

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, April 1, 2026
10:18 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.

BILLS: 260199, 260200, 260201, 260202,
260203, 260204, 260205, 260206,
260208, 260209

RESOLUTION: 260227

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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JOHNSON: Good morning, everyone.

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(Good morning.)

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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JOHNSON: Good morning, everyone.

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(Good morning.)

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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JOHNSON: This is the public

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hearing and public meeting of the

11

Committee of the Whole regarding

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Bill Nos. 260199, 260200, 260201,

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260202, 260203, 260204, 260205,

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260206, 260208, 260209 and

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Resolution No. 260227.

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Ms. Loughead, will you

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please call the roll to take

18

attendance.

19

THE CLERK:

20

Councilmember Squilla.

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COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

22

Present.

23

THE CLERK:

24

Councilmember Gauthier.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

2 Present.

3 THE CLERK:

4 Councilmember Jones.

5 (No response.)

6 THE CLERK:

7 Councilmember Young.

8 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:

9 Present.

10 THE CLERK:

11 Councilmember Driscoll.

12 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

13 Present.

14 THE CLERK:

15 Councilmember Lozada.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

17 Present.

18 THE CLERK:

19 Councilmember Bass.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

21 Present.

22 THE CLERK:

23 Councilmember Phillips.

24 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

1 Present.

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember O'Neill.

4 (No response.)

5 THE CLERK:

6 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Present.

9 THE CLERK:

10 Councilmember Thomas.

11 (No response.)

12 THE CLERK:

13 Councilmember Harrity.

14 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

15 Here.

16 THE CLERK:

17 Councilmember Ahmad.

18 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

19 Present.

20 THE CLERK:

21 Councilmember Landau.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

23 Present.

24 THE CLERK:

1 Councilmember Brooks.

2 (No response.)

3 THE CLERK:

4 Councilmember O'Rourke.

5 (No response.)

6 THE CLERK: Council

7 President Johnson.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Present. A quorum of
10 this committee is present. This
11 hearing is now officially called to
12 order.

13 Ms. Loughhead, will you
14 please read the titles of the bills
15 and resolution.

16 THE CLERK: Bill No.
17 260199, an Ordinance adopting the
18 Operating Budget for Fiscal Year
19 2027.

20 Bill No. 260200, an
21 Ordinance to adopt a Fiscal Year
22 2027 Capital Budget.

23 Bill No. 260201, an
24 Ordinance to adopt a Capital

1 Program for the six Fiscal Years,
2 2027-2032 inclusive.

3 Bill No. 260202, an
4 Ordinance amending Chapter 19-2400
5 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
6 "Hotel Room Rental Tax," by
7 providing for an additional excise
8 tax on hotel room rentals, all
9 under certain terms and conditions.

10 Bill No. 260203, an
11 Ordinance amending Subcode "A" (The
12 Philadelphia Administrative Code)
13 of Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code
14 (The Building, Construction and
15 Occupancy Code), by adding and
16 revising Zoning Board of Adjustment
17 fees and provisions regarding
18 hearing scheduling, all under
19 certain terms and conditions.

20 Bill No. 260204, an
21 Ordinance amending Title 3 of The
22 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Air
23 Management Code" to modify the
24 amounts of license and permit fees,

1 under certain terms and conditions.

2 Bill No. 2602055, an
3 Ordinance amending Section 19-1806
4 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
5 "Authorization of Realty Use and
6 Occupancy Tax," to clarify the
7 imposition of the tax on the use or
8 occupancy of real estate with
9 respect to cell towers, all under
10 certain terms and conditions.

11 Bill No. 260206, an
12 Ordinance amending Chapter 6-600 of
13 The Philadelphia Code ("Asbestos"),
14 by adding and providing provisions
15 related to various fees, all under
16 certain terms and conditions.

17 Bill No. 260208, an
18 Ordinance amending Chapter 19-1800
19 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
20 "School Tax Authorization," to a
21 add a new Section 19-1808, entitled
22 "Authorization of Rideshare Use
23 Tax," to authorize the Board of the
24 School District of Philadelphia to

1 levy a tax upon the use by a
2 passenger of a transportation
3 network company for a prearranged
4 ride that originates in
5 Philadelphia; all under certain
6 terms and conditions.

7 Bill No. 260209, an
8 Ordinance amending Title 19 of The
9 Philadelphia Code, entitled
10 "Finances, Taxes and Collections,"
11 to add a new Chapter 19-4800,
12 entitled "Retail Delivery Tax," to
13 establish a tax on orders for the
14 delivery in Philadelphia of retail
15 consumer and other tangible goods,
16 all under certain terms and
17 conditions.

18 Resolution No. 260227,
19 Providing for the approval by the
20 Council of the City of Philadelphia
21 a Revised Five Year Financial Plan
22 for the City of Philadelphia,
23 covering Fiscal Years 2027 through
24 2031, and incorporating revisions

1 with respect to Fiscal Year 2026,
2 which is to be submitted by the
3 Mayor to the Pennsylvania
4 Intergovernmental Cooperation
5 Authority pursuant to an
6 Intergovernmental Cooperation
7 Agreement by and between the City
8 and the Authority.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you, Ms. Loughead.

