
24 Patrol recently held a meeting with
25 the DA's Office around enforcement

1 around a number of these different
2 issues. And so, that's something
3 that the two of them are going to
4 collaborate as to putting together a
5 little bit more attention and some
6 type of initiative to address that
7 issue as well as some of the other
8 quality-of-life issues around ATVs
9 and things of that nature. The
10 street performance, they all kind of
11 go hand-in-hand in terms of the
12 increase in what we've seen around
13 that activity.

14 And so, we're actively
15 working now to get additional again
16 resources, but also figuring out what
17 we can do collectively from the
18 enforcement piece that's actually
19 going to be effective, not just doing
20 something that's not going to be
21 effective.

22 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Well,
23 because it's going to get more -- it
24 couldn't be any more timelier with
25 the weather getting better. I think

1 it's just going to get worse and
2 worse. And I think if we don't send
3 a message early this spring, it's
4 going to be out of control by the
5 summer. So the quicker that that
6 group comes up with a plan and if it
7 requires legislation, we'll certainly
8 from the Council standpoint
9 collaborate with Council President to
10 see what we can do from an ordinance
11 standpoint if you need more teeth.

12 But I guess we just can't
13 wait any longer because this problem
14 was all last summer, and the last
15 three weekends my office has gotten
16 hundreds of calls. So I just beg for
17 a quick team response to this. And
18 thank you, Deputy Commissioner, for
19 what you're doing.

20 That's all, Council
21 President.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Thank you. Thank you, Councilman.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
25 Thank you, sir.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
2 believe we have Councilman Harrity
3 who has some follow-up questions for
4 Round 2.

5 Councilman Harrity.

6 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
7 (Inaudible).

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 Councilman, your --

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
11 (Inaudible).

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 Councilman, your feed --

14 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I'm
15 sorry. Can you hear me? Can you
16 hear me now?

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Better, yes.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Okay.
20 I'm sorry. I'm actually not feeling
21 well. I'm at home, but just trying
22 to suffer through this.

23 But I liked what you said
24 when you said when you were running I
25 guess one of the stations, you had

1 one of your desk duty officers
2 monitoring the camera and were able
3 to make some convictions like that.
4 I'd like to know how many actual
5 officers do we have right now on desk
6 duty and if it would be feasible to
7 try to have them monitor some of
8 these cameras like you had done in
9 the past, because I know we have a
10 large number of people that are
11 either on desk duty or administrative
12 or something like that where maybe we
13 can get some progress going with
14 these cameras?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

16 So our limited duty number fluctuates
17 each day as people come back as well
18 as the number of people that we have.
19 Folks are restricted or as a result
20 of some type of internal
21 investigation, we will not utilize
22 those folks, because again there may
23 be some issue as to why they're
24 already on the bench, so to speak,
25 and we don't want to utilize them.

1 But that is something that
2 we're ensuring that the officers that
3 are limited are doing a number of
4 different things, but that is
5 something that I'll be working with
6 the Deputy of Patrol to again make
7 sure that we're doing more of that if
8 it's not being done in certain places
9 as to ensuring that it is being done
10 moving forward.

11 And again, like I said those
12 numbers of limited duty, we have a
13 number of folks that are IOD,
14 somewhere around 400 people that are
15 in IOD status. Those people can
16 return at any given time in a limited
17 capacity so that changes each day as
18 to what we have available to us.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: But is
20 there a general number of how many
21 people that are actually on desk duty
22 that actually come in daily and are
23 there?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
25 I --

1 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I mean,
2 I know the number --

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:
4 I can get that number and get that
5 back to you today. I'll get that
6 number back to you.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Yeah,
8 I'm just curious. I actually thought
9 that what you said was great, the
10 fact that you utilized them to
11 monitor those cameras because like
12 Quetcy, my colleague Quetcy Lozada
13 said, we know our officers over here
14 have a lot more things to do than
15 just monitoring cameras. But if we
16 had some more of those light-duty
17 officers, it would allow them to be
18 productive also and feel more like
19 they're contributing. So I thank
20 you. And again, I thank you for
21 everything you do.

22 The 24th and 25th Police
23 Districts have been very responsive
24 to me, and I support them thoroughly.
25 I just know that they're overwhelmed

1 and I'm just trying to get to how we
2 can give you more resources in order
3 for us to be able to combat these
4 issues, because we get beat up
5 everywhere we go about the crime
6 problem. And quite frankly, we've
7 got a lot of senior citizens in my
8 neighborhood that are afraid to go to
9 the store and now have to take extra
10 buses to get to a store because we
11 have none. But it's just a little
12 frustrating, and I appreciate
13 everything you guys do.

14 That's all I got, Council
15 President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

17 Thank you. Thank you, Councilman.

18 We have no other Members in
19 the queue for these witnesses.

20 Gentlemen, I want to thank you very
21 much. Thank you for your service and
22 we look forward to continuing through
23 our budget process. I anticipate
24 some additional resources for some
25 aspects of what it is we discussed

1 today.

2 So we will talk to the
3 Finance Director and the Budget
4 Director about amendments to ensure
5 that we get some additional resources
6 on the proposed FY24 budget. Again,
7 thank you. We really appreciate you
8 being available. Thank you.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER STANFORD:

10 Thank you, Council President, and
11 thank you to all members of Council
12 for your commitment and your
13 questions today. Appreciate you.
14 Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16 You're welcome.

17 Mr. McDermott, next up we
18 have?

19 THE CLERK: Our next witness
20 is the Director of the Office of
21 Homeless Services, Liz Hersh.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

23 Thank you very much. And good
24 afternoon, Ms. Hersh. Thank you for
25 being here.

1 Councilwoman Gilmore

2 Richardson, I believe had requested a
3 callback. So you will be first up in
4 the queue, Councilwoman.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you,
7 Council President.

8 And thank you, Liz, and to
9 your team and to the Office of
10 Homeless Services for your work. I
11 apologize that I was not available
12 the first round, but I wanted to come
13 back for this round to just ask some
14 questions that I have to help me
15 further understand the operation of
16 your department as we deliberate in
17 this budget process.

18 So I'll have a number of
19 questions, but I'll start off with
20 just some more general funding
21 operations questions that I'd like to
22 have responses to. And just forgive
23 me because I'll be taking copious
24 notes so that I have this information
25 as we go through the process.

1 So the Office of Homeless
2 Services had \$7,600,652 in Class 100
3 funds, and 36 million or so in Class
4 200 funds in FY21 General Fund actual
5 obligations. Your FY24 proposed
6 budget is a little over 10 million in
7 Class 100 funds and 67 million in
8 Class 200 General Funds.

9 You all are requesting an
10 additional 62 General Fund-budgeted
11 positions from your FY23 filled
12 numbers to your FY24 budgeted
13 numbers. But in your testimony it
14 states that there is a 22 percent
15 decline in overall homelessness over
16 the last five years. But just in the
17 last two years we've increased your
18 allocation from 2.6 million in
19 funding for staff with an additional
20 30 million in contracting dollars.

21 So what percentage decline
22 have we seen in the last two years
23 with that significant increase in
24 funding?

25 MS. HERSH: Give me one

1 minute to look at our Point-in-Time
2 Count.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Okay. And I want to be
5 clear, I did receive the email that
6 the Administration sent regarding
7 questions that Councilmember Gauthier
8 had for your office, and I have not
9 had the opportunity to fully review
10 that because I did see information
11 about the Point-in-Time Count there,
12 because we just got that right before
13 we got on this hearing.

14 MS. HERSH: Oh, okay. Very
15 good, and happy to follow up as well.
16 In 2020 there were 5,634 people who
17 were total counted as being homeless
18 in our Point-in-Time Count, and in
19 2022 it was 4,489.

20 MR. CURRAN: Good morning,
21 Councilmember. This is Peter Curran.
22 I am the Deputy for Finance at
23 Homeless Services. I did want to
24 address that jump in the Class 100
25 funding and positions from FY21 to

1 '22 and '23. In our revised FY21
2 budget due to the pandemic, we moved
3 a considerable amount of our General
4 Funded staff to the ESG CARES money,
5 which was --

6 MS. HERSH: CARES.

7 MR. CURRAN: -- yeah, CARES
8 which was funded through the CARES
9 Act that was rushed through in the
10 end of FY20 by the federal
11 government. So we basically just
12 moved people that were employed at
13 that time so we did not have to have
14 extended layoffs to this grant. So
15 we really didn't increase, so to
16 speak, our budget. It's just that
17 those funds are restored in our FY22
18 budget.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Okay. So that was
21 really just sort of moving folks
22 around. Do you believe that the
23 goals of your department has changed
24 over that last two years since you've
25 made those moves, particularly around

1 servicing roughly the same amount of
2 people?

3 So what I'm looking at when
4 I'm looking at the budget books --
5 that's the old school way to say
6 it -- but when I'm actually printing
7 out these documents and looking at
8 the numbers and then I listen to what
9 your testimony states as the goals,
10 particularly around where there's
11 been a 22 percent decline over the
12 last five years, but then you kind of
13 see the money in the way it's moving,
14 I'm just seeking understanding of if
15 we've seen this decline how that has
16 impacted what you all are requesting
17 operation-wise and why the money was
18 moving in the way that it is? You
19 understand my question?

20 MS. HERSH: I do, and thank
21 you so much for that question.
22 There's really two answers for your
23 question. One is inflow. The number
24 of people who are experiencing
25 homelessness is not static. In FY22,

1 we served nearly 18,000 people. They
2 are people who entered our system in
3 one way or another. And 70 percent
4 of them were either unknown to our
5 system at any previous state or
6 unknown to us in the prior two years.
7 So unfortunately, we have an economy
8 that creates homelessness, so we
9 still have new people entering.

10 I think the other question is
11 what do we spend the money on. Our
12 strategy since we started has been to
13 focus on long-term housing. Shelters
14 are necessary. They save lives. We
15 can't let people be exposed to the
16 elements, we can't let them starve to
17 death. And so, we have to have a
18 shelter system. But long-term
19 affordable housing, deeply affordable
20 housing and especially supportive
21 housing, that's what ends
22 homelessness.

23 And so, we have been
24 investing significantly with your
25 support in that long-term housing,

1 and it has between a 90 and 96
2 percent success rate in preventing a
3 return to homelessness. Therefore,
4 we think it's a very good investment.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Excellent. So how many
7 additional providers have you all
8 been able to partner with, with the
9 additional dollars that you've
10 received? And what programs, and you
11 just talked about long-term housing
12 investments, but what programs have
13 you all prioritized in the increase
14 in spending that we sort of see in
15 the budget books?

16 MS. HERSH: I'm so glad you
17 asked me this question, Councilwoman.
18 So, one, we started a Street to Home
19 program. We know that many people
20 who are unsheltered won't come into
21 shelter. They don't like the
22 congregate setting. They don't like
23 the curfew, the rules. They want the
24 autonomy, but they're still homeless
25 because they don't have the money, so

1 our Street to Home has been a very
2 effective housing first model.

3 We have added what we call
4 noncongregate shelter. These are
5 units that are especially beautiful
6 for older adults. We've seen a real
7 graying of the homeless population,
8 and that again as you recall during
9 the pandemic we had people in their
10 80s and 90s sleeping on the baggage
11 belts in the airport, and they would
12 come in if they had their very own
13 room and their own TV with their own
14 remote, but they wanted the care and
15 comfort and safety of being in a
16 community. And so, we've added five
17 noncongregate shelters and they're
18 temporary. They're all community-
19 based. They're all new providers who
20 are out there using what were
21 otherwise empty buildings and just
22 had a tremendous success rate.

23 We've added Shared Housing.
24 I talked a little bit about this in
25 our original testimony a couple weeks

1 ago. But one of the things that
2 happens is if you have a federal rent
3 subsidy like a Housing Choice
4 Voucher, you're not allowed to live
5 with someone who's not related to
6 you.

7 It means that people who are
8 experiencing homelessness or who are
9 experiencing poverty can't do things
10 that the rest of us do like choosing
11 a roommate or choosing a partner that
12 maybe you don't want to get married
13 to but who you want to live with.
14 And so, we have created and are
15 expanding our Shared Housing program.

16 We have a Shallow Rent
17 program. What we find is that for
18 people who are on very low fixed
19 income from disability, which is
20 about \$800 a month, they can't pay
21 the rent. But if we can provide them
22 with services and they pay \$200 of
23 rent, which is somewhat affordable,
24 and we pay the rest, we can help and
25 get them stabilized. And instead of

1 cycling through shelter, they can
2 stay in their own place. And we've
3 had tremendous success with this with
4 people and it stopped some of that
5 shelter churn.

6 So those are a number of the
7 programs that we have invested in,
8 and our fidelity model Housing First
9 Philadelphia is fortunate to have the
10 best Housing First program in the
11 country. It was the first program to
12 have a substance use disorder team.
13 It's a very, very intensive program
14 that helps people move directly from
15 the street, people that have
16 disabilities who are chronically
17 homeless into their apartment with
18 very, very intensive wraparound
19 services. And so, the City has
20 invested significantly in those
21 Housing First programs as well.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. And
24 I'm taking notes for now for each one
25 of my questions. And --

1 MS. HERSH: I would be happy
2 to write it up for you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then in
5 addition to that, if you could just
6 detail which units have grown
7 positions with the growth in your
8 General Fund appropriation?

9 MS. HERSH: Which units --
10 oh --

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Which units under your
13 department have grown in positions
14 since your General Fund appropriation
15 has increased? And I'm particularly
16 interested in the five new budgeted
17 positions for the Office of the
18 Director from FY23 filled?

19 MR. HOLLoman: Are you able
20 to reference what those positions are
21 because I think when you mentioned
22 that -- and good afternoon, Council.
23 I'm David Holloman, Chief of Staff
24 for the Office of Homeless Services
25 and I welcome all of your questions

1 here today.

2 As Peter indicated earlier,
3 when we first started in the
4 pandemic, we had to move a
5 significant amount of positions,
6 including positions in the Office of
7 Director to the ESG Grant just to
8 maintain status. I think when you
9 guys restored those significant
10 dollars, those were positions that
11 were already in place. I'm trying to
12 get a better grasp of understanding
13 when you said that we increased the
14 Office of the Director position.

15 As it's stated right now as
16 we're broken down, there's five
17 executive level positions within the
18 Office of the Director. There hasn't
19 really been any significant
20 expansion. Just to give you an
21 overview of that, we have 5 executive
22 level positions with 14 director
23 level positions, which are a
24 combination of 75 percent civil
25 service and others or MDO/contracted

1 positions. Those are sort of
2 maintained throughout the whole
3 expansion.

4 Where we have seen increase
5 in positions here have been a direct
6 relationship as federal grants that
7 have been awarded to this office
8 where we have to bring in certain
9 expertise to execute those grants.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: Sorry, was on mute. So
12 I was actually pulling up the details
13 here on my computer. So I will
14 circle back and get you the direct
15 page where it's listed. Okay. But I
16 have the detail here on my computer.
17 Okay. Just give me one second.

18 MR. HOLLOMAN: Sure.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Let me circle back as to
21 not waste time, but I will get the
22 five specific positions. And it
23 could be just that those positions
24 were shifted because of the CARES
25 funding. Okay.

1 In addition to that, I wanted
2 to move forward and talk about again
3 the COVID funds that were received by
4 your department. What is your
5 deadline to spend those funds?

6 MS. HERSH: September 30,
7 2023.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Okay. So this year --

10 MS. HERSH: They're mostly
11 spent. We only have a very -- I
12 think we have one program remaining.
13 The federal government strongly
14 incentivized spending those funds
15 very aggressively, obviously because
16 it was the pandemic. So most of them
17 were spent in the first year and then
18 the remainder largely in the second
19 year. So I think we only have one,
20 if I'm not mistaken, only one program
21 that's left with those ESG CARES
22 funds.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then how did
25 you all spend those dollars? And

1 then with what's left, what are you
2 going to spend those dollars on?

3 MS. HERSH: Primarily, what
4 we did in the first year, as Dave
5 said, was we did pick up I think it
6 was 17 or 20 positions that were
7 qualified. Those funds were only
8 available for outreach, shelter,
9 intake and rapid re-housing, so they
10 were very restricted in what they
11 could be used for.

12 We did at that time take I
13 think close to a \$17 million cut in
14 City General funds because we knew
15 that we could pick up shelter
16 operations using those dollars. So
17 that was a big chunk of that 35
18 million that we got. The remainder
19 we used to create those noncongregate
20 shelter programs, so that when we
21 closed the COVID prevention hotels,
22 we had these community-based settings
23 to move people into I think there's
24 112 of those rooms now that we're
25 supporting. And then we added Rapid

1 Re-housing. That's considered by the
2 federal government to be a permanent
3 housing program, so that was actually
4 how we started the Street to Home
5 program.

6 And we did add a number of
7 new providers. We added, for
8 example, at that time Way Home, which
9 was a partnership with William Way
10 and SELF, Inc. that really -- we're
11 not allowed to prioritize people who
12 are in protected classes, but it did
13 create access to LGBTQ people for
14 rapid re-housing through that
15 partnership. So those were the main
16 ways that we used that funding.

17 We also created Help for the
18 Hurdles, which was short-term child
19 care and transportation to help
20 people get to the point where they,
21 you know, you can't get a job because
22 it cost too much, right, to get
23 transportation and child care, so it
24 gave them a bridge to that. And we
25 also funded vaccine ambassadors for

1 about a year and a half, where people
2 who were actually shelter residents
3 became ambassadors with other shelter
4 residents to try and help them
5 overcome their fear to getting the
6 COVID vaccine, and that was another
7 program that was very successful and
8 also got money into people's pockets.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Right. I was going to
11 ask about the Help for the Hurdles
12 program specifically, and I'll circle
13 back to that. I'm going to skip the
14 questions that I have for the Point-
15 in-Time Count, particularly around
16 parenting youth. I will submit those
17 for you all to respond to
18 specifically because I haven't had an
19 opportunity to review what you all
20 sent back to us because we just got
21 it at 9:51.

22 So I will pass those
23 questions and go to Help for the
24 Hurdles since you brought it up
25 because I do have a question about

1 that program. Can you tell us which
2 workforce development partners you
3 all are working with? In your 2018
4 strategic plan, you note that
5 connecting people in the homeless
6 system to workforce development and
7 employment opportunities is a
8 strategic goal and that you will
9 establish a strategic partnership
10 between homeless assistance and
11 workforce development systems and
12 identify opportunities to create new
13 jobs targeted to the specific needs
14 of the population experiencing
15 homelessness.

16 So if you could tell us which
17 partners you're working with and just
18 give us -- you gave us a quick update
19 on the program. But who is leading
20 the implementation of this strategic
21 initiative? And is there a specific
22 workforce development strategic plan?
23 And if you all are partnering with
24 the Workforce Development Unit and
25 Commerce on this work?

1 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah. One of
2 the --

3 MS. HERSH: The -- go ahead,
4 Dave.

5 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah. One of
6 the key agencies that we partnered
7 with was First Step Staffing to
8 identify individuals who were
9 actually residing in our shelters to
10 get them into entry-level jobs and
11 other trade jobs. I really
12 appreciate some of the programs that
13 you guys champion with other
14 departments such as the Streets
15 Department with the tracking to get
16 them into progressive, fair First
17 Step Staffing is sort of set up like
18 that but is not directly tied to any
19 of the civil service unions.

20 What it does is really work
21 with individuals who are sometimes
22 chronically homeless or have been out
23 of the workforce for a significant
24 period of time to link the entry-
25 level jobs. And then if they

1 progress out, they're able to hire
2 them to a full-time position with
3 agencies that they work with.

4 It is a nonprofit
5 organization that was based out of
6 Atlanta that has been in I would say
7 a few major cities that have
8 partnered with large organizations
9 that have hired people to entry level
10 and hired them to permanent
11 employment.

12 One of the things I do want
13 to speak to, and I will really
14 appreciate your line of questions
15 here, the content of people that we
16 see in our shelter system. One of
17 the main demographics, and thanks to
18 Mitch Little and his office work
19 earlier, the majority of people that
20 are in our shelters are on SSI or
21 below, which is about \$806 a month.
22 Fair market rent is about \$1300, so
23 there's a lot of programs that we
24 implement to try to use the best of
25 our dollars, but there's still just

1 isn't enough there.

2 One of the challenges that
3 we -- challenges and opportunity with
4 the ESG grants were that we were able
5 to partner with a number of nonprofit
6 organizations to give people short-
7 term subsidies so hopefully that they
8 can springboard into permanent
9 housing but also working with First
10 Step Staffing for those people who do
11 not have a disability, that is able
12 to work that can maintain that.

13 The issue that Liz indicated
14 earlier is around that influx and
15 inflow of people that are coming into
16 our systems that are still below the
17 extreme poverty line and trying to
18 get into a system. Shelter beds, and
19 again I think what you're trying to
20 get at is what are we doing for our
21 return on investment on the best
22 dollars of the money, those beds turn
23 over anywhere between four to six
24 times for one individual.

25 Shelter is a system that has

1 to be in place. It's something that
2 we don't want, but we know that it
3 has to be in place because of the
4 high significant poverty level of
5 people that we're seeing that are
6 coming into our systems.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: For my understanding,
9 you said First Step Staffing?

10 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yes.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Do they have a location
13 or office here in the City of
14 Philadelphia?

15 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah, their
16 main office right now is in the
17 Kensington area. And I believe
18 they're out of the Impact Social
19 Service building --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Social services?

22 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Okay.

25 MS. HERSH: Before COVID they

1 had an office in the Municipal
2 Services Building, but it closed
3 during COVID and has not yet
4 reopened.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Got it. Okay. And they
7 are leading this effort for Help for
8 the Hurdles; is that correct?

9 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yes, they are.
10 And we are also working with Same Day
11 Pay like One Day At A Time, and also
12 with the CLIP program that have been
13 extremely successful in getting
14 individuals into mainstream
15 employment.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Okay. Now,
18 I'm going to move on to homelessness
19 prevention and diversion services.
20 You know that this issue is very
21 important to me, particularly for the
22 conversations that we've had
23 previously. I will not sugarcoat
24 that. I do think that the intake
25 process needs to change, particularly

1 with the amount of funding that we
2 have allocated to you all over the
3 last several years. And in light of
4 the testimony that you all have
5 provided that states that you have
6 seen a decrease of 22 percent.

7 I have been around in the
8 City long enough to remember Ridge
9 Avenue Shelter. I mean, I go back
10 that far. Okay. And my concern, my
11 overarching concern, and the reason
12 why I'm really delving into this in a
13 real meticulous way is because I have
14 an issue and take issue with the fact
15 that there is only one place that
16 parents with children, and
17 particularly young children, can go
18 to particularly on the weekends and
19 that they can't ascertain and/or
20 assess if there's even space for them
21 when they get there.

22 If they're coming from one
23 end of the City to the other, you
24 can't really ascertain whether or not
25 when you get there you'll have a

1 place to stay for the night,
2 particularly in emergency situations.
3 And you all know that I have
4 personally helped constituents. When
5 they call our office phone Saturday
6 night at 8 o'clock and I just
7 happened to be there and I picked up
8 the phone, and could not ascertain
9 how we could help this family, who
10 obviously if they were calling my
11 office on a Saturday night at
12 8 o'clock, they were in distress.
13 And they were probably calling a
14 bunch of other places trying to get
15 help.

16 So I really am seeking full
17 understanding of how all these
18 millions of dollars are being thrown
19 around, yet we have one place in the
20 City of Philadelphia on the weekends
21 for parents with children to go to.
22 So my goal in this is to receive
23 responses on the record with the
24 questions that I have. But
25 ultimately by the end of this budget

1 process, to ensure that this model is
2 changed, to ensure that we allocate
3 enough money for you all to do the
4 work necessary to open an additional
5 location for intake for families with
6 children.

7 It is no way that you all
8 have decreased homelessness by 22
9 percent and have had the increase
10 you've had in millions of dollars in
11 addition to the federal money and are
12 not able to open a second location
13 for parents with children, and
14 particularly mothers with children
15 who are in distress. So that you
16 know and I'm clear is my goal for
17 this budget cycle.

18 And that's why I have to get
19 this on the record. I am not going
20 to vote for this budget as it has
21 been presented. This budget will
22 need to be changed significantly in
23 order to address those concerns. I'm
24 looking at all of this budget detail,
25 and a lot of this is the same.

1 And I'm looking at all these
2 different groups that are being paid,
3 but I see nowhere where we have the
4 opportunity to actually really help
5 families who are in desperate need of
6 these services. So I just want to be
7 clear on that's what the end goal is
8 for me here. Okay.

9 So in your testimony and in
10 the detail, the study, which states
11 that every dollar we spend on
12 prevention avoids \$3 in shelter
13 costs, yet we are only spending \$4.91
14 million in General Fund
15 Appropriations on prevention,
16 diversion and intake. Your stated
17 goal is to help 1400 families with
18 this allocation. Does this
19 appropriation allow us to fully
20 assist this many families and keep
21 them housed?

22 MS. HERSH: Yes. But as you
23 note, that is about 25 percent of the
24 people who come to our front door
25 seeking prevention.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Okay. All right.

3 Considering the nearly 37,000 people
4 who have applied for housing vouchers
5 and we're only servicing about 1400
6 families with our current allocation,
7 what do you estimate the amount of
8 need is for these services to really
9 be effective? And what would the
10 cost be?

11 MR. HOLLOMAN: I think it's
12 hard to give you an exact answer to
13 that. One of the reasons why now is
14 because a lot of the federal
15 regulations as it relates to eviction
16 has been lifted and we're starting to
17 see more people starting to show up,
18 various eviction points even at our
19 front door. So I think it's too
20 early right now to give you an honest
21 answer on how much it would be to
22 allocate to that.

23 When you mentioned that
24 question about the \$4.9 million, we
25 would love to have more prevention

1 dollars that we can support more
2 people that may need a short-term
3 subsidy that will prevent them from
4 coming into shelter. So that answer
5 to that, let me be very clear, yes,
6 we need more money because we're
7 starting to see more families, let me
8 just speak about families in
9 particular, that are starting to show
10 up at our front door.

11 But as far as giving you an
12 exact number, I think right now
13 because of a lot of the federal
14 dollars, not just Philadelphia, but
15 many other cities are starting to dry
16 up, we're starting to see the direct
17 effect as the eviction moratorium has
18 been lifted where we're starting to
19 see more people come to our front
20 door.

21 I think ask us a little bit
22 later in the year. I think we can
23 give you a better barometer of how
24 many people we are seeing on a
25 monthly basis that come to our front

1 door and seeing what the average cost
2 of need per household that will
3 benefit from prevention dollars.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Got you. Okay. Well,
6 that is certainly helpful. I also
7 want to note for the record that if
8 you look at Section 45 in the
9 Operating Budget Detail Book 2, okay,
10 on the very first page, you can sort
11 of look at what I was referring to
12 regarding the positions, because in
13 the box at the bottom on the left-
14 hand side breaks down the FY23 filled
15 positions, 11/21 and then FY24
16 budgeted positions, and it breaks it
17 down general versus grant fund and
18 then the amount. So I just wanted to
19 say that so you have that
20 information.

21 MR. HOLLOMAN: Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Going back to that, can
24 you all just detail how much you're
25 spending just on intake? If you just

1 had to aggregate and separate out
2 intake, how much are you spending on
3 just intake?

4 MR. HOLLOMAN: Does that
5 include personnel also?

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Yes, if you can
8 aggregate it out, personnel, and then
9 on the different classes?

10 MR. HOLLOMAN: Can we get
11 that back to you in writing --

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Okay.

14 MR. HOLLOMAN: -- because I
15 think trying to separate that right
16 now in terms of personnel and what
17 dollars go from prevention, the
18 various units that are implied there,
19 I think that would be difficult to
20 give you that exact answer right now.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Okay. Well, then could
23 you just give me an overall answer on
24 how much is your spending intake,
25 just like everything together without

1 aggregating it out?

2 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah. Peter,
3 do you have an accurate roundabout
4 number?

5 MR. CURRAN: I'll need a
6 minute to gather that, but I should
7 have something within a moment.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be great.
10 So while Peter is working on that, we
11 can move on to my next question. If
12 you could just detail the intake
13 process for families with children
14 for the record? Your 2022 annual
15 report noted that almost 40 percent
16 of the space in emergency shelters,
17 safe havens and transitional housing
18 was dedicated to households with
19 children, but there is no specific
20 program objective focused on this
21 population in your prevention and
22 diversion goals section. What are
23 you doing specifically to prevent
24 homelessness for families with
25 children?

1 MS. HERSH: A family -- that
2 was an omission. I apologize.
3 Families with children are the top
4 priority for prevention, and the vast
5 majority of prevention dollars are
6 dedicated to families with children.
7 Similarly, 45 percent of the
8 emergency housing vouchers that we
9 got have gone to families.

10 And the first and now second
11 tranches of Neighborhood Preservation
12 Initiative funding is all being
13 dedicated to families, specifically
14 renovating long vacant PHA units,
15 mostly large units, to accommodate
16 large families. In the first round,
17 it was 9 houses and 39 beds. In the
18 next round, it will be 15 houses and
19 I think they're all five and six
20 bedrooms. So that has been our
21 priority for families as well.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then if you
24 could speak specifically to how you
25 all work on the process for placement

1 as far as emergency situations? If
2 you could detail for the record if a
3 family with children need shelter
4 service on a Saturday at 8 o'clock,
5 what happens?

6 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah. I
7 appreciate the question and I thank
8 you for your advocacy with that
9 family that you were able to call,
10 and I apologize for what you
11 experienced at that. So usually what
12 happens is when it's -- and I'm going
13 to break it down in two segments.

14 During the daytime we have
15 Apple Tree Family Center, which is
16 located at 1430, where if a family is
17 experiencing emergency situation,
18 they are to come in there, they're
19 meeting with a social worker.
20 There's three basic questions that
21 they're asking them.

22 One, is there a place that
23 you can go to, another loved one
24 where you can be prevented or
25 diverted from being in shelter

1 because we know that's not always the
2 long-term option. Secondly would be
3 is it safe. Are you in a situation
4 where your life is a danger, because
5 I think that triggers a different
6 response, whether that's fleeing
7 domestic violence or not.

8 And if their answer is no,
9 then they're meeting with an intake
10 social worker. That social worker is
11 then looking within our entire system
12 based on that assessment of need and
13 placing that person in (inaudible).
14 One of our biggest challenges that we
15 struggle with right now are large
16 families.

17 In some situations where we
18 have providers that are able to
19 accommodate maybe two children, we
20 have families that are coming in with
21 four or five and sometimes we have to
22 make do to maybe have facilities that
23 have bunk bed accommodations or a
24 pack-and-play for a young child to
25 stay in. Those are difficult

1 situations.

2 We'll be honest with you. We
3 don't always have the exact answer.
4 The issue is when it comes at night
5 and we know there's a lot of
6 situations that occur at night, we
7 have one of our intake sites which
8 families come to. We would love to
9 partner with you, I think it's a
10 different conversation, about finding
11 another afterhour intake site that
12 can take families. But they are able
13 to come down to that intake site,
14 it's the same process during the day.

15 What should happen is that
16 they should still ask them three
17 questions. The other next step of
18 what should happen is they should be
19 calling around to all of the family
20 sites to see if they could
21 accommodate those individuals. More
22 times than not, and I will say about
23 85 to 90 percent of the time, most of
24 our providers are fabulous. They
25 work their butt off to try and place

1 them --

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Yes, they do.

4 MR. HOLLOMAN: There are
5 situations and cases where they
6 aren't able to place individuals, but
7 unless that family is willing to go
8 into a situation where we don't have
9 room for six, they may have room for
10 four where two people may have to go
11 in. That's an uncomfortable
12 situation. It's a traumatic
13 situation. We don't support or
14 encourage that, but that's what we
15 have to do to make sure that they're
16 in a safe environment. But we would
17 love to partner with you around
18 figuring out additional options.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: And I just want to be
21 clear for the record that typically
22 that would never come to my
23 attention, right, because typically
24 my staff would deal with that issue.
25 But at that particular time, it did

1 come to my attention. I don't know
2 those individuals. I have no
3 connection to them. They reached out
4 to my office and I simply tried to
5 handle the constituent case myself.

6 And, yes, I did speak with
7 you all about it and I appreciate
8 everything you all have explained.
9 But I think it's unacceptable in a
10 city like Philadelphia where we know
11 we are experiencing poverty in a real
12 way, that we only have one place, and
13 they could not help that family
14 because they couldn't even tell them
15 whether or not they should come. How
16 does that work --

17 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah, we agree
18 with you. We're --

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: -- I'm very disappointed
21 in that process. And I am not
22 comfortable. I'm just trying to be
23 clear before I get to the last part
24 of my questions, and I'll submit the
25 rest of them for the record of which

1 I will need full responses because
2 this will help me to figure out what
3 suggestions and recommendations that
4 I'll put forth in this process, but
5 we can't be in that space and place
6 in a city like Philadelphia where we
7 only have one option that may not
8 even be available. I'm a mother
9 first. Okay.

10 And what I experienced,
11 because they didn't know who I was
12 when I called and I'm glad I did not
13 identify myself, tells me that other
14 people are dealing with this and not
15 having the best experience no matter
16 what anybody says. And I know
17 because I called personally. Okay.
18 And I didn't call from the 686
19 number. I called from my cell phone.
20 It's not acceptable no matter what
21 way you look at it. No matter what
22 way we chop this up it's not
23 acceptable.

24 And, yes, we do have to get a
25 second place for families because we

1 shouldn't have to be in a place where
2 we're allocating all -- I'm looking
3 at all of this money. I have your
4 budget detail pulled up on my
5 computer. I'm looking at the way
6 this money is moving around since --
7 I mean, I have a few more questions,
8 but none of this is making sense to
9 me.

10 Can you explain how much you
11 all spend on just the site that
12 services families, just the site that
13 is the intake for families? How much
14 do you spend just on that site?

15 MR. CURRAN: That would be --
16 I have a total for intake in general
17 which is about 2.3 million. It will
18 take me a little longer to drill down
19 to just specifically the family
20 intake.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Okay. So 2.3 million
23 total for intake. How much is your
24 department's entire budget?

25 MR. CURRAN: In Class 200 or

1 the entire budget overall for FY24
2 proposed the 78 million?

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: \$78 million for the
5 Office of Homeless Services and that
6 includes grant --

7 MR. CURRAN: That's all
8 strictly City money. If we include
9 grant funds, it's 127 million.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: Okay. So \$127 million
12 including grants and City. For
13 Office of Homeless Services, 2.3
14 million for intake?