11 Today we will hold the
12 public hearing of the Committee of
13 the Whole to consider the bills
14 read by the Clerk that constitute
15 proposed operating and capital
16 spending measures for Fiscal Year
17 2027, a Capital Program and a
18 Forward-looking Capital Plan for
19 Fiscal Year 2027 through Fiscal
20 Year 2032.

21 This morning we have
22 scheduled testimony from the
23 Department of Human Services and
24 the Mayor's Office of Education.

1 Ms. Loughhead, will you
2 please call the first witnesses to
3 testify from the Administration.

4 THE CLERK: Kimberly
5 Ali, Commissioner for the
6 Philadelphia Department of Human
7 Services; and Dr. Deborah Carrera,
8 Chief Education Officer.

9 (Witnesses approached
10 witness table.)

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Good morning.

13 COMMISSIONER ALI: Good
14 morning.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Please state your name
17 for the record and please begin
18 your testimony.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.
20 Good morning, Council President and
21 members of the Philadelphia City
22 Council. My name is Kimberly Ali
23 and I'm the Commissioner of the
24 City of Philadelphia Department of

1 Human Services, DHS. With me today
2 is Nadine Perese, Chief Financial
3 Officer; Cydney Irving-Dasent,
4 Chief of Children and Family
5 Support Services; and Sean Perkins,
6 Chief of Early Childhood Education
7 as well as other members of my
8 senior leadership team.

9 I want to thank you for
10 the opportunity to provide
11 testimony to support DHS Fiscal
12 Year 2027 operating budget. DHS is
13 the county's child welfare and
14 juvenile justice system. I have
15 the honor of leading the
16 department, which consists of 1500
17 dedicated employees who, in
18 alignment with the department's
19 mission, are focused on serving
20 children youth, families and
21 communities by building on their
22 strengths and advancing safe and
23 supportive environments.

24 Our work at DHS is

1 rooted in the following goals,
2 maintaining children and youth
3 safely in their own homes and
4 communities, increasing timely
5 reunification or other permanency,
6 reducing the utilization of
7 residential placements and
8 improving child, youth and family
9 functioning.

10 DHS's Fiscal Year 2027
11 General Fund allocation is \$235
12 million, which includes 4.4 million
13 in new funding to increase
14 workforce opportunities for 1000
15 additional youth and young adults
16 through Career Connected Learning,
17 C2L, and increasing our PHLpreK
18 capacity by adding 100 more slots
19 for our eager early learners, who
20 are 3 and 4 years of age. When
21 children and young people have
22 access to quality education and
23 meaningful career readiness
24 opportunities, the impact extends

1 well beyond the classroom. Their
2 caregivers are better positioned to
3 pursue employment, earn
4 certifications and degrees and
5 advance in their careers.

6 Investing in preschool
7 and career learning is not just an
8 investment in our youth, it is a
9 direct investment in the economic
10 mobility and stability of the
11 entire family. DHS will continue
12 to safely divert children and
13 families from entering the child
14 welfare and juvenile justice
15 systems by offering community-based
16 prevention services that address
17 their needs in their own homes and
18 communities.

19 In support of our work,
20 I am pleased to share that we have
21 made great progress towards
22 achieving our goals. We are moving
23 in the right direction. For
24 example, during Fiscal Year 2025 we

1 were able to provide prevention
2 services to over 1700 families
3 rather than through the formal
4 child welfare system.

5 Additionally, there are
6 1464 children and youth receiving
7 services in their own homes, which
8 provide support to their families
9 and prevent them from being
10 separated from their loved ones.
11 As of today, there are 2258
12 children in child welfare
13 placement, which is down from 5111
14 in 2020. This amounts to 2853 less
15 children in care or a 56% reduction
16 in the number of children and youth
17 who are in child welfare placement.

18 We prioritize kinship
19 when a safety threat cannot be
20 mitigated and the child requires
21 placement. Placing children and
22 youth with kin lessens the trauma
23 that they suffer because they are
24 placed with a family member or

1 someone who knows the child or
2 youth. At DHS, 40% of children are
3 currently placed in kinship care,
4 which is above the national average
5 of 38%.

6 We are also becoming
7 less dependent on residential
8 placements. Just 7.4% of youth in
9 placement are in child welfare
10 residential placement. This is
11 well below the state average of 13%
12 and lower than the national average
13 of 9.5%. DHS recognizes that we
14 cannot do this work alone. We
15 continue to work in partnership
16 with stakeholders, the courts,
17 advocates and community-based
18 providers to build a continuum of
19 services to meet the needs of
20 children, youth and families
21 outside of the formal child welfare
22 and juvenile justice systems.

23 We continue to offer
24 diversionary services, including

1 Intensive Prevention Services or
2 IPS. IPS providers are
3 strategically located in specific
4 sections of the city and have the
5 capacity to serve over 1400 youth
6 annually across all the sites.
7 This program is particularly unique
8 because youth received an
9 individualized service plan
10 designed to strengthen their sense
11 of self-worth, enhance life skills
12 and improve relationships at home,
13 at school and in the community.