15 MR. CURRAN: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: Right, okay. Great. So
18 if I go back to the Homelessness
19 Prevention and Diversion Services
20 Unit, the vast majority of the
21 funding in this unit is spent on
22 staff. Can --

23 MR. CURRAN: Correct.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: -- you detail -- I'm

1 sorry?

2 MR. CURRAN: No, I said
3 correct. My apologies.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Okay. If you could just
6 detail how City staff work with
7 Philadelphians to avoid homelessness,
8 and if you could generally explain
9 how this office operates in the goals
10 of each position. That's
11 homelessness prevention and diversion
12 services.

13 MS. HERSH: About how we work
14 with -- how we do homelessness
15 prevention and diversion. Yeah, so
16 there's two ways that people can
17 enter -- well, actually three ways.
18 One is they can come to our office,
19 which is the most common way. They
20 can also call and make an appointment
21 and work with a social worker or they
22 can go to one of the community-based
23 organizations.

24 Then they would meet with a
25 social worker who would do an

1 assessment, see if they are eligible
2 for homelessness prevention if we
3 have funds available, and then work
4 with them to get the documentation.
5 Homelessness prevention and diversion
6 takes a number of different forms.

7 It might be mediation with a
8 family member or a landlord to try
9 and resolve the problem that's
10 causing them to be displaced. It
11 might take the form of paying a
12 security deposit first and last
13 month's rent or it might take the
14 form of paying back rent.

15 In some small number of cases
16 depending on the funding source, it
17 would be multi-month rent. This is
18 dedicated almost exclusively to
19 parents of children, usually young
20 parents of children. The data that's
21 available, the only research that
22 really is available around the
23 effectiveness of homelessness
24 prevention shows that the closer the
25 people who are to the shelter

1 population, the more likely they are
2 to become homeless if they don't get
3 the assistance, because everybody
4 could use a little bit more money.

5 And a lot of people who come to us,
6 they could all use more money. And
7 so, we try to assess for that multi-
8 month assistance whether they're
9 really the most vulnerable, what we
10 would call imminently homeless.

11 Councilmember, I did want to
12 make clear one thing. And I'm sure
13 you're clear about it, but I wanted
14 to also make sure. We do have
15 between 13 and 15 family shelters and
16 we do have about 1200 shelter beds.
17 We just opened up another shelter in
18 January, because as Dave said we were
19 seeing an uptick in family
20 homelessness as you have noted. And
21 so, we did open up another 60 beds
22 which did fill up right away, which
23 is why we've been focusing on this
24 long-term housing.

25 The way the overnight intake

1 system should have worked is that
2 when a family comes to us, if there's
3 no bed that we have at that one site,
4 that they could be transported to
5 another site.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: And who would transport
8 them?

9 MS. HERSH: Either outreach
10 or the shelter providers.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Okay. And I appreciate
13 that. And you know that I know about
14 the shelter system and the shelters
15 here because I did constituent
16 services for Blondell. And I think
17 it would be helpful as they do come
18 online, that you just make sure you
19 send it over to us so we just have an
20 updated list and our internal Council
21 team has updated the housing
22 resources for us so we have that as
23 well. So just keep us updated as
24 each new potential site or system
25 comes online so that we have that

1 information.

2 My concern more so than
3 anything else, although I know the
4 beds are very important, right,
5 before we can get them into long term
6 is the intake part of the process,
7 because what people experience when
8 they are seeking help and in some of
9 their most desperate moments will
10 sort of determine how they're able to
11 interface with the system moving
12 forward. And so, that's why I'm sort
13 of focusing in on the intake part of
14 the process, which again I feel as
15 though if I had that experience,
16 there's no telling what's happening
17 with these families out there. So if
18 you could just talk about --

19 MR. HOLLOMAN: Thank you --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Pardon me?

22 MR. HOLLOMAN: No, I just
23 want to say one thing before we move
24 on from that. One again, I thank you
25 for doing that, for your advocacy

1 around that. I think one of the
2 things that we are immediately
3 working on is to make sure that we
4 have a written-down process that all
5 of the Council can have for the
6 constituent service. So when someone
7 is seeking shelter, at least they
8 have that information that, one, the
9 constituent service or any one of you
10 have that information that you can
11 share with them.

12 The other thing I think we
13 need to do is evaluate on our online
14 services and make sure that people
15 understand that in multiple language
16 that is very simple and clear that I
17 like to use this term, and it's no
18 offense to anyone, that my mother
19 would understand who doesn't work in
20 this field. So we need to make it
21 very informative to people where they
22 understand that.

23 So I think as part of our
24 response back to you guys, we want to
25 make sure that we have a corrective

1 action plan that lays out what a
2 person should receive or information
3 they should receive when they are
4 seeking beds after traditional hours
5 and during the regular hours.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be great.
8 And then particularly for
9 homelessness prevention and diversion
10 services, I'm particularly interested
11 in that unit. Who leads that unit?
12 Is there a Deputy Director for
13 Prevention like the other units?

14 MS. HERSH: Homelessness
15 Prevention and Diversion is under our
16 Housing Services. The Deputy is
17 Roberta Cancellier. The person who
18 is over Homelessness Prevention and
19 Diversion is Bruce Johnson. He was
20 recently promoted because he also in
21 addition to overseeing that shelter
22 access, he also oversees mobile
23 assessors who are people who go out
24 in the community and do assessments
25 of people who are homeless if they

1 are unwilling to come into shelter so
2 they still have access to our
3 services. So Bruce Johnson is the
4 person.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Got it. You have one
7 Social Services trainee in that
8 department, is that correct, or only
9 one budgeted?

10 MS. HERSH: Yeah. She's
11 really the keeper of the numbers.
12 Most of the -- we have centralized,
13 put intake for shelter and
14 homelessness prevention all together
15 at our access points. We have five
16 access points, Valley Youth House,
17 Veterans Multi-service Center, Apple
18 Tree and Roosevelt Darby during the
19 day, House of Passage Station House,
20 and now Michael Hinson Resource
21 Center and Red Shield overnight plus
22 Outreach.

23 And so, the individual -- so
24 it's mostly not the -- a lot of the
25 overnight is not OHS staff. It's

1 contracted out. So that one person
2 is really kind of the keeper of the
3 numbers more than anything else.
4 Most of our services are contracted
5 out. So that's a lot of what you see
6 as you observed in the Class 200
7 budget.

8 MR. HOLLOMAN: And --

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Right, I'm seeing all of
11 that. I'm seeing Valley House, RHG.
12 I'm seeing all the prov -- I have
13 your detail pulled up on my screen,
14 so I'm looking at all of these
15 different providers, and then also
16 seeking understanding on sort of what
17 exactly their role is at which point
18 in your process, because you know
19 that under your department and then
20 under the specific program you'll
21 have permanent housing, and it sort
22 of breaks it down I think a little
23 bit differently than maybe how you
24 all are actually currently structured
25 maybe because of some of the grant-

1 funded positions. That's why I asked
2 about the grant-funded positions
3 before.

4 Go ahead. I'm sorry. David,
5 you were trying to say something.

6 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah, I'm
7 sorry. Can I clarify one thing too?
8 I believe when you're saying
9 prevention and diversion, so all of
10 our social workers and social worker
11 trainees at intake are cross-trained
12 to do prevention and diversion at
13 those intake sites.

14 When they go to the RHD, the
15 Mike Hinson Center, those are a
16 different form of work where we are
17 contracted out in the Class 200. But
18 for the intakes, all of the social
19 workers, social worker trainees are
20 cross-trained. We actually made that
21 push a couple years back to make sure
22 that everyone who comes in, don't
23 matter who they see, are able to do
24 the work of prevention and diversion
25 staff. So they have that ability to

1 do the assessment from A to Z.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be fine.

4 I am going to finish up. Again, I

5 already asked regarding the intake

6 process for families. But

7 specifically under emergency and

8 temporary housing, are there any

9 specific program objectives relating

10 to families with children? And if

11 you could give us a breakdown of all

12 the shelters that are available for

13 families with children?

14 And then finally, what it

15 would take to open up a second

16 weekend evening intake facility for

17 families with children and

18 potentially families with a large

19 amount of children? That will be my

20 last question. You don't have to

21 answer it today. But if you could

22 give us that in writing, and then I

23 will submit the balance of my six

24 additional pages of questions for

25 responses so that I will have this

1 information as we go through this
2 budget process. Okay. So thank you
3 very, very much.

4 Thank you very much, Council
5 President Clarke. Thank you very
6 much.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

8 Thank you, Council Lady --

9 MS. HERSH: Councilmember
10 Gilmore Richardson, I just really
11 want to thank you so much for your
12 detailed analysis and your tough
13 questions and as Dave said, your
14 advocacy. One of the most
15 disheartening things during this
16 current Mayoral Election is that only
17 three candidates showed up to the
18 Mayoral Candidate Forum.

19 And so, the fact that you're
20 asking tough questions looking at all
21 of this information and wanting
22 answers, that just warms my heart.
23 It fills us with joy. We will spend
24 as much time as it takes to hear what
25 you have to say, take into account

1 your suggestions. I just really want
2 to again and echo what Dave said
3 about expressing gratitude. Thank
4 you very much.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Thank you. Thank you. All right.
7 We have public testimony this
8 afternoon so we're going to have to
9 take a break to give the stenographer
10 and others to prepare for that. So
11 with that, we will take a recess.
12 Thank you, Councilwoman.

13 Take a recess until I'll say
14 around 1:40, 1:45. And to those that
15 are listening, I know we're scheduled
16 at 1:30 for public testimony, but
17 we're going to be a little delayed.
18 We do need to give people a break to
19 prepare for that.

20 Thank you very much for your
21 testimony. And as we move through
22 this process, there may be the need
23 to have some additional callback.
24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: Thank you, CP.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 You're welcome.

4 (Afternoon recess.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Good afternoon to everyone. We will
7 now reconvene this morning's hearing
8 on the FY24 budget.

9 Mr. McDermott, can you call
10 the roll to take attendance. And
11 Members that are in attendance,
12 please indicate by saying you're
13 present.

14 THE CLERK: Councilmember
15 Bass.

16 (No response.)

17 THE CLERK: I see
18 Councilmember Bass is present.

19 Councilmember Brooks.

20 (No response.)

21 THE CLERK: Councilmember
22 Driscoll.

23 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Good
24 afternoon. Present.

25 THE CLERK: Councilmember

1 Gauthier.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
3 afternoon, Council President and
4 everyone listening. Present.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
6 Good afternoon.

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember
8 Gilmore Richardson.

9 (No response.)

10 THE CLERK: Councilmember
11 Harrity.

12 (No response.)

13 THE CLERK: Who I see is
14 present.

15 Councilmember Johnson.

16 (No response.)

17 THE CLERK: Councilmember
18 Jones.

19 (No response.)

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember
21 Lozada.

22 (No response.)

23 THE CLERK: Councilmember
24 O'Neill.

25 (No response.)

1 THE CLERK: Councilmember
2 Phillips.

3 (No response.)

4 THE CLERK: Councilmember
5 Squilla.

6 (No response.)

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember
8 Thomas.

9 (No response.)

10 THE CLERK: Who I see is
11 present.

12 And, Councilmember Vaughn.

13 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN:

14 Present. Good afternoon, everyone.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

16 Councilmember Brooks is present.

17 THE CLERK: Thank you,
18 Councilwoman.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

20 We're good. All right. Thank you.

21 Thank you all. We will now resume
22 the public hearing to begin taking
23 testimony from the public on the
24 City's proposed budget.

25 Before proceeding however, I

1 will lay a few ground rules on how we
2 will proceed with public testimony
3 this afternoon. We are here today to
4 hear from you about the City's
5 proposed operating and capital
6 budgets and proposed tax revenue
7 measures.

8 Due to the COVID-19
9 emergency, we have implemented
10 special procedures with respect to
11 public comment, which was advertised,
12 posted on Council's website and sent
13 out in a press release. Speakers
14 interested in giving testimony were
15 asked to call or email us by
16 3:00 p.m. yesterday so that we can
17 take the technical steps necessary to
18 provide an opportunity for public
19 comment in a virtual environment.

20 We also encourage everyone
21 who asked to testify to submit
22 written testimony to
23 budget.hearing@phila.gov to ensure
24 that their voice is part of the
25 permanent public record. Any

1 testimony submitted that way will be
2 added to the record of this
3 particular hearing.

4 To ensure that there is an
5 opportunity for all of you to be
6 heard, certain ground rules have been
7 established and they go as follows:
8 Your testimony should be about the
9 City's proposed operating and capital
10 budgets and proposed revenue
11 measures. Once your name is called,
12 you will then have up to three
13 minutes to speak. In order to be
14 fair to all those wishing to speak,
15 we intend to hold faithfully to that
16 three-minute limit.

17 Once you are asked to begin
18 your testimony, timing will be
19 started. When there is 30 seconds
20 remaining to your time, you will be
21 reminded of this. And once your
22 allotted time has passed, you will be
23 asked to conclude your remarks.

24 Mr. McDermott, are we ready?

25 THE CLERK: Yes. Our first

1 witness --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Can you state the first name on the
4 list.

5 THE CLERK: The first witness
6 to testify is Kenneth Wood.

7 MR. WOOD: Can you hear me?

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 Good afternoon.

10 MR. WOOD: Yes. Good
11 afternoon. My name is Kenneth Wood.
12 I'm a 60-plus year resident of the
13 City of Philadelphia, all those years
14 in the community of East Kensington.
15 I'm here today to once again plead
16 with my elected officials to restore
17 Engine 6 fire truck at Belgrade and
18 Huntingdon Street.

19 Engine 6 was established in
20 1871 as a horse-driven apparatus and
21 was in service for 138 years. It
22 moved to Belgrade and Huntingdon
23 Street in 1952 and was stationed
24 there for 57 years, so it was placed
25 out of service in 2009. This

1 community is in dire need of this
2 fire truck back.

3 As you can see in this year's
4 budget, the fire response times are
5 apprehensible. The average
6 nationwide time for a fire truck to
7 get to your residence is 5 minutes
8 and 20 seconds. But here in the City
9 of Philadelphia last year it was 6
10 minutes and 48, 47 seconds. Less
11 than one-third of the time did a fire
12 apparatus actually get on scene on
13 time in the City of Philadelphia.

14 My community since the
15 building boom started here of the
16 overdevelopment in 2015, we've almost
17 doubled, almost tripled the
18 population and the amount of units in
19 this community. And it's all
20 lightweight construction. I mean,
21 they've added thousands of units
22 here, all wooden lightweight
23 construction.

24 We rely on the fire truck to
25 come from another community with

1 water to come put the fires out, and
2 that's just too risky for me and my
3 community. We would definitely
4 desperately need this fire truck
5 back. Other fire trucks shouldn't
6 have to race here to put out fires
7 and become involved in accidents,
8 which recently happened.

9 Last year's City budget, as
10 I've had handed in the paperwork on,
11 in the Philadelphia Inquirer on
12 February 6th of this year shows where
13 the City had a \$492.4 million cushion
14 left over from last year. It's
15 almost a half a billion dollars, so I
16 don't know why we continuously
17 discuss about getting grants from the
18 federal government, basically begging
19 them to put this fire engine back in
20 service when this City has a half a
21 billion dollars left over from last
22 year's budget. So to continue to put
23 the community at risk is just
24 deplorable and uncalled for.

25 Like I said, the fire

1 incidents last year in the City of
2 Philadelphia was over 48,000
3 responses. And like I said, we rely
4 on other fire trucks to come from
5 other communities and it's just too
6 risky. And I'm pleading with you to
7 find the budget money to use to put
8 that truck back in service as soon as
9 possible for me and my community.

10 Thank you for your time and I
11 appreciate it. You have a good day.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

13 Thank you. Thank you so much for
14 your testimony. We really appreciate
15 it.

16 THE CLERK: Thank you. I'd
17 also like to acknowledge that
18 Councilman Thomas put that he's
19 present in the chat.

20 Our next witness is
21 Dr. Carletta Skipworth.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

23 Good afternoon.

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 Doctor?

2 MS. LINDY: Can you hear me?

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Yes. Please proceed with your
5 testimony. State your name for the
6 record also.

7 MS. LINDY: I'm Elaine Lindy.
8 I'm speaking on behalf of Fiesta
9 Schoolyards, a nonprofit initiative
10 of the Lindy Foundation. We started
11 four years ago with Fiesta
12 Schoolyards with a mission to bring
13 schoolyard improvements to 100 needy
14 schools in Philadelphia at the rate
15 of 10 schools per year.

16 So far we've completed and
17 donated 24 Fiesta Schoolyards to the
18 City, bringing basketball courts,
19 running tracks, murals, outdoor
20 classrooms, funnel ball, musical
21 stations, seating areas, painted
22 games and maps. We're now halfway
23 through our 25th, the Katherine
24 School in Southwest Philly, and that
25 will mark one-quarter of the way

1 through our goal.

2 We are now reaching out to
3 seek the City's support for a
4 \$500,000 line item in your Fiscal
5 Year '23-24 budget so we can continue
6 our work representing half the cost,
7 the other half provided by Lindy
8 Foundation to match for a total of 1
9 million per 10 schoolyards.

10 So from the perspective of
11 the City for the 500,000 for the 10
12 schoolyards, it's pretty much \$50,000
13 where one schoolyard alone can run 10
14 times that or more. We provide
15 project management and oversight as
16 well. In 2019, we graciously
17 received 100,000 from the City's
18 budget when we were just starting.

19 Currently eight
20 Councilmembers have signed support
21 letters for this current request,
22 which include Councilmembers from
23 Districts 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and
24 Councilmember At-large Sharon Vaughn.
25 Today we received from the District a

1 letter of support in which Daniel
2 Mullin, Site Improvement Coordinator
3 of the School District says, Fiesta
4 Schoolyards has graciously donated
5 site improvements which has
6 transformed many schoolyards from
7 existing barren-paved areas to
8 vibrant and exciting areas to play,
9 learn, relax and enjoy. Fiesta
10 Schoolyards handles all projects in a
11 professional manner from start to
12 finish. We look forward to
13 continuing our partnership and
14 relationship with Fiesta Schoolyards
15 as they help us improve outdoor
16 spaces for our children.

17 I want to importantly note
18 that the role of these schoolyards is
19 for the community as a whole. These
20 play amenities are available after
21 school, weekends and summer daytime
22 hours. Often times our schoolyards
23 are the only community meeting space
24 within walking distance for local
25 residents.

1 So in summary, we
2 respectfully request for the grant of
3 our \$500,000 request so Fiesta
4 Schoolyards can continue our work in
5 the 2023-24 Fiscal Year to bring 10
6 more schoolyards to Philadelphia and
7 improve the quality of the lives of
8 these school children. Thank you
9 very much for your time and
10 consideration.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
12 Thank you for your testimony. We
13 really appreciate it.

14 MS. LINDY: You're welcome.

15 THE CLERK: Our next witness
16 is Linda Caldwell Smith.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Good afternoon.

19 COUNCIL SUPPORT: Give me one
20 second. I believe Linda is not in.
21 Can we go to Brian.

22 THE CLERK: Sure. Our next
23 witness is Brian Valdez.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Good afternoon.

1 MR. VALDEZ: Good afternoon.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Please state your name for your
4 record and please proceed.

5 MR. VALDEZ: My name is Brian
6 Valdez. I'm the Community Engagement
7 Specialist with Inglis. And I'm
8 calling today to request that the
9 City Council allocate money within
10 the Streets Department budget to
11 support the installation of Americans
12 with Disabilities Act-compliant
13 crosswalk at Mario Lanza Boulevard
14 adjacent to the Penrose Shopping
15 Plaza in Southwest Philadelphia.

16 As many of you may know,
17 Inglis has been serving people with
18 disabilities, Philadelphians with
19 disabilities for nearly 150 years.
20 Our programs reach about 1,000 people
21 per day and we're also the largest
22 provider of accessible housing in the
23 Philadelphia region with 300 units.
24 And I wanted to specifically talk
25 about our Eastwick Gardens

1 properties, which are home to 42
2 residents who use wheelchairs.

3 They routinely need to cross
4 Mario Lanza Boulevard to use the
5 shopping center to get to the other
6 shops in the plaza. There's
7 currently no crosswalk or safety
8 features to help them navigate that
9 road and it's a high traffic road.
10 There's illegal dumping, which blocks
11 some of the curbs, and there's also a
12 lot of drag racing that goes on.

13 We provided evidence of all
14 the illegal dumping and the drag
15 racing with our testimony that we
16 emailed. Inglis has been working
17 with the Streets Department to come
18 up with an estimate of how much it
19 would cost to install the
20 ADA-compliant crosswalk, and it would
21 be around \$100,000. So we are urging
22 City Council to allocate money to
23 complete the project.

24 And I specifically wanted to
25 read one quote from our residents.

1 One of our residents, his name is
2 Antonio. He's been living in the
3 Eastwick Gardens for many years. And
4 he says, Overall a crosswalk in our
5 community plays a critical role in
6 ensuring safety and accessibility of
7 all pedestrians, particularly those
8 with disabilities and is a key
9 component to creating a more
10 inclusive and accessible community.
11 Folks who live in wheelchairs in our
12 community would benefit tremendously
13 and it would make the road safer for
14 us and we would not have to worry
15 about getting hit by a fast-moving
16 car. And thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

18 Thank you. Thank you for your
19 testimony. We appreciate it.

20 THE CLERK: Our next witness
21 is Constance Jones.

22 MS. JONES: Good afternoon,
23 everyone.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

25 Good afternoon.

1 MS. JONES: So my name is
2 Constance Jones and I am the Property
3 Manager of Inglis Gardens at Eastwick
4 1. And I just heard Brian Valdez's
5 testimony, and I can concur to the
6 information that just was provided.
7 And my testimony today and greatest
8 concern is for the City to really
9 take into consideration of providing
10 an accessible pedestrian signal
11 crosswalk area on 3002 Mario Lanza
12 Boulevard.

13 It's very important because
14 the community really does rely on the
15 crosswalk to cross over. There's so
16 many different commercial buildings,
17 such as the shopping center that they
18 will have access to. Many of the
19 residents do attend to cross that
20 walkway in the morning, afternoon,
21 evening, whether it's with an aide or
22 by themselves.

23 And unfortunately, everything
24 that Mr. Valdez has pointed out to
25 Council is true. There's illegal

1 dumping, for this month of April at
2 least three times this month, and the
3 drag racing is a nonstop situation
4 that occurs in the morning, sometimes
5 in the afternoon and really, really
6 serious in the evening. So by
7 providing that crosswalk would make
8 it more safer for the residents to
9 cross at any point in time. And I
10 really do hope that the Council will
11 take into consideration adding the
12 crosswalk into the budget.

13 I will continue to send
14 pictures. I will continue to record
15 the video of the drag racing and the
16 illegal dumping. And thank you for
17 taking time to listen to the
18 testimony of Inglis Gardens. Have a
19 great day.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

21 Thank you. Thank you for your
22 testimony. We really appreciate it.

23 THE CLERK: Our next witness
24 is Shelly Rosen.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 Good afternoon.

2 MS. ROSEN: Good afternoon.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 State your name for the record and
5 please proceed.

6 MS. ROSEN: My name is Shelly
7 Rosen. I'm a Librarian and speaking
8 as a member of D.C. 47 Local 2187.
9 I'm calling concerning the Parks &
10 Recreation budget. So as we all
11 know, there's been multiple shootings
12 very recently at rec centers across
13 the City. There's been three in
14 recent memory, including one that
15 resulted in the death of a worker.

16 And so, working in the
17 Library's Department, we have
18 staffing minimums where we don't open
19 if there's not enough staff and we
20 have guards at every library. But
21 rec centers don't have that. Rec
22 centers don't have guards and they
23 don't have staffing minimums. And
24 it's clear that that is very unsafe
25 for workers and for people attending

1 rec centers, and it makes them
2 unsafe. It makes it a place that
3 people don't go that doesn't feel
4 like a place where you can really
5 send your kids to have a safe time.

6 And to me rec centers are for
7 the body what libraries are for the
8 mind, and they work together. Doing
9 physical activity at a rec center
10 improves your mental health and
11 studying improves your body. It's
12 just all connected. And I feel like
13 when it comes to things like
14 shootings we've been using this
15 atmosphere of fear to try and solve
16 it. You know, police cameras, and
17 that's clearly not working. You know
18 what they say about trying the same
19 thing over and over again and
20 expecting different results and
21 that's clearly not working.

22 But what does work what we
23 have found is that when you create a
24 lively community atmosphere full of
25 people, that is a huge deterrent to

1 violence. And so, what I'm calling
2 for the same thing that Brett from
3 Local 2186 called for in the news the
4 other day is \$18 million to hire
5 guards and other essential workers
6 for rec centers across the City and
7 to fully staff and do a hiring sweep
8 for the Parks & Rec Department just
9 like we did for the libraries so that
10 every rec center can be fully staffed
11 and really a safe environment with
12 staffing minimums and guards and
13 people running programming.

14 I think that's going to
15 really rejuvenate the City and create
16 those important third spaces that
17 youth and people of all ages need,
18 places that are community-based and
19 don't expect you to pay anything. I
20 think that's really lacking. Let me
21 see what else do I have in my notes.
22 I think that's really what it's
23 getting to is it's so important that
24 we fully staff.

25 In libraries we've been

1 working overtime, hiring hundreds and
2 hundreds of workers and we're on
3 track now to six days a week service
4 in the fall hopefully. I want that
5 for rec centers. I want them to have
6 that hiring spree. I want them to be
7 able to really make our parks and our
8 rec centers an amazing community
9 space as well and serve our
10 community, and that I think will be a
11 huge boom to our safety and our well-
12 being overall. So thank you for your
13 time.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

15 Thank you. Thank you for your
16 testimony. We appreciate it.

17 THE CLERK: Our next witness
18 is Beatrice Zovich.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

20 Good afternoon.

21 MS. ZOVICH: Hi. Good
22 afternoon. Can you hear me?

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

24 Yes, we can. Just state your name
25 for the record and please proceed.

1 MS. ZOVICH: Thank you very
2 much. Good afternoon. My name is
3 Beatrice Zovich and I am a
4 Philadelphia resident. And I am
5 testifying today on the City's Parks
6 & Recreation operating budget because
7 I'm concerned about FDR Park and I'm
8 concerned not only about the
9 destruction of the park, which is one
10 of Philadelphia's most treasured
11 green spaces, but about the stark
12 absence of public engagement and
13 exclusion of the community in
14 decision-making or discussion about
15 the issue and complete disregard for
16 the democratic process.

17 So given a stated commitment
18 to serving City residents and making
19 Philadelphia park spaces to build
20 community, integrate nature into
21 urban life and even combat climate
22 change, the manner in which Parks &
23 Rec is attempting to push forward the
24 FDR Park plan with no modifications
25 to cite and outpouring of questions

1 and concerns in the community that
2 will be most affected is
3 disappointing at best.

4 The lack of transparency
5 about who the true benefactors of the
6 proposed sports fields will be and
7 the disingenuous endeavors to collect
8 community feedback are insulting to
9 South Philadelphia community members
10 who will be most negatively impacted
11 by the destruction of the Meadows
12 that will occur if they are paved
13 over for athletic fields.

14 And what is most
15 disheartening to me is that at this
16 time in which all evidence points to
17 the fact that the health of our
18 planet is in dire straits and that
19 the existence of life as we know it
20 is under serious threat unless we
21 take immediate and drastic action,
22 Parks & Rec is even considering
23 destroying South Philadelphia's only
24 urban woodland and meadowlands to
25 install 42 acres of synthetic turf.

1 For over a century, the
2 communities in South and Southwest
3 Philadelphia have suffered from the
4 toxic impacts of pollution and from
5 nearby refineries and highways, and
6 this project would only continue this
7 trend by clearing trees, thus
8 worsening air quality and causing
9 increased pollution and heat.

10 Additionally, the proposed
11 synthetic turf fields will pollute
12 the waterways at FDR Park and the
13 Delaware River with PFAS and
14 microplastics, the use of which the
15 EPA has taken unprecedented action to
16 advise against, and which would
17 poison our soil and water. This is
18 not to mention the immense
19 destruction of habitat that will
20 occur for the hundreds of year-round
21 and migrating species that call the
22 park home, including endangered
23 monarch butterflies.

24 PPR has continually tried to
25 brainwash this issue and has invested

1 no time in animal safety
2 translocation or removable during
3 destruction of the parks that already
4 occurred last fall. So the problems
5 that face the City of Philadelphia
6 can seem insurmountable and will
7 require radical and multi-faceted
8 solutions, and FDR Meadows are one of
9 our City's greatest assets that make
10 it such a vibrant and incredible
11 place. So I strongly urge
12 considering not taking them over with
13 poisonous substances and avoiding
14 creating a new problem for our City.
15 Thank you very much for hearing my
16 testimony.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Thank you for your testimony. We
19 appreciate it.

20 THE CLERK: Our next witness
21 is Peter Fugiel.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Good afternoon.

24 MR. FUGIEL: (Inaudible) and
25 fellow Philadelphian. My name is

1 Peter Fugiel and I am testifying on
2 the proposed operating budget,
3 specifically for the Philadelphia
4 Department of Labor. I'm asking the
5 Council to amend the proposed budget
6 to increase funding to the Office of
7 Worker Protections, which is
8 responsible for ensuring that workers
9 know their rights under the City's
10 labor laws and that employers who
11 violate these laws are held
12 accountable.

13 Without adequate funding for
14 outreach and enforcement, the office
15 will fail to deliver on promises made
16 by this Council, promises of a fair
17 workweek, paid sick leave or minimum
18 wages for workers in the City. I
19 appreciate the value of effective
20 labor standards because of my work as
21 a Postdoctoral Researcher at the
22 Rutgers School of Management and
23 Labor Relations.

24 My research focuses on
25 scheduling standards such as the

1 Philadelphia Fair Workweek law. This
2 law has the potential to improve the
3 health, well-being and economic
4 security of workers at-large, retail
5 and food service chains, as
6 researcher Kristen Harknett and
7 colleagues found following the
8 implementation of a similar law in
9 Seattle.

10 However, a recent study of
11 workers with young children in
12 Philadelphia conducted by Becky
13 Daniels and colleagues found no
14 improvement in schedules or well-
15 being for workers covered by law.
16 Why did the Seattle law benefit
17 workers in ways that Philadelphia law
18 did not? I believe the most likely
19 explanation is Seattle's much greater
20 investment in outreach, education and
21 enforcement through their Office of
22 Labor Standards.

23 The Seattle office has an
24 operating budget of over \$8 million,
25 including 2 million for outreach to

1 business and community organizations.
2 Their office has 36 full-time
3 positions, including 12 investigators
4 and 5 outreach staff. In
5 Philadelphia by contrast, the Mayor's
6 budget gives less than \$4 million for
7 the Department of Labor, which allows
8 for only 5 investigators and 2
9 outreach specialists.

10 Keep in mind that Seattle's
11 workforce is about two-thirds the
12 size of Philadelphia's. Yet they
13 have more than doubled the staff and
14 funding for labor enforcement. Given
15 how far Philadelphia lags behind
16 Seattle and other cities with well-
17 funded labor departments, it's not
18 surprising that their workweek and
19 other laws passed by this Council
20 fall short of their intent and
21 potential. But it's not too late for
22 Philly to change course and make good
23 on our commitments to workers who are
24 struggling to earn a living or just
25 care for themselves and their

1 families.

2 That's why I urge the Council
3 to adopt Councilmember Brooks'
4 proposal to increase the budget for
5 the Office of Worker Protections by
6 \$1.2 million to allow for additional
7 staff, retention of experienced staff
8 and greater outreach to employers,
9 workers and community groups. Thank
10 you for your consideration.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

12 Thank you. Thank you very much for
13 your testimony. We appreciate it.

14 THE CLERK: Our next witness
15 is Fabiola Davila.

16 MS. DAVILA: Good morning and
17 thank you very much for your time.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

19 Good afternoon. Please state your
20 name for the record and please
21 proceed.

22 MS. DAVILA: Fabiola Davila.
23 Good morning. Thank you very much
24 for your time. (Inaudible). I'm a
25 Senior Program Associate with the

1 Vera Institute of Justice. I'm here
2 today regarding Bill 230146 for the
3 operating budget for Fiscal Year '24,
4 specifically for the Office of
5 Immigrant Affairs under the Managing
6 Director's Budget. I've also
7 submitted written testimony in
8 addition to this telephonic
9 testimony.

10 I'm urging you to support a
11 \$500,000 investment in the
12 Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity
13 Project or PAIFUP. PAIFUP is a
14 successful publicly-funded program
15 that provides lawyers for immigrants
16 facing deportation. People facing
17 detention and deportation don't have
18 the right to an attorney if they
19 can't afford to hire one, and they
20 have to fight for their lives and the
21 right to return to their families on
22 their own. A \$100,000 budget
23 increase on the currently proposed
24 \$400,000 would ensure that PAIFUP has
25 the resources to stand with

1 Philadelphia and immigrants.

2 Since its inception in 2019,
3 PAIFUP has represented 75
4 Philadelphia residents facing
5 deportation. These residents have
6 deep ties to the community. They
7 have lived an average of 12 years in
8 the U.S and 35 percent are parents to
9 children under the age of 18. But
10 the need for representation is
11 greater than what PAIFUP can provide
12 at its current funding level.

13 PAIFUP providers have
14 reported alarming rates of
15 immigration enforcement in recent
16 months, including early morning
17 arrests and arrests at courthouses in
18 unmarked vans. An increase in the
19 budget will help PAIFUP represent
20 more community members at risk of
21 being deported as rates of detention
22 continue rising nationally. And
23 increasing investment in PAIFUP will
24 also ensure that it can provide
25 support for newly arrived immigrants.

1 This year PAIFUP providers
2 quickly mobilized in partnership with
3 the City to provide legal services
4 when Texas politicians bussed
5 hundreds of asylum seekers to
6 Philadelphia in an effort to score
7 cheap political points. With PAIFUP
8 fully funded, the City can be
9 prepared for these unexpected and
10 challenging situations.

11 Our immigrant neighbors are
12 still at risk of being torn from
13 their families by federal enforcement
14 officials. Philadelphia's increased
15 investment in PAIFUP can keep the
16 City at the forefront, continuing to
17 lead the way towards an immigration
18 system that is welcoming and fair.

19 I urge Philadelphia to
20 advance its commitments as a
21 certified welcoming city by
22 increasing its investment in PAIFUP
23 to \$500,000 in Fiscal Year 2024.
24 Thank you again so much for your
25 time.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Thank you for your testimony. We
3 really appreciate it.

4 THE CLERK: Our next witness
5 is Andy Toy.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 Good afternoon.

8 MR. TOY: Can you hear me
9 okay?

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11 Yes, we can. Please proceed.