14 In collaboration with
15 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
16 Richardson, other members of City
17 Council and the Philadelphia Police
18 Department, we established
19 Community Evening Resource Centers
20 or CERCs. There are six CERCs
21 citywide that serve as safe havens
22 for youth seven days a week from
23 7:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.

24 Since their opening, the

1 centers have provided services to
2 over 3000 youth, with over 79,000
3 visits. As the summer season
4 nears, we look forward to
5 connecting with more youth. Our
6 goal is to connect our young people
7 to job readiness, training,
8 conflict resolution and other
9 violence prevention services.

10 With our proposed and
11 continued investments in programs
12 and services in FY27, I am
13 confident that these positive
14 outcomes will continue. However, I
15 do want to acknowledge that there
16 is also still more work to do to
17 ensure children are safe, cared for
18 and that families are supported.
19 These efforts are underscored by
20 our journey to become an equitable
21 and just department. We aim to
22 reduce the disproportionate number
23 of Black and Brown children and
24 youth in the child welfare juvenile

1 justice systems.

2 DHS has partnered with
3 national organizations to develop a
4 robust training, I mean, strategy
5 to include the following: Training
6 DHS Community Umbrella Agencies and
7 community-based providers on
8 understanding the need for
9 advancing equity work. To date, we
10 have trained 1548 individuals.

11 Providing supplemental, mandated-
12 reporter training with an emphasis
13 on supporting families when there
14 are no signs of child abuse.

15 To date, we have trained
16 3325 individuals, to include the
17 School District of Philadelphia,
18 Children's Hospital and
19 St. Christopher's Hospital. In
20 partnering with the Philadelphia
21 Department of Public, we expanded
22 the Philly's Family Can Support
23 Line to offer resources to families
24 who are in need of support, with

1 the goal of diverting children and
2 youth from entering the child
3 welfare and juvenile justice
4 systems.

5 In summary, our FY27
6 budget reflects the DHS priorities
7 to improve outcomes for children,
8 youth and families. I want to
9 thank you for the opportunity to
10 testify today. We look forward to
11 our continued partnership to serve
12 Philadelphia's children, youth and
13 families. My team and I are
14 available to answer questions.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

17 Ms. Deborah Carrera, the
18 floor is yours.

19 DR. CARRERA: Good
20 morning, Council President Johnson
21 and members of City Council. I am
22 Dr. Deborah Carrera, the Chief
23 Education Officer for the City of
24 Philadelphia. Joining me today is

1 Sharon Ward, who is my Deputy Chief
2 Education Officer. I'm pleased to
3 provide testimony on the Mayor's
4 Office of Education's Fiscal Year
5 2027 operating budget.

6 The Mayor's Office of
7 Education is dedicated to
8 transforming Philadelphia's
9 education system by fostering
10 innovation and ensuring world-class
11 learning opportunities for all
12 residents, regardless of age or
13 socioeconomic background. By
14 facilitating collaboration among
15 city departments and educational
16 institutions, MOE creates a
17 unified, effective strategy for
18 educational advancement and
19 supports the Mayor's vision of a
20 safer, cleaner and greener
21 Philadelphia with access to
22 economic opportunity for all.

23 MOE actively engages
24 educational stakeholders citywide,

1 ensuring efforts align with the
2 Mayor's goals and contribute to a
3 world-class education for
4 Philadelphia learners. MOE
5 identifies gaps in existing
6 services, scales successful
7 programs and launches new
8 initiatives to meet evolving needs,
9 expanding access and opportunity
10 across all communities. The
11 Mayor's Office of Education's
12 priority programs advance the
13 mayor's goal of government that
14 residents can see, touch and feel
15 and provide access to economic
16 mobility for young people and
17 adults. Education is the
18 foundation of economic opportunity
19 and our approach is to align
20 education programs with workforce
21 goals and create transparent
22 pipelines from educational
23 institutions to city, school
24 district and private sector

1 employment. We work for adequate
2 and equitable state funding for all
3 Philadelphia public schools and
4 develop programs that serve
5 Philadelphians who face the
6 greatest barriers.

7 Our Fiscal Year '27
8 priorities include further
9 expansion of the Extended Day,
10 Extended Year program to new
11 district- and charter-operated
12 schools as well as a new initiative
13 that will help Philadelphians
14 burdened by student loan debt
15 navigate federal loan program
16 changes and support eligible
17 individuals in securing public
18 service loan forgiveness.

19 We will be planning for
20 One Philadelphia Community Schools,
21 which will double the number of
22 high school community schools,
23 bring a new focus on career
24 exploration and preparation and

1 identify new partnerships to expand
2 adult education programs for adults
3 seeking workforce training or
4 employment. We will also continue
5 our work to attract and retain
6 teachers in our district- and
7 charter-operated schools.

8 The city thrives when
9 its learners thrive. Mayor
10 Parker's Fiscal Year '27 budget
11 will enable MOE to better serve
12 learners, deepen our programs and
13 strengthen the education-to-career
14 pipeline. And I'm happy to take
15 your questions today.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. I
18 want to start off by just
19 acknowledging the work of
20 Commissioner Kimberly Ali. She
21 hails from South Philadelphia,
22 particularly the Point Breeze area.
23 Always proud to see the hard work
24 that she's doing. We come from the

1 same neighborhood, so to see us
2 both doing this work is truly a
3 pleasure. And I see Deputy
4 Commissioner, actually Deputy Mayor
5 back there, Vanessa Garrett-Harley.
6 I just want to give a shout-out
7 because I know y'all all work
8 together.

9 And so, just a couple
10 brief questions before I provide
11 opportunities for my members, and
12 always good to see everyone,
13 including the legendary Ms. Deborah
14 Carrera. Thank you for being here
15 as well. Every time I meet
16 somebody in the education field
17 they say, that's my mentor, she's
18 doing great work, particularly at
19 E.M. Stanton School. Welcome.

20 A couple questions:
21 When we talk about the expansion of
22 PHLpreK by 100 slots, something
23 that's very, very near and dear to
24 me, can you give me an idea of,

1 one, the gap that the 100 slots
2 will close? Two, how are we
3 determining what neighborhoods that
4 individuals receive opportunities
5 to participate in the 100 slots?
6 And then the last part of that
7 question is, how are we making sure
8 that those particular slots and
9 those providers are Star 4
10 education centers?

11 COMMISSIONER ALI: So
12 thank you for that question,
13 Council President. I will call up
14 Sean Perkins, who is Chief of Early
15 Childhood Education, and he can
16 answer those questions.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
18 JOHNSON: And also, help me out
19 with this. Is this a new structure
20 that the PHLpreK is under? I know
21 DHS administered it. But at one
22 time I know we did the soda tax
23 early on and we had an Office of
24 Education and everything was under

1 the Office of Education. So
2 explain the process to me or the
3 new structure or if something
4 changed since then. And even if
5 that wasn't the case, explain that
6 to me.

7 COMMISSIONER ALI: So if
8 you could recall, back in 2016 the
9 Office of Children and Families was
10 created. Under the Office of
11 Children and Families was PHLpreK
12 as well as the Mayor's Office of
13 Education. And so, that structure
14 has still been there since 2016.
15 However, the reason why you see
16 Chief Deputy Mayor Vanessa Garrett-
17 Harley is because she's responsible
18 for the Office of Children and
19 Families, which includes the
20 Department of Human Services and
21 she's also responsible for the
22 Mayor's Office of Education. And
23 so, PHLpreK as well as Career
24 Connected Learning is on the DHS

1 budget.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: I see that. Okay. Just
4 wanted to get some clarity on that.

5 MR. PERKINS: Good
6 morning, Council President and
7 other members of Council. My name
8 is Sean Perkins. I'm the Chief of
9 Early Childhood Education, also
10 Point Breeze resident. I want to
11 answer some --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Take it easy on him.
14 Don't give him a hard time, y'all.

15 MR. PERKINS: Your
16 question, sir, Council President,
17 was about 100 new seats that get
18 put out that are available to
19 families to access in Philadelphia.
20 Each year we run an application
21 process for all the licensed child
22 care centers across Philadelphia to
23 apply for any seats that may become
24 available. Some sites end up

1 relinquishing them. They say we
2 can't take this many or there are a
3 variety of different reasons or
4 sometimes this Council passes a
5 budget that says we want to expand,
6 so we prepare for that.

7 We also go a year even
8 earlier where we prequalify some
9 centers. That's like our waiting
10 list or our runway that prepare
11 centers to be prepared for any
12 additional seats that become
13 available. So we're always ready.
14 We're preparing for any eventuality
15 where we are meeting the demand of
16 families.

17 You asked the question,
18 sir, about what is that demand.
19 Every year there's about 20,000
20 children born in Philadelphia. So
21 we have about 40,000 3- and 4-year-
22 olds. We have 5250 PHLpreK seats.
23 We have an additional approximately
24 10,000 federal- and state-funded

1 full-day free preschool options in
2 Philadelphia. That's our job. We
3 coordinate with the school district
4 and the state to see where are
5 those seats so we can allocate them
6 appropriately to meet both family
7 demand and, as you mentioned, the
8 high quality nature of those Star 3
9 and Star 4 locations.

10 So we run that
11 application process every single
12 year. We have a series of criteria
13 to evaluate that on, one of which
14 is geography. So we take into
15 consideration where we have the
16 fewest number of publicly-funded
17 preschool seats per child in that
18 geographic region. We also look at
19 where do we have the highest number
20 of children with two or more risk
21 factors without high-quality seats.

22 And then we also look at
23 where do we have the highest number
24 of children in poverty without

1 high-quality PreK seats. We apply
2 that across a variety of different
3 metrics to see what's the best
4 investment for those 100 or however
5 many seats we have available.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: And the last part of that
8 question is, how do you focus on
9 making sure that we're targeting
10 Star 4 early childhood education
11 centers just to make sure our
12 children are getting the high-
13 quality seats?

14 MR. PERKINS: Yeah, we
15 do a couple things. The first of
16 which is a portion of our dollars
17 go towards a quality support
18 center. So we just recently ran
19 our RFP process to identify who's
20 the best place to give technical
21 assistance, coaching, professional
22 development, emergency response to
23 any of our centers. They're also
24 responsible for ensuring the high-

1 quality nature of those early
2 learning programs and the
3 instructional support. So we do
4 that.