12 MR. TOY: Okay. Sure.

13 Thanks. Good afternoon, Council
14 President Clarke and members of City
15 Council. My name is Andy Toy and I
16 am the Policy Director for the
17 Philadelphia Association of Community
18 Development Corporations or PACDC.
19 Thank you for the opportunity to
20 testify today regarding the proposed
21 FY2024 budget, City budget.

22 In our work with CDCs and
23 other stakeholders this past year as
24 we've been developing our Equitable
25 Development Policy Platform which you

1 have seen hopefully, we seek
2 opportunities for greater impact
3 within our communities as we recover
4 from the pandemic and we seek to
5 bolster our tools that create better
6 places and enhance equitable
7 development. We'd like to focus your
8 attention on just three areas we
9 think needed additional funding
10 support in the proposed budget:

11 First, as we've seen during
12 the pandemic and since, housing
13 counselors and the 25 or so agencies
14 across the City that employ them have
15 become even more essential. The work
16 is embedded in the Philly First Home
17 Program for new homeowners who might
18 otherwise not be able to afford a
19 home. They work with tenants and
20 landlords to minimize evictions.
21 They help homeowners to find
22 resources to stay in their homes such
23 as avoiding foreclosure and the Basic
24 Systems Repair program and addressing
25 tangled titles.

1 As more resources become
2 available such as the Whole Home
3 Repair funds and Trident Mortgage
4 settlement funding, we expect their
5 work will continue to grow. At the
6 same time we're seeing that the
7 stress of the job, HUD requirements
8 and competition for employment from
9 banks and even the City are making it
10 even ever harder to attract and
11 retain seasoned employees whose
12 salaries have not kept pace with
13 inflation, let alone add staff to
14 meet the growing demands.

15 This is why in conjunction
16 with our housing counseling partners
17 we are requesting a \$2.2 million
18 boost in funding in FY24 budget over
19 the current year. Second, we
20 continue to see neighboring
21 commercial corridors as the lifeblood
22 of many of our communities, and those
23 that have gone have good programs of
24 businesses working together and able
25 to attract or leverage funding for

1 improvements, cleaning, lighting,
2 safety and marketing are doing
3 better. This takes coordination and
4 trust-building to do well. Just as
5 mall managers are key to a well-
6 functioning mall, corridor managers
7 have even bigger responsibilities.

8 We are requesting an
9 additional \$2 million in support for
10 commercial corridor management
11 through the Commerce Department's
12 Targeted Corridor Management Program
13 or TCMP and the CDC Support Grant
14 Program to assist small businesses
15 and strengthen neighborhood
16 economies.

17 These additional resources
18 will allow additional neighborhood
19 corridors to see the benefits that
20 come with dedicated management
21 funding. Finally, Philadelphia like
22 other cities has seen a growing trend
23 of speculators, often out-of-state
24 private equity firms with lots of
25 cash quickly buying up available

1 properties and either doing nothing
2 with them or turning them from home
3 ownership to rentals. This has many
4 negative impacts and has exacerbated
5 the recent downward trend of Black
6 and Latino homeownership. I thank
7 you again.

8 We would like to promote a \$4
9 million property acquisition
10 stabilization plan. Sorry I went
11 over. Thanks again for the
12 opportunity and we look forward to
13 working together, and you can see my
14 testimony.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you. Thank you for your
17 testimony. We appreciate it.

18 MR. TOY: Thank you.

19 THE CLERK: Our next witness
20 is Kenneth Bigos.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 Good afternoon.

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Mr. Bigos?

1 MR. BIGOS: Hello.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Good afternoon. State your name for
4 the record. Please proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MR. BIGOS: Yes. Good
7 afternoon. Thank you, Council
8 President and members of City
9 Council, for allowing me to present
10 my testimony today. My name is
11 Kenneth Bigos. I'm the Executive
12 Director of the Affordable Housing
13 Center in Pennsylvania, which is a
14 housing counseling agency for the
15 Division of Housing and Community
16 Development Network. I also serve as
17 the Chair of the DHCD's Housing
18 Counseling Coalition consisting of
19 the various housing counseling
20 organizations.

21 I'm here to advocate that
22 City Council allocate an additional
23 \$2.2 million to increase the housing
24 counseling network for the Fiscal
25 Year 2023-2024 budget. Housing

1 counselors alleviate the anxieties as
2 they assist households faced with a
3 pending eviction or foreclosure.
4 Without housing counselors, tenants
5 and homeowners would be backed into a
6 corner having to comply with
7 unrealistic requests from the
8 landlord or mortgage servicer on how
9 to make repayments to their
10 obligations and would have no idea
11 how to access available rescue funds.

12 Even though the pandemic has
13 "ended," the pace of evictions have
14 not waned. According to the Eviction
15 Lab, evictions are approaching
16 pre-pandemic levels and more school
17 closures are expected to increase by
18 115 percent in 2023 compared to the
19 previous year. Heroically, housing
20 counselors work through the trauma
21 that these clients present during
22 these stressful moments and create
23 positive outcomes and peace of mind
24 for clients to stay in their home.

25 The City's housing counselors

1 are responsible for making the
2 Eviction Diversion, Mortgage
3 Diversion programs a national model.
4 This tool has provided legal
5 protection and has prevented
6 thousands of Philadelphians from
7 being displaced from their home and
8 their community. They also help
9 elevate the aspirations of households
10 that want to achieve the purchase of
11 their first home or give them the
12 peace of mind that their home is
13 protected from the threat of tangled
14 titles.

15 Despite the high interest
16 rates in home values, at AHCOPA we
17 have 60 eager households enrolled in
18 our pre-purchase counseling program
19 each week. The Philly First Home
20 grant offers encouragement and
21 opportunity for many first-time
22 homebuyers who never thought owning a
23 home would be possible, particularly
24 for households of color that were
25 denied mortgage access due to

1 discrimination of redlining. This
2 along with the guidance expertise of
3 housing counselors, we have seen
4 clients overcome barriers that are
5 now on a pathway to wealth
6 accumulation into building a legacy.

7 To combat the pernicious
8 problem of single titles, AHCOPA is
9 working with free legal services to
10 educate households about state
11 planning and to have their documents
12 drafted. DHCD housing counseling
13 agencies are still experiencing
14 capacity concerns and we are
15 requesting as mentioned that City
16 Council appropriate an additional
17 \$2.2 million to the housing
18 counseling agency network.

19 At AHCOPA, we are projecting
20 that our program will grow
21 exponentially and other agencies have
22 seen capacity concerns as well, and
23 we are a valuable resource within the
24 entity. And I want to thank you for
25 your attention and consideration.

1 Thank you.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Thank you for your testimony. We
4 appreciate it.

5 THE CLERK: Our next witness
6 is Sarah Maginnis.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

8 Good afternoon.

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11 Good afternoon.

12 MS. MCGINNIS: Good
13 afternoon. Thank you. Sorry about
14 that. Good afternoon, Council
15 President Clarke and all the members
16 of Philadelphia City Council. My
17 name is Sarah Maginnis, and I'm the
18 Executive Director of NAIOP Greater
19 Philadelphia representing developers,
20 owners and related professionals in
21 office, industrial and mixed-use real
22 estate.

23 I'm here today to provide
24 remarks regarding the proposed Fiscal
25 Year 2024 operating and capital

1 budgets and Five Year Plan. While
2 attention is understandably diverted
3 to this year's Mayoral and Council
4 Elections, we at NAIOP Greater
5 Philadelphia greatly appreciate the
6 attention this body is giving to the
7 new budget. It is vital not to look
8 at 2023 as simply spending our time
9 for the next Administration. No
10 budget should be status quo. No
11 moments should be wasted in solving
12 challenges that have been the City's
13 Achilles' heel for decades.

14 In short, we believe the
15 spending plan you are tasked with
16 approving is an opportunity for
17 substantial investments that will
18 lead to growth in Philadelphia.
19 Growth of course is a term that gets
20 thrown around all too frequently, but
21 for the members of NAIOP it means
22 some very specific things in the
23 context of the next budget.

24 First, we believe that the
25 Administration should invest in new

1 efficiencies in City government,
2 including more consistent planning
3 processes and more uniform zoning
4 regulations to level what is now an
5 uneven playing field for smaller
6 developers. Dollars invested by the
7 City to make the business of doing
8 business easier don't just benefit
9 the big players. They open the
10 City's arms to smaller firms,
11 entrepreneurs, newcomers, many of
12 whom struggle to navigate
13 Philadelphia's confusing and
14 cumbersome entitlement process.
15 Through the upcoming budget, you can
16 lay the groundwork for better tools
17 to equip those with minimal resources
18 to navigate the process more easily.

19 Second, NAIOP believes the
20 next budget should boost direct
21 (inaudible) for Black- and Latino-
22 owned businesses. This is how we can
23 truly prioritize diversity by
24 committing to an increased City
25 investment in flexible capital for

1 small businesses, particularly those
2 from disadvantaged communities.

3 The budget can also find new
4 dollars to support recent progress in
5 expanding the diversity of the City's
6 Building Trades, particularly at the
7 apprenticeship level. Taken as a
8 whole, these investments in the
9 coming year will create growth and
10 not just for growth sake, but for
11 growth to support inclusion. Thank
12 you for the opportunity to testify
13 and I'd be happy to answer any of
14 your questions.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you very much for your
17 testimony. We appreciate it.

18 THE CLERK: Our next witness
19 is Jada Ackley.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
21 Good afternoon.

22 MS. ACKLEY: Hello?

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 Good afternoon.

25 MS. ACKLEY: Hi. My name

1 is Jada Ackley and I'm a --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Please pro --

4 MS. ACKLEY: Can I continue?

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Yeah, go ahead.

7 MS. ACKLEY: My name is Jada
8 Ackley and I'm a West Philadelphia
9 native and environmental justice
10 advocate. And I'm here today to make
11 a testimony on the Parks & Rec's
12 operating budget, specifically the
13 project plan for FDR Park to be
14 radically transformed from the public
15 green space that's come to be known
16 as the South Philly Meadows into
17 artificial turf fields sort of
18 (inaudible) standard practice fields.

19 As a lifetime resident of the
20 Overbrook neighborhood, I and my
21 community are still grieving the
22 sudden and traumatic loss of the
23 public green space that resulted from
24 the Cobbs Creek Golf Course clear-
25 cutting. And as a community, we will

1 feel these ecological and social
2 impacts far into the future.

3 What I heard about the plans
4 for this section of FDR Park, I felt
5 called to help intervene. I amongst
6 many others are in opposition to this
7 development for numerous reasons,
8 mainly those that it poses for human
9 health. The (inaudible) project will
10 exacerbate, will directly impact the
11 quality of life for those in the
12 immediate area by replacing the
13 natural land cover, which sequesters
14 water with impermeable surface that
15 will contribute to flooding.

16 The community directly north
17 of the site ranks in the 98th
18 percentile for extreme heat
19 vulnerability and poor air quality
20 exposure according to the Center for
21 Disease Control's environmental
22 justice index, and the destruction of
23 this natural green space and the
24 associated construction activities
25 will worsen these issues by removing

1 the cooling and air quality
2 improvement services the Meadows
3 currently provide.

4 The materials planned for the
5 turf fields also have been widely
6 linked to cancer. And at a time
7 where the City has just released its
8 first long-term tree equity plan and
9 urban agriculture plan, this project
10 would deeply undermine all of those
11 efforts.

12 Across the City,
13 environmental justice communities
14 today are still grappling with the
15 legacies that stem from the long
16 history of reckless development
17 projects that prioritize private
18 interest over public health. The
19 impacts this project will have will
20 not only compound these issues, but
21 will have their own unique impacts
22 that will be far-reaching into the
23 future and that are not entirely
24 known.

25 This multi-million dollar

1 project is not the safest nor the
2 most effective use of the City's
3 resources as it relates to the Parks
4 & Rec's mission and the City's
5 responsibility to improve quality of
6 life for its citizens at large. I
7 ask you to please consider all of
8 these negative health impacts that it
9 will have on your constituents first,
10 as they assume you will do when they
11 elect you into office. Thank you.

12 THE CLERK: Thank you. Our
13 next witness is Maureen Braun.

14 MS. BRAUN: Hi. My name is
15 Maureen Braun. Thank you guys so
16 much for giving us the time to voice
17 our concerns. I am a pediatrician at
18 CHOP. I work at the CHOP clinic in
19 South Philly and I live in South
20 Philly. I have two daughters who are
21 5 and 7, and I'm adding my voice to
22 the many others here today as well as
23 many others who could not be here
24 today, namely the children of
25 Philadelphia, the kids I see at work

1 every day, the kids that need access
2 to nature and open space in the City
3 to ask you all to please save the
4 Meadows at FDR Park.

5 As you just heard, there is a
6 growing body of evidence supporting
7 the benefits of regular time in
8 nature particularly for children of
9 adolescents. It can help to mitigate
10 the effects of chronic stress, which
11 is a reality for so many of
12 Philadelphia's young people who are
13 living in poverty and among violence
14 in our city. The Meadows is a refuge
15 and it's for everyone. It's free,
16 it's accessible and the proposed \$100
17 million sports complex that would not
18 only destroy a public health resource
19 that the City who desperately needs,
20 but it would replace it with toxic
21 artificial turf which contains
22 carcinogens, as you guys heard,
23 including PFAS and other chemicals.
24 And that's been research that's been
25 known for years. When I was in

1 training, I had a mentor who
2 testified against artificial turf
3 field installation. So we know what
4 we'd be putting in there and how it
5 could affect our children.

6 So, yeah, the proposed
7 complex would be harmful to our kids'
8 physical health and it would take
9 away this amazing space that's
10 actually helpful to their physical,
11 mental and emotional well-being. And
12 I so appreciate all of the testimony
13 from the environmental justice
14 people. They know much more than I
15 do about the flooding and the
16 environmental repercussions.

17 But just to be a voice that I
18 think represents much of this
19 community, I have kids who play
20 sports. My nephews live in South
21 Philly and they play like traveling
22 sports, they're super competitive and
23 into it. Many of my patients are
24 athletes and participants in youth
25 sports. I was actually a former

1 collegiate athlete. I grew up
2 playing sports. I understand the
3 importance of youth sports and I
4 support them.

5 But let's restore the many
6 neighborhood fields that have fallen
7 into this disrepair. Keep some
8 fields local where kids can walk and
9 play games. Let's make that
10 distribution and quality of playing
11 fields Equitable throughout our
12 City's neighborhoods, restore what's
13 there so kids can feel like their
14 City sees them, and then preserve
15 this natural jewel that we have.

16 We all know it's been said
17 that the tree canopy throughout
18 Philadelphia but particularly in
19 South Philly is struggling, and
20 people don't want to live in a city
21 that doesn't have pockets of peace
22 and nature. If the Meadows go, I
23 really believe taxpayers will follow.
24 People don't want to live in a city
25 that is completely paved or that has

1 chemical waste and toxic fields
2 instead of some natural green space.

3 We want a city with trees.

4 We want space to walk and relax and
5 play. So please save this natural
6 space. Give our kids access to trees
7 and open space the chance to maybe
8 see a bird or a turtle and it's just
9 a subway ride or a walk away. Please
10 do not spend \$100 million to ruin our
11 natural tool with a toxic latent
12 field system. Restore the
13 neighborhood parks and leave the
14 Meadows as they are please, and thank
15 you so much for the time.

16 THE CLERK: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Thank you for your testimony. We
19 appreciate it.

20 THE CLERK: Our next witness
21 is Madeline Dahlin.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Good afternoon.

24 MS. DAHLIN: Hello. Are you
25 able to hear me?

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Please proceed with your testimony.

3 MS. DAHLIN: Hi. My name is
4 Madeline Dahlin and I live in West
5 Philadelphia. I'm also working for
6 the School District of Philadelphia
7 in the (inaudible) office. I'm
8 calling to talk about the budget for
9 the Parks & Rec center and the plan
10 for FDR Park and the Meadows.

11 From personal experience, the
12 park is a really important space for
13 me. I feel like there are very few
14 green spaces that are open with this
15 many trees and it can be a really
16 important space for myself and others
17 to be able to relax and feel safe and
18 comfortable.

19 But I just wanted to talk
20 specifically about a few issues that
21 I see with the new plan. First of
22 all, the synthetic fields that are
23 planned to have the turf put in, it's
24 been said by the EPA that there's no
25 safe levels of these PFAS, the

1 plastic, for us to have and to be in
2 the water, and it feels really unsafe
3 that this would be right here next to
4 the wetlands and also for students,
5 the athletes, the children, the
6 families that would be using these
7 fields. That's not safe. It's not
8 good for folks. It would make them
9 sick. So I really don't think that
10 this should be something that the
11 City should be using instead of
12 grass, beautiful grass right now
13 there in the Meadows, and I believe
14 that should be kept. And I just want
15 to know if the other cities are
16 abandoning the use for these turf
17 fields.

18 And secondly, I just wanted
19 to say that I believe that there's so
20 much nature in our City. We're lucky
21 that we have so many parks, and this
22 is one of the biggest parks. And
23 it's really upsetting to me that
24 there would be so much money of the
25 budget to destroy this nature and

1 this great space that we have, and
2 instead it could be used to improve
3 so many other parks across the City
4 that really feel like they're really
5 disinvested in, especially parks in
6 neighborhoods.