5 We also engage with the
6 provider community. We have a
7 variety of different organizations
8 and collaborations to make sure
9 who's doing what and what do you
10 need the most help on, so we can
11 meet that need. And the third
12 thing is we get an annual
13 evaluation from a third party
14 organization that comes to see what
15 is the quality nature inside of
16 each classroom and center every
17 year, so we can focus on not just
18 the things that are internal, those
19 that are externally evaluated as
20 well.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: And do we have data on
23 the number of centers that we help
24 go from 3s to 4s, from 2s to 3s to

1 show that we're continually helping
2 raise the bar on the quality of
3 services provided to our children?

4 MR. PERKINS: Yes, sir.

5 We just received our fifth
6 consecutive Gold Medal Award for
7 that work. We get that external
8 evaluation every year. We
9 just received a fifth one --

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: That's what's up. Can we
12 clap when it's good, y'all?

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. PERKINS: We started
15 in Year 1, 56% of our seats were
16 high-quality Star 3 or 4 rated by
17 the state. We are now at 97%.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: That's what I'm talking
20 about.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: And you hail from Point
24 Breeze. That's what I'm talking

1 about. The Mighty Second District.
2 All right. Well, thank you very
3 much. That's something near and
4 dear. And I believe when we talk
5 about academic achievement, we have
6 to start as early as possible to
7 put our young people on the path
8 for success. I want to --

9 COMMISSIONER ALI:

10 Council President, can I correct
11 the record with the date? I said
12 the Office of Children and Families
13 was created in 2016. It was
14 created in 2020. I wanted to
15 correct the record.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Okay. But prior to that,
18 it was under -- what's his name?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

20 Otis.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Otis Bullock, yeah -- no,
23 not Otis Bullock. Otis --

24 COMMISSIONER ALI:

1 Hackney.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Otis Hackney. I do
4 remember him starting the whole
5 process around PreK. So I was
6 wondering how it went under DHS,
7 which is fine.

8 I want to talk about
9 we're projecting -- and this for
10 DHS -- 20% vacancy rate for FY26
11 across the department. So I want
12 to get an idea of how we're
13 addressing it, but at the same time
14 we're reducing 25 long-term social
15 work positions as a way to
16 rightsize the budget. So we're
17 reducing, at the same time we got
18 vacancies. So give me an idea on
19 how we're addressing the two at the
20 same time.

21 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.
22 And so, as you indicated, Council
23 President, DHS does have a 20%
24 vacancy rate. Their rate has

1 actually improved over the past few
2 years. Primarily, our vacancies
3 rest with social work service
4 managers and youth detention
5 counselors. However, we have a
6 number of other vacancies in which
7 we are able to reduce by 25 because
8 we have done such good work with
9 reducing the size of the Department
10 of Human Services.

11 As I testified to, the
12 number of young people in placement
13 since 2020 went from 5111 young
14 people who were in child welfare
15 placement and now it's that 2258.
16 We have been doing a lot of work
17 around diversion and prevention.
18 Therefore, there is no DHS social
19 worker or no Community Umbrella
20 Agency social worker assigned to
21 those prevention or diversionary
22 programs. It is the provider
23 community that is providing
24 services to those families. That

1 has been pretty successful. And
2 so, that's why we're able to at the
3 same time reduce the number of
4 vacancies so that it's a cost
5 savings to the city, but still
6 maintaining the quality of services
7 that we offer at DHS.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Okay. I'll clap for
10 that.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Now, for some that's
14 probably thinking I'm playing, but
15 the reality is you need less social
16 worker staff because you're
17 actually getting the job done on
18 the front end, that's something
19 that means we're going in the right
20 direction. That's all I have at
21 the -- well, one last one before I
22 turn it over to my members.

23 Talk to me about the
24 Career Connected Learning program

1 in terms of youth employment and
2 what does that look like.

3 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.
4 And so, please allow me to call up
5 Cydney Irving-Dasent, who is the
6 Chief of Children and Family
7 Support Services. She oversees
8 Career Connected Learning.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
10 JOHNSON: And is this separate
11 from -- so we're going to have an
12 additional 1000 slots for our
13 youth, right?

14 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
16 JOHNSON: Are they just for the
17 summer or are they year-round? I
18 know when the Administration first
19 came on the first day, we talked
20 about year-round jobs as well,
21 right. And then also, is this
22 number totally separate from what
23 we do at JEVS that does
24 Philadelphia Youth Network summer

1 job program so I just want to get
2 an idea?

3 MS. IRVING-DASENT: Good
4 morning. Cydney Irving-Dasent from
5 the Office of Children and
6 Families. Thank you for the
7 question. We are going to serve
8 9000 young people this summer. And
9 the number of students served by
10 JEVS is included in the total
11 number. They are the primary
12 operator, but we also work with
13 other providers.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
15 JOHNSON: So tell me, just for the
16 record, I think the number of youth
17 that applied last year was 14,000
18 and we hired 7000 and I know we
19 talked about early on in the budget
20 proposal during this cycle, FY27
21 budget, the goal is for every young
22 person to have a summer job. So I
23 think we're going after 14,000 this
24 time around.