7 This one is a great gathering
8 space that many people go to, but it
9 is on the edge of the City. So I
10 really think that the money should be
11 spent in neighborhoods where there's
12 not a lot of green space and trees
13 and planting more trees and stuff
14 there.

15 And my last point that I just
16 wanted to say is that the turf fields
17 would be mostly made of plastic and
18 that's really not good for the
19 environment. It would need to be
20 replaced. There would be a lot of
21 waste that cannot be recycled and
22 destroying habitat in the process.

23 Right now there's lots of
24 beautiful birds and animals there.
25 And if this FDR Park plan is followed

1 through on, a lot of that would be
2 destroyed. And I just wanted to note
3 that in the process they took down
4 the dam this past weekend when I was
5 there. The whole park, the
6 playgrounds and stuff flooded and
7 that just really does not inspire
8 confidence when this is supposed to
9 be about creating safe (inaudible)
10 and everything.

11 So I hear the bell ringing.
12 And I just wanted to say I don't want
13 the (inaudible) air quality and
14 hotter temperatures in the area
15 because of taking down trees, and
16 these green spaces are really
17 important for our neighbors, for our
18 community, for our health, for our
19 safety. So I really hope that you
20 take that into consideration and save
21 the Meadows. Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

23 Thank you. Thank you for your
24 testimony. We appreciate it.

25 THE CLERK: Our next witness

1 is Harrison Mace.

2 MR. MACE: Hello. Can you
3 hear me all?

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
5 Yes, we can. Please proceed with
6 your testimony.

7 MR. MACE: Great. Thank you.
8 Good afternoon, City Councilmembers.
9 My name is Harrison Mace. I live in
10 South Philly and I love my city. I'm
11 part of a number of organizations,
12 but today I'm talking to you as a
13 civically engaged citizen. I
14 actually became engaged because of
15 this outdated and maladapted plan for
16 FDR Park.

17 It was designed four or five
18 years ago. How much do your children
19 change in one year? COVID changed
20 the whole world in a matter of weeks,
21 so why haven't we been able to update
22 the plan accordingly? In the literal
23 words of Parks & Recreation,
24 community engagement was a "critical
25 component of the master planning

1 process." COVID changed all of our
2 lives, our priorities and especially
3 our relationship to outdoor green
4 space.

5 It's time to revisit the plan
6 together with the community, because
7 we have a lot of questions as to
8 whether the tens and hundreds of
9 millions pledged really make sense
10 here, especially when local
11 neighborhoods, parks, fields, courts
12 and rec centers are underfunded and
13 understaffed.

14 The reason you've heard so
15 many different flavors of questions
16 and concerns about FDR today is
17 testament to the issue of mismanaged
18 leadership. Instead leadership is
19 continuously misdirected, lied to and
20 even gaslit us as a people. I tried
21 to list out all the ways, but I can't
22 fit them into my testimony today.

23 So here are some troubling
24 highlights to share: Despite more
25 questions emerging like the whole

1 park flooding due to contractor
2 negligence just last week, Kathryn
3 Ott Lovell continues only to bulldoze
4 and ignore us. And a question that's
5 not often asked is why. Why won't
6 they listen? Why are we in
7 "opposition at all"? Are they afraid
8 of a two-way conversation?

9 Maura McCarthy's promised
10 countless individuals she'd share
11 toxicity tests, plans, data with us.
12 None of that's ever been shared, and
13 there's no accountability because the
14 Conservancy is a private entity. Why
15 are they even involved? We wanted a
16 public meeting in January, but
17 democracy chalked up a big L. They
18 withdrew the public Q&A, selected a
19 house of worship where signs our
20 children made weren't allowed. They
21 banned photography at a public event.
22 They hired private bouncers. They
23 literally asked individuals who
24 they're with before deciding whether
25 to admit them. You know that these

1 were all decisions and orders
2 instituted at the top and carried out
3 to prevent real community
4 conversation. Why? We were
5 literally promised a follow-up
6 meeting where we could ask questions.
7 You know what we got? A one-way Zoom
8 that ended early. Is that civic
9 engagement?

10 To close, what are we
11 supposed to do? What is civic
12 engagement, because the message you
13 send by not taking a stand is that
14 it's all futile, and that's not a
15 city I want to live in. I implore
16 you to speak up for what's right in
17 this City and its people. Stop the
18 destruction, revisit the plan with
19 the community. We want to work for
20 the City, not against it. We need to
21 be better than we are right now and
22 you have the power to change our
23 current trajectory. Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Thank you for your testimony. We

1 appreciate it.

2 THE CLERK: Our next witness
3 is Margaret Robertson.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
5 Good afternoon.

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
8 Ms. Robertson?

9 THE CLERK: Okay. If
10 Margaret Robertson is unavailable,
11 our next witness is Kim Alsbrooks.

12 MS. ROBERTSON: Hello?
13 Hello? Hello?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Yes, hello. Please state your
16 name --

17 MS. ROBERTSON: Yes, I'm
18 here.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 State your name for the record and --

21 MS. ROBERTSON: My name is
22 Margaret --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Go
24 ahead.

25 MS. ROBERTSON: My name is

1 Margaret Robertson and I'd like to
2 speak about the budget for the First
3 Judicial District. Good afternoon
4 all. I'm a member of the
5 Philadelphia Participatory Defense
6 Hubs and in part of my work, I'm in
7 and out of criminal court and also
8 I've been involved in some dependency
9 cases.

10 I applaud the updating of the
11 Stout Center sound system because of
12 public, accused, even jurors have
13 difficulty hearing in our courtrooms.
14 I'm requesting that you additionally
15 allocate money for the courts to
16 install some type of programmable
17 digital signs to inform the public
18 about the courtroom speakers.

19 We often don't know the
20 identity of the judge or the names of
21 the defense counsel or the
22 prosecutors. In the future all of
23 these people may run for office, so
24 it's important that we know who they
25 are. We ask also that you increase

1 the funds that the court has to
2 provide for court-appointed counsel.

3 In our hub meetings, we
4 frequently hear that the community
5 members are not getting effective
6 legal representation. We believe
7 that attorneys who are court-
8 appointed need court-funded training,
9 funds for expert witnesses and
10 investigators for the cases and
11 better pay.

12 However, the court should
13 require them to provide the hours
14 they've worked on a case and the
15 basic representation standards. By
16 that, I meet with your clients, hear
17 the client's story, investigate the
18 case, go over the discovery with the
19 client, obtain the discovery first of
20 all, speak to and subpoena witnesses
21 and present evidence and trials.

22 We're also concerned about
23 the use of Findlay letters. They
24 need to be more closely monitored.
25 This is the imprisoned person's one

1 chance to have the state pay for a
2 review of appealable issues in the
3 case, but we've seen it is possible
4 for an attorney to file a form memo,
5 claiming there are no appealable
6 issues without fully examining the
7 case or conferring with the client.

8 Finally, in dependency
9 matters parents lose their parental
10 rights in cases that are often heard
11 in closed courtrooms outside the
12 public eye. In the system the
13 government rewards the state
14 financially for having children
15 adopted. And parents do not receive
16 money for free legal representation.

17 We ask the City Council to
18 use the budgeting process to examine
19 the immediate and long-term effects
20 on families and the Black and Brown
21 communities particularly, where the
22 financial costs of retain your
23 children is prohibitive and the rules
24 and laws in dependency cases are like
25 a (inaudible) than a mystery in an

1 enigma.

2 Compared to criminal law and
3 procedures, dependency law is like
4 comparing day to night because
5 dependency is so obscure. City
6 Council can fund and encourage a fair
7 procedure and a more just community.
8 Thank you for considering these
9 concerns.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11 Thank you for your testimony. We
12 appreciate it.

13 MS. ROBERTSON: Thank you.

14 THE CLERK: Our next witness
15 is Kim Alsbrooks.

16 MS. ALSBROOKS: Yes, I'm
17 here.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

19 Good afternoon. Please proceed with
20 your testimony.

21 MS. ALSBROOKS: Thank you.

22 My name is Kim Alsbrooks. I live in
23 East Falls. I've been involved in
24 the Park system as an advocate for
25 many years. I was a founding member

1 of the Friends group of Tacony Park,
2 and I wrote and drew a Fairmount Park
3 map that the current Conservancy paid
4 for and used in 2014.

5 About the FDR park project,
6 briefly and to the point this project
7 will fail on many levels, and
8 therefore it's a fiscal disaster and
9 should not be supported, and here's
10 why: I have a background in coastal
11 ecology. This project is extremely
12 insensitive to the environment. A
13 lot of ignorance is at play and
14 occurring in the planning and
15 implementation of the artificial turf
16 for any success to occur.

17 It's not going on hard ground
18 in the City. It's going on a hill of
19 mud in a wetland area. What Ott
20 Lovell wants is instant fields on a
21 flood-prone, low-lying area, so she's
22 removed a tree canopy and plans on
23 digging out a bunch of fresh mud to
24 build up the area. You can't put a
25 hot plastic rug on rich marsh mud in

1 the sun, run around on it and expect
2 it to last.

3 That turf will not only stink
4 to high heaven, it will rot so fast
5 you will be replacing them every four
6 to five years. Paying for 12 rotting
7 playing fields is a fiscal failure.
8 When little bits of plastic start to
9 show up on players sneakers, you will
10 be breaking the bank again. Any idea
11 what it costs to deconstruct, dispose
12 of and replace 12 fields every four
13 to five years? My research says it's
14 about 2 mil per field.

15 And with rising sea levels
16 building in that area is very short-
17 sighted. The whole thing could be
18 underwater in a couple of years. A
19 few more points: The polluted runoff
20 from the turf plastic, chemicals and
21 cancer-causing phthalates will be
22 directed into the tidal pool to be
23 spread up and down the Schuylkill and
24 Delaware River and beyond. That's an
25 ecological fail.

1 The fields are not 24/7.
2 They won't be playable in the hot
3 months, prime game season. They
4 famously heat up like asphalt. Also
5 24/7 is never recommended for these
6 turfs. Overuse creates dangerous
7 playing conditions as fields become
8 impossible to maintain. If you play
9 at night, the flora and fauna in that
10 area will be adversely affected due
11 to extremely high wattage confusing
12 their natural order of sunlight.

13 The electric bill, another
14 financial fail. There's a much
15 greater potential for injuries, heat
16 strokes and respiratory problems with
17 artificial turf showing a lack of
18 responsibility to players. Lawsuits
19 might occur because this is a known
20 problem with fake turf.

21 Finally, the fields are not
22 for the use of Philly. That's just
23 another fake carrot in this project.
24 It's not in the middle of the City.
25 It's next to I-95 and the Lincoln

1 Financial Field for a reason. Ott
2 Lovell is diverting money for the
3 much-needed improvements and upkeep
4 for our existing playgrounds and
5 fields in order to have world-class
6 playing fields, more to do with the
7 World Cup games in 2026.

8 There's a lot of
9 misinformation connected to this
10 project. 100 percent of the people
11 in Philly that I have spoken to --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 Ma'am --

14 MS. ALSBROOKS: -- have a
15 total what-the-heck moment when I
16 mention these fields, and they don't
17 know about this by the way.
18 Commitment to public forum is another
19 fail. The people will not support
20 the reality of this project in
21 relationship to --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Ma'am, you got to start wrapping it
24 up.

25 MS. ALSBROOKS: -- climate

1 change, ecological and --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 You got to start wrapping it up. All
4 right.

5 MS. ALSBROOKS: Yep. Okay.

6 Yes. And it's sad that our youth
7 won't receive the help they need in
8 their own neighborhoods. Please take
9 this project off the table. Protect
10 the wetlands. Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

12 Thank you. Thank you.

13 THE CLERK: Our next witness
14 is Lawrence Szmulowicz.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16 Good afternoon.

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

19 Good afternoon.

20 MR. SZMULOWICZ: Yes. Hi.

21 Sorry about that. Yeah, my name is
22 Lawrence Szmulowicz. I am a resident
23 of Cobbs Creek where I organize
24 regular trash pickups and bird walks.
25 I'm also a volunteer with the Cobbs

1 Creek Environmental Justice. So I'm
2 calling to voice opposition to the
3 Parks & Recreation budget and the
4 City's capital budget for 2024.

5 Specifically, I oppose the
6 allocation of \$1.5 million for the
7 so-called capital improvements of the
8 Cobbs Creek Golf Course. This is the
9 second handout of this nature
10 totaling \$3 million. It is
11 outrageous that the City is giving \$3
12 million tax dollars to the ultra
13 wealthy developers who are leasing
14 the golf course from the City
15 currently.

16 The City has already given
17 the developers a sweetheart deal by
18 leasing out the 350-acre \$98 million
19 golf course for just \$1 up to 70
20 years and waiving all property tax
21 and use and occupancy tax. In
22 exchange of this sweetheart deal, the
23 developers agreed to pay for all
24 improvements to the golf course. Why
25 then is the City now subsidizing this

1 project to the tune of \$3 million?

2 The City should hold the
3 developers responsible for its
4 promise to pay for improvements to
5 the golf course. The developers
6 don't need the \$3 million, but our
7 community does. The developers top
8 leadership is composed exclusively of
9 ultra wealthy White billionaires and
10 millionaires who live outside of the
11 City of Philadelphia. How can the
12 City justify giving our tax dollars
13 to ultra wealthy developers when our
14 schools and community programs remain
15 severely underfunded?

16 More generally, I oppose the
17 Parks & Recreation's budget to fund
18 projects that destroy our community's
19 natural resources. We see this at
20 the Cobbs Creek Golf Course where the
21 developer has clear cut 108 acres of
22 trees, including 500 healthy heritage
23 trees and we see it in FDR Park with
24 the destruction of forest and meadows
25 to build acres of artificial

1 AstroTurf fields.

2 The Philly Tree Plan talks
3 about the importance of expanding our
4 urban forest, but in reality the City
5 is spending our tax dollars to
6 destroy our trees and other natural
7 spaces. Stop spending our tax
8 dollars to destroy our natural
9 environment please. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11 Thank you for your testimony. We
12 appreciate it.

13 THE CLERK: Our next witness
14 is Brett Bessler.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16 Good afternoon.

17 MR. BESSLER: Hello. My name
18 is Brett Bessler. I'm Vice-president
19 and Business Agent of Local 2186.
20 Thank you for giving me this
21 opportunity. For the third year in a
22 row, our local leadership and members
23 have observed significant holes in
24 the Mayor's proposed budget. We're
25 seeing no real action being taken to

1 improve the staffing levels of our
2 municipal workforce and City services
3 our members provide.

4 For the third year in a row
5 we have advocated for real investment
6 in our members and the services they
7 provide that keep our residents safe
8 and ensure their ability to obtain
9 necessary resources they need in
10 spaces like our recreation centers.
11 In Parks & Rec, we have advocated for
12 the third year in a row to increase
13 programming staff to two full-time
14 recreation leaders for each site,
15 increase maintenance staff and we've
16 also advocated for the third year in
17 a row to bring the addition of
18 security guards, social workers and
19 recreational therapists. Yet we see
20 none of these valuable resources
21 reflected in the Mayor's proposed
22 budget.

23 We have advocated for more
24 social workers in our Prison system
25 to aid residents in improving their

1 mental health and assure the
2 smoothest transition back to society.
3 We've advocated for more staff in L&I
4 to keep our residents safe by
5 conducting preventative safety
6 inspections. We have advocated for
7 more health inspectors and nurses in
8 the Department of Public Health to
9 keep our residents as healthy as
10 possible.

11 And despite these efforts
12 what we see in this proposed budget
13 is the continuation of an alarming
14 trend of contracting out and
15 increasing the administrative
16 (inaudible). We see OHR struggling
17 to keep up, but we see little to no
18 increase in the professionals that
19 can hire and fill these positions to
20 ensure the funding this Council body
21 approves is spent accordingly.

22 As an aside, I would like to
23 point out that when you look at the
24 budget, it seems we have absolutely
25 no problem hiring and retaining the

1 overabundance of exempt employees
2 that do nothing but formulate plans
3 for short-staffed, overworked and
4 burnout field staff to conduct.

5 This begs the question of
6 where exactly do our priorities lie.
7 As it stands now, it seems like these
8 exempt employees who some candidates
9 this election season have admitted
10 they don't even really know what they
11 do are taking priority over boots-on-
12 the-ground field staff that do the
13 real work in providing services to
14 our residents.

15 I have heard stump speech
16 after stump speech from candidates
17 this election season where they
18 expressed their support for these
19 services. Yet it still remains to be
20 seen if we will put our money where
21 our mouth is. This Council body has
22 the power to respond to the crisis in
23 our City by investing heavily in our
24 communities to improve the safety and
25 well-being of our residents.

1 I urge you to reconsider this
2 proposed budget to bring
3 transformative change to this City by
4 supporting our members who run this
5 City. We would love nothing more
6 than to not have to repeat ourselves
7 for a fourth year in a row. Thank
8 you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
10 Thank you for your testimony. We
11 appreciate it.

12 THE CLERK: Our next witness
13 is Christopher Setz-Kelly.

14 MR. SETZ-KELLY: Good
15 afternoon, Council President Clarke
16 and members of Council.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Good afternoon.

19 MR. SETZ-KELLY: My name is
20 Chris Setz-Kelly and I'm a
21 Philadelphia resident residing in
22 South Philadelphia. I'm a Managing
23 Attorney at HIAS Pennsylvania, one of
24 the reasons of refugee, resettlement
25 and immigration legal services

1 agencies. I urge City Council to
2 increase funding for PAIFUP, which
3 stands for the Pennsylvania Immigrant
4 Family Unity Project to \$500,000 for
5 Fiscal Year 2024 in Bill 230146.