1 And I know part of the
2 Mayor's budget proposal is saying
3 we're going to do some and then
4 we're going to ask philanthropy to
5 also chip in. What's the number
6 for 2027 -- all 14,000 that apply
7 should have the opportunity to have
8 a summer job if they choose to,
9 correct?

10 MS. IRVING-DASENT: The
11 system will not support the entire
12 14,000. Last summer we served
13 8000.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
15 JOHNSON: Okay.

16 MS. IRVING-DASENT: The
17 Mayor has committed to another 1000
18 so we'll get 9000 for this summer.
19 And with the support of the
20 business community and
21 Philadelphians, we hope to get to
22 10,000 this year.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
24 JOHNSON: I have to ask the

1 question though, one pushback on
2 this. Why we just can't put in our
3 budget for the full 14? One,
4 clarify that the system can't
5 accommodate the 14,000. Help me
6 out with that part.

7 MS. IRVING-DASENT: We
8 need a combination of things for
9 that to work. We need providers.
10 We need the nonprofit provider
11 community to be able to issue and
12 administer the stipends, collecting
13 the applications, all of the vital
14 documents to process the young
15 people, and we need to have enough
16 places for young people to have
17 their summer experiences. So we
18 need additional businesses,
19 community members.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
21 JOHNSON: I want you to help me
22 out.

23 MS. IRVING-DASENT:
24 Okay.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Clearly, there's a will,
3 there's a way. So when you say the
4 system can't handle it and I think
5 you're saying, in order to build
6 that infrastructure, right, to hire
7 these 14,000 -- so let's say
8 hypothetically the private
9 community steps up and says, okay,
10 you want to hire 9000 this year.
11 We want to provide the additional
12 funding so you can reach the
13 14,000. Wouldn't we still need the
14 infrastructure in the system to
15 accommodate us to hire all 14,000?

16 MS. IRVING-DASENT: We
17 would welcome the problem to figure
18 out how to serve 14,000 young
19 people. It certainly is the long-
20 term goal --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Yes. Thank you.

23 MS. IRVING-DASENT: --
24 with the support of businesses so

1 that we can have placement sites
2 for young people.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Okay. I just want to
5 challenge the Administration to
6 figure out, like, I know we do
7 public-private partnerships, right.
8 But if we already know that there's
9 14,000 youth who are applying, then
10 we should come into the situation
11 already looking at a strategy
12 aggressively to not just do the
13 infrastructure in the system, but
14 that budget should be on our dime.
15 That's just my opinion. I just
16 believe the City of Philadelphia in
17 terms of our budget -- and that
18 total cost would be how much right
19 now just for the 9000?

20 MS. IRVING-DASENT: The
21 total system cost?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Just for the 9000 for
24 this year FY27 budget?

1 MS. IRVING-DASENT: 17

2 million.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Yeah. 17 million out of

5 7 billion and -- 0

6 (Councilmember sneezed.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Bless you. I didn't say

9 nothing.

10 I was just trying to get
11 the clarity on -- I just think as a
12 city when it comes to our budget,
13 and particularly with our children,
14 right, because we do make major
15 lists for a variety of different
16 industries and a variety of
17 different interest groups that come
18 and seek support, that at least for
19 them they should just know, period,
20 budget-wise, the families should
21 just know if the 14 come, they
22 apply, they should have a choice.
23 And if they don't apply, they don't
24 provide the proper documentation,

1 then they don't get the job, but
2 those jobs should be relatively
3 available.

4 So that will be
5 something I will continue to have
6 conversations with, with the
7 Administration. Anything the
8 private industry does I believe
9 should be extra. And do we know
10 who that private industry is from
11 philanthropy that want to
12 participate? Like, has the Chamber
13 of Commerce said, we're going to
14 come to the table and provide 5
15 million? Have commitments been
16 made or we're just hoping that
17 after the budget is passed they'll
18 step up and provide the funding for
19 the program?

20 MS. IRVING-DASENT: I'd
21 have to get back to you on where
22 the levels of commitment are as we
23 stand today. I know that we are
24 actively engaging a number of

1 entities to make sure that 14,000
2 young people can have the
3 opportunity.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Okay. Can you just
6 please provide some time in the
7 near future before the budget
8 process is over what those
9 commitments look like? I know
10 there's a roundtable of businesses
11 that are at the table, but we
12 should have these commitments
13 before this budget process is over
14 so everyone will know that this is
15 the commitment from the business
16 community.

17 But I do want to say
18 I'll continue this process with my
19 members, that I just believe we
20 should foot the whole bill, that's
21 just where I'm at, just for our
22 youth so they can just know -- I
23 believe this investment is a major
24 lever in reducing gun violence in

1 the city of Philadelphia. It's a
2 major level of why we're seeing
3 poverty go down. And we're the
4 second largest, poorest big city in
5 America, and I think that
6 investment just also puts everyone
7 at ease in terms of our young
8 people being -- I think I've seen
9 two flash mobs already, one in
10 Curtis' district in Fairmount Park
11 at the Japanese House. Did I say
12 correctly it, yes.

13 And then also on 52nd
14 Street they were wildin' out. So we
15 want to -- my Nana said, an idle
16 mind is the devil's workshop. So we
17 want to get them activated. So I'm
18 all on board on what y'all are
19 doing. I just want to see if we
20 can do a little bit more.

21 When we talk about
22 vacancies, you mentioned Youth
23 Study Center, right. Let's talk
24 about how we address Youth Study

1 Center in terms of vacancies, the
2 progress we have made in terms
3 of -- we don't want to minimize the
4 work that you have done, Dr. Ali,
5 regarding making sure that we don't
6 have overcrowdedness.

7 I know Councilwoman
8 Jamie Gauthier, and it might have
9 been another member, Councilmember
10 Jones, led a delegation to Youth
11 Study Center to kind of work with
12 y'all and kind of see how our young
13 people are being taken care of.
14 And a lot of it wasn't on us. It
15 was a lot of state-related policies
16 having an impact on us. And also,
17 how young people are being charged,
18 contributed to the overcrowding of
19 our Youth Study Center -- Juvenile
20 Justice Center.

21 Can you give us an idea
22 of the progress we have made
23 because I know we've made some
24 progress? I just want to highlight

1 that. But also, how are we going
2 about the hiring to make sure we
3 have individuals over there
4 monitoring our young people?

5 COMMISSIONER ALI:

6 Thanks for that question. And so,
7 the PJJSC and the work in terms of
8 a population has been a journey,
9 but I'm happy to report this
10 morning that our placement
11 population at the PJJSC has been
12 reduced significantly. We have 94
13 young people that are being held at
14 PJJSC, 94. It's a significant
15 reduction.

16 (Applause.)

17 COMMISSIONER ALI: As a
18 reminder, the PJJSC is a 184-bed
19 facility. So the fact that we have
20 94 young people being held speaks
21 to the work not only that we do
22 with our partners, but also the
23 work that is happening at the
24 PJJSC. And so, we attributed some

1 of the successes in terms of the
2 young people at the PJJSC to the
3 work that we're doing with the
4 Philadelphia Police Department.
5 You will hear more about that when
6 they testify around our citywide
7 diversion.

8 We start a Citywide
9 Diversion in January of 2025. And
10 when you look at the number of
11 young people who were arrested
12 according to police data, the
13 juvenile arrests from 2024 to 2025
14 was reduced by 16%. And during
15 that same time, Calendar Year 2024
16 to Calendar Year 2025, the
17 population at the PJJSC also was
18 reduced by the number of young
19 people that was being held by 13%.
20 And so, we definitely see some
21 synergy around that.

22 We also see synergy
23 around the work that we are doing
24 with our providers around providing

1 alternatives to detention for young
2 people. And so, when you think
3 about our inhome detention services
4 for young people, our evening
5 reporting centers as well for young
6 people, those services are designed
7 individually for young people to
8 keep them out of the Juvenile
9 Justice Services Center as well as
10 residential placement. And so, at
11 those particular centers they
12 provide conflict resolution, career
13 readiness for young people and a
14 whole host of services in order to
15 ensure that young people stay on
16 the right track. And so, it has
17 again been a journey in terms of
18 the PJJSC and we're just happy that
19 we are 94 today.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Awesome. You're rocking
22 and rolling. Good job.

23 Ms. Deborah Carrera, you
24 talked about student attendance and

1 outcomes, highlighting some of the
2 things that the School District of
3 Philadelphia is doing. The data
4 has 54% of students attended at
5 least 90% of school days in FY25.
6 Do you have any data regarding
7 truancy rates? And then also, give
8 us your perspective on the current
9 school facilities plan and if that
10 will have an impact on how our
11 students continue this 54%
12 attendance rate. And even building
13 upon that 54%, the changes that
14 will be taking place moving
15 forward?

16 DR. CARRERA: So good
17 morning again, President Johnson.
18 I'm Dr. Deborah Carrera. That is
19 such a critical question because we
20 know that if kids don't come to
21 school, then they cannot learn.
22 And so, we've heard the
23 Superintendent share in this body
24 that there has been an increase in

1 student attendance as you've
2 shared.

3 One of the strategies
4 that this Administration has
5 implemented is the Extended Day
6 Extended Year initiative. And we
7 are seeing that in these 40 schools
8 that have this programming, more
9 students are attending. We have
10 about 78% of our students, K to 8,
11 that are attending 90% more in
12 comparison to the schools that are
13 not Extended Day, Extended Year,
14 which are about 70%.

15 To your second question
16 about the school facilities
17 component, there's going to be
18 some -- this is hard work. There's
19 some challenges. But the most
20 important thing, and I think I've
21 shared with this body as well, I
22 was an educator for 27 years, a
23 principal for 15 years in some
24 really hard schools.