6 PAIFUP is a program that
7 provides legal representation to
8 members of Pennsylvania's immigrant
9 community that have been detained by
10 ICE, which stands for Immigration and
11 Custom Enforcement. The PAIFUP
12 program strives to provide universal
13 representation to non-citizens in
14 removal proceedings.

15 Additional funding for Fiscal
16 Year 2024 would allow PAIFUP to
17 increase its staffing and represent
18 more Philadelphia residents. PAIFUP
19 is emblematic of Mayor Kenney and
20 Philadelphia's commitment to
21 welcoming immigrants hailing from
22 diverse backgrounds. Just last
23 winter PAIFUP attorneys were on hand
24 to provide legal services to migrants
25 that had been bussed to Philadelphia

1 from Texas legal.

2 Representation for those
3 detained by ICE is critical
4 protecting immigrant families. Often
5 it is the primary breadwinner of a
6 family that is taken by ICE. When
7 this occurs, the family is left
8 without financial support until their
9 family member is released by ICE.

10 The Vera Institute reports that
11 immigrants with an attorney are 3.5
12 times more likely to be released on
13 bond. Thus, supporting universal
14 representation programs like PAIFUP
15 is one of the surest ways to
16 guarantee that families remain intact
17 and stay out of poverty.

18 The other benefits of legal
19 representation are numerous. Many of
20 our clients qualify for forms of
21 relief such as asylum. It is nearly
22 impossible for someone to succeed in
23 applying for asylum when they are
24 detained without the assistance of an
25 attorney. Because they are

1 incarcerated, clients are unable to
2 gather documentation, contact
3 witnesses and undergo important
4 psychological and forensic
5 evaluations. Having an attorney to
6 assist in preparing a client case is
7 crucial.

8 Some studies indicate that
9 immigrants with an attorney are 10
10 times more likely to obtain
11 immigration relief than those
12 without. Additionally, ICE often
13 institutes removal proceedings
14 against long-time permanent residents
15 or green card holders who are not, in
16 fact, affordable under governing law.

17 Typically only an experienced
18 immigration attorney can identify
19 these charging mistakes by ICE and
20 intervene to prevent an unjust
21 deportation. I represented detained
22 immigrants in both private practice
23 and now with HIAS, which is a
24 nonprofit agency. I can attest that
25 most immigrants detained by ICE

1 cannot afford private counsel to
2 represent them.

3 Programs like PAIFUP are
4 critical for ensuring due process.
5 Philadelphia should continue to stand
6 with the growing number of cities
7 that protect immigrant communities by
8 supporting universal representation
9 programs. For these reasons, I urge
10 Council to allocate \$500,000 to
11 PAIFUP in 2024. Thank you.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 Thank you for your testimony. We
14 appreciate it.

15 THE CLERK: The next person
16 to testify is Ursula Anderson.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Good afternoon.

19 MS. ANDERSON: Hi. Good
20 afternoon. I am a 44-year-old
21 resident of South Philadelphia and I
22 am calling to voice my concern about
23 the plan for installing 42 acres of
24 artificial turf fields at FDR Park.
25 The primary reason that I am

1 concerned with this plan is because
2 lots of environmental racism.

3 So the Parks Department has
4 decided to install artificial turf
5 fields in FDR. They build this as
6 opening up access to soccer, which is
7 a major sport for people of color or
8 Southeast Asian, Asian immigrants,
9 Latino, Afro-latino, Caribbean,
10 African immigrants to the City. Yet
11 they have decided to install
12 artificial turf fields.

13 Artificial grass is hot.
14 Nobody who plays soccer prefers to
15 play on artificial grass. Families
16 who come out to watch soccer prefer
17 natural grass. Yet the Parks
18 Department wants to use artificial
19 turf in an attempt to save money, but
20 it will be at the expense of our
21 people of color and immigrants who
22 live in the City at their health,
23 because it is well-documented that
24 artificial grass does contain toxic
25 chemical.

1 And so, the millions that are
2 planned to be allocated in the budget
3 to install these 42 acres of
4 artificial turf, I believe that money
5 should be directed towards
6 maintaining and improving the
7 existing resources, fields and courts
8 that already exist that are in
9 disrepair all over the entire City,
10 including South Philly.

11 The second reason that this
12 speaks to me, the Parks & Rec's plan
13 of development and FDR speaks of
14 environmental racism to me is that
15 the Parks Department has decided that
16 providing soccer fields is the way
17 that they should be investing in
18 people of color because those are the
19 primary people who play soccer, and
20 there's a heavy population of people
21 of color and immigrants in South
22 Philly.

23 So instead of investigating
24 and connecting people of color to the
25 natural world, they have decided that

1 they will instead invest in providing
2 artificial turf fields when they
3 could instead be increasing
4 programming to connect people of
5 color to the outdoors. In particular
6 instead of destroying the Meadows,
7 they should be focusing on increasing
8 programming to connect South Philly's
9 only urban woodland to the people who
10 actually live in South Philly who
11 need it the most, and that's people
12 of color.

13 So again, I feel like the
14 Parks Department should be increasing
15 their programming and their resources
16 to do community accessible urban
17 agriculture about (inaudible) and
18 things like that. Thank you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 Thank you for your testimony. We
21 appreciate it.

22 THE CLERK: Our next witness
23 is Catherine Miller Wilson.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Good afternoon.

1 MS. MILLER WILSON: Good
2 afternoon. My name is Catherine
3 Miller Wilson. I'm the Executive
4 Director of HIAS Pennsylvania. Thank
5 you very much for allowing me to
6 testify today. Can you hear me?

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
8 Yes, we can.

9 MS. MILLER WILSON: Okay.
10 Great. I'm testifying in support of
11 the Pennsylvania Immigrant Family
12 Unity Project, PAIFUP, under the
13 general budget, Bill 230146, adopting
14 the operating budget for Fiscal Year
15 2024. I'm the Executive Director as
16 I stated, and I urge Philadelphia
17 City Council to increase funding for
18 PAIFUP to \$500,000 for Fiscal Year
19 2024.

20 An investment in PAIFUP of
21 \$500,000 is urgently needed to
22 continue to promote a business-
23 friendly climate as well as safety,
24 freedom and family unity for
25 Philadelphians. This additional

1 investment of 100,000 over the
2 current year's commitment would not
3 only increase PIFUP's ability to
4 provide critically needed
5 representation to Philadelphia
6 immigrants, but also be a critical
7 part of any plan to grow
8 Philadelphia's economy and promote
9 safety amongst its residents and
10 combat poverty as well.

11 While these ramifications for
12 an additional 100,000 might seem
13 unrealistically widespread, the
14 Chamber of Commerce of Greater
15 Philadelphia has been as concerned
16 about the shortage of workers as they
17 are about other business-friendly
18 policies. There are staffing crises
19 in every single industry, including
20 at the City level.

21 A recent report noticed a
22 population decline in Philadelphia
23 even while increased numbers of
24 immigrants seek to make a home here,
25 but they cannot do so if they're

1 sitting in immigrant detention or
2 hiding in the shadows for fear of
3 being detained. Immigration legal
4 representation frees these future
5 workers, business owners, homeowners
6 and civic-minded neighbors to build a
7 life in Philadelphia. Fleeing from
8 persecution, extreme poverty in
9 places where individual rights are
10 not respected, immigrants that arrive
11 here want nothing more than to
12 participate fully in what our City
13 has to offer.

14 Supporting immigration legal
15 representation must be a part of any
16 sound plan for Philadelphia's future.
17 Philadelphia's investment thus far
18 has brought critical benefits to the
19 City since its inception in 2019.
20 PAIFUP has directly represented 75
21 Philadelphia residents facing
22 deportation. These residents have
23 deep ties to the community. They
24 have lived an average of 12 years in
25 the United States and 35 percent are

1 parents to children under the age of
2 18.

3 In total, PAIFUP has helped
4 20 Philadelphians secure release from
5 detention, reuniting families and
6 supporting strong communities. While
7 the success rate for detained cases
8 that go underrepresented nationwide
9 is a staggering 3 percent, the
10 success rate for detained PAIFUP
11 client cases is (inaudible). Thank
12 you very much. I'm submitting this
13 testimony in writing. Thank you for
14 letting me testify.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you for your testimony. We
17 appreciate it.

18 THE CLERK: Our next witness
19 is Lady Danni Morinich.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
21 Good afternoon.

22 MS. MORINICH: I think that
23 Parks & Rec should have a substantial
24 budget, but I don't think that
25 they're using their funding in a way

1 that stewards are diminishing urban
2 green spaces or that it supports all
3 of our communities. When the HOPS
4 law was passed, it was to ensure that
5 glyphosate-based herbicides weren't
6 used in public spaces that were used
7 by children and pets. Yet because it
8 isn't enforced, they're still being
9 used.

10 Now, they're planning to
11 cover 12 proposed fields at FDR Park
12 with artificial turf that contains
13 PFAS and can impact the children that
14 play on it and contaminate the water
15 and land beneath the surface. And
16 the claim that PPR is looking at safe
17 turfs, well, we only need to look at
18 Portsmouth, New Hampshire to see how
19 manufacturers lied about providing
20 PFAS-free turfs, only to find out
21 that it does contain the chemicals
22 which are now leaching into the soil
23 and water.

24 And while PPR is pushing the
25 FDR multi-field agenda saying it's

1 necessary to provide safe play areas
2 for Black and Brown youth, if that
3 were truly the case, then instead of
4 spending millions in one location
5 trying to monetize public land, it
6 would be a more responsible use of
7 funding by offering extensive
8 resources to Parks & Rec centers
9 across the City, not just to install
10 cameras, but to fund security and
11 programs that focus on conflict
12 resolution and training to provide
13 skills that kids can later parlay
14 into careers.

15 Physical activity and team
16 sports are wonderful for exercise and
17 teaching kids how to work together,
18 but nature is also a wonderful
19 teacher and for a larger number of
20 people. My mother used to say that
21 more is caught than taught. So what
22 example are we setting for our
23 children if we don't challenge PPR
24 when they clear-cut trees, introduce
25 toxins into the landscape and

1 dedicate a majority of funding to one
2 project in just one section of the
3 City while allowing others to
4 languish. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
6 Thank you for your testimony. We
7 appreciate it.

8 THE CLERK: Our next witness
9 is Lynn Landis.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
11 Good afternoon.

12 MS. LANDIS: Good afternoon.
13 My name is Lynn Landis. I'm founder
14 of wildfoodies.org and
15 helpalertphilly.org, and I'm here to
16 testify about FDR Park. First, I
17 want to register my outrage that the
18 City proposed a redevelopment plan
19 and allowed the clear-cutting of 70
20 acres of trees from FDR Park with no
21 official public meetings to allow for
22 official public comments neither
23 through the Parks & Rec Department
24 nor through Parks, Recreation and
25 Cultural Affairs Committee.

1 Until today, the City's
2 actions concerning FDR Park including
3 the millions of dollars of taxpayers'
4 money potentially involved have
5 violated the spirit and intent of the
6 Sunshine Act. That said, I'm against
7 adding any new playing fields to FDR
8 Park for the following reasons: One,
9 the City can't afford it and don't
10 have the staff to maintain our park
11 facilities as they are.

12 Two, that land is basically a
13 flood plain and should be protected
14 as a national asset, not a commercial
15 opportunity. And three, according to
16 scientific reports, all artificial
17 turf is toxic and will present a
18 serious health hazard to both
19 children and adults alike as well as
20 contaminate our drinking water and
21 harm wildlife. Increasingly, cities
22 are banning artificial turf. Philly
23 should be removing turf from our
24 parks, not installing it.

25 City Council needs to do what

1 they claim they want to do, protect
2 public health and the environment as
3 well as provide a great recreational
4 experience in our public parks
5 throughout the City. Walk away from
6 this ill-conceived and hideously
7 expensive project and save the
8 Meadows instead. Thank you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

10 Thank you for your testimony.

11 THE CLERK: Our next witness
12 is Laura Perkins.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
14 Good afternoon.

15 MS. PERKINS: Hi. Laura
16 Perkins, right?

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Yes. Please proceed with your
19 testimony.

20 MS. PERKINS: Hi. My name is
21 Laura Perkins. I'm the human rights
22 organizer at Casa San Jose, a
23 Southwest Pennsylvania Latino
24 community organization. I coordinate
25 legal services for low-income

1 undocumented immigrants who do not
2 have money to pay attorneys. I'm
3 commenting along with many written
4 testimonies asking Philadelphia to
5 include \$500,000 to the PAIFUP,
6 Pennsylvania Immigrant Family Unity
7 Project. Although I do not
8 personally live in Philadelphia, I
9 stand in solidarity with all
10 immigrants in Pennsylvania asking for
11 this funding for this project.

12 Regardless of our political
13 opinions on immigration policy, we
14 can all agree that the 14th Amendment
15 to the United States Constitution
16 grants due process to all people
17 currently on U.S. soil. I've
18 attended hundreds of immigration
19 court proceedings, and I'm here to
20 tell you that due process is being
21 violated every day by our immigration
22 courts, which treat pro se
23 defendants, those who cannot afford
24 attorneys, completely differently
25 from those who have attorneys. This

1 is discrimination based on
2 socioeconomic status and other
3 factors.

4 The Pennsylvania Immigrant
5 Family Unity Project, PAIFUP, is
6 fighting for the rights of low-income
7 immigrants in Pennsylvania, many of
8 whom live in Philadelphia. Some
9 examples of cases they've taken:

10 Case No. 1, a 14-year-old crossed the
11 border on his own to reunite his
12 brother in Pennsylvania. After
13 multiple months detained in Texas, he
14 was finally released, but he was
15 mistakenly assigned to Immigration
16 Court in Texas. He was told unless
17 he had an attorney he would have to
18 travel to Texas for his court. If he
19 didn't, he would be ordered deported.
20 PAIFUP took this case and two years
21 later he is still happy to be living
22 with his mother and attending public
23 school.

24 Case No. 2, a single mother
25 who was the victim of severe domestic

1 violence. She was originally
2 assigned to court in Maryland, which
3 is where she was initially abused,
4 but she escaped to Pennsylvania.
5 Although her abuser followed her and
6 her 6-year-old daughter to
7 Pennsylvania where he beat her face
8 to the point of where she was
9 unrecognizable and attempted to
10 kidnap her, my organization got her
11 to a safe location and PAIFUP is
12 helping her get legal status through
13 the U Visa.

14 And Case No. 3, a man that
15 has an open criminal case against him
16 although the accuser has since
17 recanted, PAIFUP took his case
18 because they do not discriminate
19 against people with criminal charges,
20 which many immigration legal service
21 providers do. This is an important
22 policy because immigrants pay double
23 for criminal accusations even though
24 they are two separate legal
25 processes.

1 PAIFUP supports hard-working
2 Pennsylvania residents who face
3 discrimination and are simply
4 fighting to survive. As a social
5 worker and community organizer, I
6 truly cannot think of a more
7 important service for our community.
8 This is needed more than housing,
9 food, child care or employment
10 services. I respectfully ask that
11 you support our growing Pennsylvania
12 immigrant community and include
13 \$500,000 in the budget for the
14 Pennsylvania Immigrant Family unity
15 Project in Bill 230146.
16 Respectfully, Laura Perkins. Thank
17 you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 Thank you.

20 THE CLERK: Our next witness
21 is Amanda Collette.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Good afternoon.

24 MS. COLLETTE: Good
25 afternoon.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 State your name for the record and
3 please proceed.

4 MS. COLLETTE: Sure. Good
5 afternoon. My name is Amanda
6 Collette and I live in Roxborough. I
7 serve as a Democratic City Committee
8 member in the 21st Ward and I'm here
9 today as part of Transit Forward
10 Philadelphia. I'm a Senior
11 Administrator at Temple University's
12 College of Engineering. I also
13 volunteer with the mentoring program
14 Students Run Philly Style, which
15 serves youth across the City, many of
16 whom use SEPTA to participate in the
17 nine-month program.

18 I moved to Philly 25 years
19 ago to attend college and lived
20 without a car in the City for over 20
21 years. I was able to get around the
22 area via SEPTA and truly valued the
23 impact of a broad well-funded public
24 transit system on the quality of
25 life. I continue to commute to work

1 most days via the regional rail
2 system. I am testifying in support
3 of the Mayor's proposal to establish
4 Philadelphia's First Low-income Fare
5 Program projected to reach 25,000
6 people.

7 This program puts
8 Philadelphia on par with peer cities
9 like LA, Seattle, Boston and New
10 York. Affordable transit access
11 allows poor residents to live without
12 a car, an investment that immediately
13 depreciates and costs thousands of
14 dollars per year to maintain.

15 22.8 percent of City
16 residents are at or below the poverty
17 level as of 2021, including 28
18 percent of Black residents and 36
19 percent of disabled residents. The
20 proposed program creates additional
21 access to jobs, housing and cultural
22 institutions for impoverished
23 residents and is also a push toward
24 racial and disability justice.

25 A person making the minimum

1 wage in Philadelphia earns about
2 \$15,080 annually and would not
3 qualify the program as currently
4 proposed. We strongly encourage you
5 to expand the program to cover those
6 above the poverty line too. I'm also
7 testifying to request an increase in
8 local contributions to SEPTA
9 operations in capital.

10 Philadelphia ranks 28th in
11 local contributions across all
12 transit systems in the country. This
13 is despite generating the seventh
14 most revenue from fares of any system
15 in the U.S. With the Bipartisan
16 Infrastructure Act, public
17 transportation is poised to receive
18 once-in-a-generation new funding. To
19 qualify for most of this money,
20 transit systems must be able to
21 provide local matching funds.

22 Currently, the lack of local
23 investment means Philadelphia will
24 not qualify for those vital grants
25 from the federal government. I

1 cannot fathom the possibility of
2 leaving funding on the table because
3 we did not do our part. I will
4 conclude with this: I run with a
5 young woman who's a student who
6 relies on the school transit pass to
7 get to and from school and any other
8 activities. Her family cannot afford
9 additional transit passes for her to
10 get around outside of the hours for
11 her school pass. She often misses
12 our weekend practices. So that means
13 she is not able to be among the 600
14 students joining the Broad Street Run
15 on Sunday. How many other Philly
16 youth are unable to fully participate
17 in out-of-school programs due to lack
18 of funds for something as simple as a
19 bus ride?

20 I urge you to consider
21 creating access for more low-income
22 Philadelphians and to invest more in
23 the system so that we can maximize
24 federal investment. Thank you very
25 much, Council and Council President,

1 for your time today. I look forward
2 to seeing your commitments to
3 equitable transit investments.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5 Thank you very much for your
6 testimony. We appreciate it.

7 THE CLERK: Our next witness
8 is Kate Maguire.

9 MS. MAGUIRE: Good afternoon
10 and thank you, Councilmembers. My
11 name is Kate Maguire. I've lived in
12 the 19145 zip code for over 10 years.
13 I'm a regular volunteer at FDR Park
14 and I participated in the Park Plan
15 Community Surveys in 2017 and 2018.

16 We have a once-in-a-lifetime
17 chance to give South Philly kids
18 access to a big forest. There will
19 be ample chances to invest in
20 maintaining neglected rec centers and
21 improving existing ball fields, which
22 we absolutely should do. But if we
23 take down the remaining forest, these
24 kids will be grandparents before we
25 have another opportunity like this.

1 Artificial turf fields are a
2 terrible and expensive idea and we
3 should not waste money on them. They
4 create heat islands, cause a high
5 injury rate for those who play on
6 them, release microplastics into our
7 waterways and they only last 8 to 10
8 years before we have to spend
9 millions more in taxpayer money
10 replacing them and disposing the old
11 ones.

12 We should preserve the mature
13 trees, animal habitat and numerous
14 native plants that remain on the
15 western side of the old golf course.
16 Over 50 years of studies show that
17 access to nature spaces leads to
18 significant positive outcomes for
19 kids across social, behavioral and
20 educational metrics. Philly kids
21 deserve that kind of goodness.

22 This is a once-in-a-lifetime
23 opportunity to give our kids that
24 access. Yeah, spend some money on
25 the existing ball fields please.

1 Spend money on our existing neglected
2 rec centers please, absolutely. But
3 let kids have some unstructured
4 playtime in nature. Spend our money
5 getting caring adults to take kids on
6 nature walks. Teach them plant and
7 animal identification. Give them a
8 life appreciation for their
9 environment. No to wasting money on
10 artificial turf. Yes to preserving
11 our forest. Yes to healthy
12 opportunities for kids.

13 It's a better budget choice.
14 It's better for the air quality.
15 It's better for our summer heat.
16 It's better for the ecosystem, and
17 it's better for Philadelphia. Thank
18 you very much for your time.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 Thank you very much for your
21 testimony. We appreciate it.

22 MS. MAGUIRE: Thank you.

23 THE CLERK: Our next witness
24 is Lance Haver.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 Good afternoon.

2 MR. HAVER: Good afternoon.

3 My name is Lance Haver. I live in
4 Hawthorne, a South Philadelphia
5 neighborhood. As I believe in full
6 disclosure, I want to put on the
7 record in the past I was the Director
8 of Consumer Affairs through the City
9 of Philadelphia and the Director of
10 Civic Engagement for City Council
11 under the current Council President,
12 President Clarke.

13 And again, congratulations
14 President Clarke. I hope you enjoy
15 your retirement.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
17 Thank you.

18 MR. HAVER: I currently work
19 as the consumer reporter for Hall
20 Monitor, and I'm advocating the City
21 budget contain enough funds to
22 continue the Reverse Commute Program
23 that brings Philadelphia residents to
24 on average \$21-an-hour jobs in
25 suburbia, places where SEPTA just

1 isn't practical.

2 I'd like to compare how open
3 City Council's budget process is to
4 that of the state of Pennsylvania.
5 Any resident of Philadelphia such as
6 myself can testify regarding the
7 budget, but only those invited by the
8 state legislators can testify
9 regarding the state's budget.

10 Council is to be commended for
11 supporting participatory democracy.
12 And why the Editorial Board of The
13 Inquirer does not commend Council for
14 doing so speaks more to the failure
15 of the Editorial Board to understand
16 the political process than anything
17 else.

18 My testimony today is to urge
19 Council to examine how the City's
20 procurement and bidding process hurts
21 Philadelphians and moves jobs out of
22 the City. Here are three examples
23 from the Water Department's current
24 attempt to raise rates by 21 percent:
25 One of the drivers of the rate

1 increase is the poverty level in the
2 City. A level that would be lowered
3 if there were more living-wage jobs
4 available in Philadelphia.

5 PWD instead of using its
6 procurement to create jobs in
7 Philadelphia gives contracts and
8 businesses to out-of-state banks and
9 firms. As I talk to you this
10 afternoon, the Water Department has
11 over \$130 million in a bank account
12 it calls the Rate Stabilization Fund.
13 Instead of using that money to make
14 the rate increase unnecessary, the
15 Water Department has placed that
16 money on deposit at U.S. Bank, a bank
17 that has no retail branches in the
18 City of Philadelphia, markets no
19 mortgages or small business loans to
20 Philadelphians.

21 The Water Department has
22 refused to join a bond co-operative
23 to keep its costs down. The Water
24 Department has hired a company based
25 in Georgia, not Philadelphia, to

1 schedule appointments for replacing
2 water meters in Philadelphia. And
3 the Water Department uses an out-of-
4 state company to read meters.

5 The excuse for all this, the
6 loss of resources, living wage jobs
7 and economic development, the Water
8 Department says the problem is the
9 City's procurement process. I urge
10 Council to ask the Procurement
11 Department how much of what the City
12 buys or contracts for comes from
13 Philadelphia.

14 The current process even with
15 the local help rewards businesses and
16 contracts from moving out of the City
17 and not paying its share of
18 Philadelphia taxes. Yes, we want
19 taxpayers to get the most of their
20 taxes, but we should do it in a way
21 that makes sense, not a Wall Street
22 type race to the bottom contract
23 system that removes wealth from
24 Philadelphia neighborhoods.

25 We should adopt a net bid

1 system to replace the current gross
2 bid system. The real cost of any
3 good or service is the net cost, the
4 cost less what the company and its
5 workers pay in all taxes, business
6 taxes, wage taxes, real estate taxes,
7 and the "multiplier tax." Even if --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

9 Sir --

10 MR. HAVER: -- the gross bid
11 out-of-state companies lower, the net
12 cost of the City is higher when we
13 factor in with the local economy
14 would contribute to our economy. I
15 know I'm out of time. I appreciate
16 the opportunity. As I said, if only
17 every other governmental institution
18 was as open as City Council, we would
19 be living in a better world. Thank
20 you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

22 Thank you. We obviously concur, sir.
23 Thank you. We appreciate --

24 MR. HAVER: Hopefully, under
25 the procurement part as well.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Thank you.

3 THE CLERK: Our next witness
4 is Erin Mack.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Good afternoon.

7 MS. MACK: Hi. Good
8 afternoon. My name is Erin Mack. I
9 live in South Philly, and today I'll
10 be speaking to you about the Parks
11 budget regarding the FDR Park plan
12 and the \$100 million AstroTurf sports
13 complex. I'll probably be repeating
14 some of the points made in previous
15 testimonies, but allow me to
16 reiterate for support and emphasis.

17 When I first moved to Philly,
18 my biggest complaint I would tell my
19 friends is that there are no trees or
20 it felt like there were no trees.
21 And so, going to the Meadows for the
22 first time felt like magic. It is
23 one of my favorite places in
24 Philadelphia because of the animals
25 and the plant life. And it's unlike

1 anything else in South Philly, and
2 that's because it literally is unlike
3 anything else in South Philly.

4 If you look at Philadelphia
5 on the map, you'll notice that FDR is
6 the largest green space we have in
7 South and it is the only urban
8 woodlands in South Philly. It is the
9 only one. I want to just emphasize
10 that. And to bulldoze the natural
11 landscape and install AstroTurf over
12 it would be a terrible mistake.

13 We don't know who Parks would
14 rent the sports fields out to because
15 that question hasn't been answered,
16 and FDR Meadows is already an amazing
17 resource and center for the community
18 to gather. If we want to put the
19 Parks budget to the best use, it
20 could be focused on maintaining
21 current natural grass courts and
22 fields all over the City, and they
23 don't have to be replaced every
24 decade and thrown out, trashed
25 because synthetic turf is not

1 recyclable.

2 Not to mention that turf
3 leaches chemicals into the soil and
4 water around it. For the Meadows,
5 that would mean polluting the
6 Delaware River. And I think we all
7 remember the recent chemical scare.
8 That really sucked. And this is the
9 water that we drink. This is the
10 water that our children drink.

11 It's just -- I mean, it's so
12 important to preserve that and to
13 preserve the Meadows, which is a
14 unique space that deserves to be
15 preserved, and the animals and plants
16 in the natural world around us should
17 be allowed to thrive. This is a
18 unique opportunity that we have to
19 preserve this amazing place in South
20 Philly. We can't build a new
21 meadows. It is the only one. It's
22 the only one. Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 Thank you for your testimony. We
25 appreciate it.

1 THE CLERK: Our next witness
2 is Eddie Wang.

3 MR. WANG: Hi. My name is
4 Eddie Wang, and I'm the resident of
5 Council District 2, and I ride the
6 Bus 12 to go to the Center City and
7 Bus No. 49 to the University City
8 area. And I'm here today to testify
9 to the need for the City of
10 Philadelphia to provide dedicated
11 funding for bus shelters, especially
12 in the Grays Ferry area where I live
13 along the Grays Ferry Avenue south of
14 Washington Street.

15 And according to the study
16 done before by UPenn, the majority of
17 the Grays Ferry residents work
18 outside of the neighborhood. And the
19 car ownership in our neighborhood is
20 lower than the entire City. And my
21 neighbors rely on public
22 transportation to go to work, go to
23 school or to shop. And many of my
24 neighbors are elderly residents.
25 They do not drive. And we have no

1 trains around where we are and we
2 only had buses.

3 And the bus route, the
4 (inaudible), and many of the bus
5 routes are located along the Grays
6 Ferry Avenue. So the Avenue is very
7 wide and we have no bus shelters and
8 no street trees. And when it rains,
9 my elderly neighbors must wait for
10 the buses in the rain.

11 And when the sun shines
12 bright in the summer, we must wait
13 for the buses under the brutal sun.
14 And we see that there are bus
15 shelters almost every couple blocks
16 on the Market Street or Lombard
17 Street. However, we have no bus
18 shelters at all in our neighborhood,
19 and we believe this is a great
20 environmental injustice. As the
21 neighborhoods continue to develop and
22 we have more and more residents they
23 say to join us, and many of us
24 believe in the benefit of taking
25 public transportation. We don't want

1 to have to drive everywhere and then
2 technology now is readily available.

3 We can have smart bus
4 shelters that can tell people when
5 the buses are arriving and we can
6 have green bus shelters with flowers
7 or trees or blooms that can
8 throughout the season or purify the
9 air. And we believe having bus
10 shelters will also help with our
11 cityscape and encourage people to
12 take the public transportation. And
13 great designs don't have to be
14 expensive, and there are many local
15 community-driven design to build
16 organizations can help with the
17 design.

18 And the bus shelter design
19 can also reflect the neighborhood,
20 can be a very unique element for the
21 Philadelphia city. So we urge the
22 City to think creatively, equitably
23 and locally so all the Philadelphians
24 can enjoy the same benefits. And I
25 also want to urge the Council to

1 consider the proposal for free
2 transit fares for the low-income
3 households because the daily commute
4 expense is really a burden for those
5 people who don't want to rely on
6 public assistance and they want to
7 work to support the family. So thank
8 you for listening to the testimony
9 and I hope that what we say will be
10 great for our community. Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

12 Thank you for your testimony. We
13 appreciate it.

14 THE CLERK: Our next witness
15 is Ron Blount.

16 MR. BLOUNT: Yes. Good
17 afternoon, Council President Clarke
18 and all Councilmembers. Thank y'all
19 for having us today giving us a voice
20 in this process. I work for the
21 Philadelphia Unemployment Project
22 that operates the Commuter Options
23 Program. It's a reverse commute
24 program for folks that live in the
25 City that can't get to suburban jobs.

1 And so, for \$6 a day, \$3 each
2 way we provide the vans. We provide
3 the gas, the tolls, the maintenance
4 and we partner with Enterprise so
5 this program can work. The City has
6 been helping us with this program
7 over the last two budgets, but we're
8 not sure if it's still being funded.
9 The majority of the money comes from
10 PennDOT. We get like 367,000 a year
11 from PennDOT to run the program. But
12 the condition is that we get a 15
13 percent match from the City which is
14 55,000 and some change. Last year
15 the City increased it to 75,000.

16 Anyway, so we was hoping that
17 this funding can continue and we can
18 continue this program. Most of the
19 people that are part of this program,
20 they're averaging around \$21 an hour.
21 95 percent of them are people of
22 color, and even a bigger number is
23 first generation immigrants. So
24 we're just asking that it continues
25 to be in the budget so that we can

1 continue to run this program.

2 In fact, if the City can
3 expand the match, the 15 percent
4 match to 300,000, we can almost
5 triple the number of folks that we
6 can get to work. So anyway, without
7 the 15 percent match from the City,
8 there's nowhere that PennDOT is going
9 to fund the program, and 75 to 80
10 people are going to lose their jobs.
11 So we're just here asking that you
12 guys advocate with us, with the
13 Mayor's Office to get this to
14 continue to happen. Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you. Thank you for your
17 testimony. We appreciate it.

18 THE CLERK: Our last witness
19 is Abraham Reyes Pardo.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
21 Good afternoon.

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 Good afternoon.

25 MR. REYES PARDO: Hi. Good

1 afternoon. Can you guys hear me?

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Yeah. Just state your name for the
4 record. Please proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MR. REYES PARDO: Hi. Good
7 afternoon. My name is Abraham Reyes
8 Pardo. I'm the Director of Housing
9 at the Urban League of Philadelphia.
10 I'm here today to testify in favor of
11 affordable housing, more specifically
12 the support needed by the housing
13 counseling community.

14 Housing counselors are the
15 backbone of the historically
16 celebrated Foreclosure Diversion
17 program, the nationally recognized
18 Eviction Diversion program and key
19 elements for the implementation of
20 programs created through the
21 Neighborhood Preservation Initiative,
22 such as the Philly First Home Grant.
23 The current conditions of the housing
24 market continue to impact our
25 capacity to respond and accommodate

1 the needs of all of our clients.

2 As of today, cases going
3 through foreclosure diversion are
4 being scheduled out to the month of
5 August and September, primarily due
6 to capacity issues which are not
7 unique to the housing counseling
8 component of the program, but
9 certainly exacerbate the timeline. I
10 must add that the federally funded
11 Homeowners Assistance Fund is
12 currently closed to process the
13 backlog of applications, some of
14 which were submitted more than a year
15 ago, a situation that jeopardizes
16 further the options of many
17 struggling homeowners and has created
18 additional work for housing
19 counselors.

20 The Eviction Diversion
21 program provides a constant stream of
22 clients who need expeditious support.
23 As the timelines are fast-paced,
24 implementation presents the challenge
25 of coordinating the many moving

1 pieces, including mediators and
2 tenants. To this date, housing
3 counseling agencies have collectively
4 advocated for 8,486 households. In
5 the case of first-time homebuyer
6 programs, my team of eight
7 HUD-approved housing counselors could
8 be working solely on the Philly First
9 Home Grant seven days a week, 24
10 hours per day. Even in the era of
11 higher interest rates, many families
12 are still seeking to achieve
13 sustainable home ownership. They
14 focus on payment affordability and
15 the safety that comes with being a
16 homeowner.

17 Our partnership with the City
18 of Philadelphia is solid. We assist
19 you in making sure all Philadelphians
20 have equal access to the housing of
21 their choice, which is also the main
22 purpose of the CDBG funds as
23 administered by the Office of Fair
24 Housing and Equal Opportunity. Thank
25 you so much.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Thank you for your testimony. We
3 appreciate that.

4 Mr. McDermott, we have no
5 additional witnesses?

6 THE CLERK: That's correct,
7 there are no additional witnesses.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

9 And do we have any comments from
10 members of the Committee?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

13 Thank you. There being none, this
14 Committee will stand in recess until
15 Tuesday, May 2nd at 10:00 a.m., at
16 which time we will reconvene in a
17 remote manner using Microsoft Teams.
18 Thank you all very much. Look
19 forward to seeing you guys tomorrow.

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Thank
21 you, Council President.

22 (Committee of the Whole
23 concluded at 3:30 p.m.)

24

25

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

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

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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