1 We have some great
2 administrators, great teachers in
3 the School District of
4 Philadelphia, and that is the
5 important work of administrators,
6 to ensure that instruction is
7 engaging. Kids come to school when
8 they know that they are safe, that
9 the environment is safe and that
10 they have caring adults in those
11 buildings. And so, we are
12 supporting the School District in
13 this initiative, but definitely
14 keeping an eye on truancy.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: When you say the
17 Administration is supporting the
18 school district on this initiative
19 regarding school facilities plan,
20 what type of communication,
21 collaboration in terms of the
22 transition if the plan moves
23 forward as the Administration is
24 providing, particularly regarding

1 the transition from kids going from
2 one school to another school, and
3 again, we want to build on that
4 progress of student attendance and
5 making sure that in the event that
6 you have school closures and/or the
7 co-locating of one school with
8 another school, that that process
9 is seamless so students don't feel,
10 you know, morale was broken, I
11 don't want to go to school or
12 parents begin to say, you know
13 what, I'd rather do home schooling
14 as opposed to moving forward with
15 the current proposal that may be
16 put forth in front of certain
17 parents in certain neighborhoods?

18 DR. CARRERA: Yeah.
19 Thank you for that question also,
20 Councilman -- President Johnson,
21 sorry. This is not easy as I said.
22 This is not easy. I was here in
23 2012, 2013. I was the principal at
24 Kensington Creative and Performing

1 Arts High School. And I was here
2 during that financial crisis. I
3 never thought I would open a high
4 school without counselors and I
5 did.

6 I had two counselors
7 before that who were exceptional.
8 They were family. They were part
9 of the school culture. Opened up
10 the school September. October,
11 November, December, guess what
12 happened? Fights increased. Kids
13 with needs for mental health
14 increased because they didn't have
15 those caring adults that were part
16 of the fabric of the school.

17 This office works
18 collaboratively with the School
19 District of Philadelphia --

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Can I ask you a question?

22 DR. CARRERA: You may.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: I get the experience in

1 the past, right. I just want to
2 get an idea today in the present.
3 Your team's strategy, right, just
4 give me an overview, Mr. Johnson,
5 these are the top five things we've
6 been working with the district to
7 make sure that in event that this
8 proposal moves forward as planned,
9 these are the things that we have
10 in place to make sure we address
11 truancy, we're addressing student
12 attendance, we're making sure
13 public safety is great -- I mean,
14 is addressed.

15 We're making sure -- a
16 lot of parents asked us about not
17 even just so much of closing down
18 the school, but just
19 transportation, do we have a plan
20 with SEPTA or not. Could you give
21 me an overview from that aspect?
22 What is the Administration's Office
23 of Education on our end doing to
24 make sure that the district is

1 doing what they need to do from a
2 collaborative standpoint, but also
3 accountability standpoint?

4 They're a billion dollar
5 independent institution, right.

6 And just want to get an idea of
7 what is our strategy -- when I say
8 our, meaning the Administration's
9 strategy to make sure that some of
10 the key areas that have been
11 expressed thus far are going to be
12 addressed.

13 DR. CARRERA: Yeah. So
14 I would say to your question when
15 we think about the strategy of this
16 Administration, number one, it's
17 the open line of communication. We
18 meet with the superintendent, we
19 meet with his chief of staff. We
20 again, to your point, President,
21 talk about those important data
22 points. We also work with the
23 Board of Education as well to --
24 it's a bidirectional relationship,

1 to talk about also the initiatives
2 that the Mayor is leading. And
3 this office is really focused on
4 supporting the district around the
5 adequacy and the funding, because I
6 don't want that to be lost in this
7 conversation --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Yes.

10 DR. CARRERA: -- that we
11 are an underfunded district. And
12 we know this, but we've got to keep
13 saying it --

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Mm-hmm.

16 DR. CARRERA: -- because
17 I'm not sure that everyone
18 understands it and that we're owed
19 a billion dollars and that makes a
20 difference. It makes a difference.
21 And so again, this office --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: You said we're owed a
24 billion, a billion?

1 DR. CARRERA:

2 1,000,000,000, right.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: From the state?

5 DR. CARRERA: Yes.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Can I ask this question,
8 if I may, and I understand that we
9 have a structural deficit, right.
10 I understand that when the wider
11 public comes to the Administration,
12 your office, with their issues and
13 their concerns, right, about the
14 plan, like they come to District
15 members, but when they do come to
16 the Administration, how is the
17 Administration, your office,
18 actually documenting that
19 information? And are y'all
20 addressing that information as
21 well?

22 Okay. The families from
23 Lankenau as opposed to coming to
24 their Councilperson, they may go

1 directly to the Administration
2 saying, these are our issues and
3 concerns regarding the shutting
4 down of their schools. How is the
5 Administration reacting to that
6 information?

7 DR. CARRERA: Thank you
8 for the question.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: I'm just trying to get an
11 idea. We're all rowing in the same
12 direction in terms of how we want
13 to protect our young people and
14 families. And so, I'm just trying
15 to get an understanding.

16 DR. CARRERA: So I
17 served on the facilities team.
18 There are about 30 of us,
19 representation from this body as
20 well, nonprofits, the unions. And
21 so, we are in continuous
22 conversation with the school
23 district around those concerns that
24 we're hearing and that are brought

1 to our attention as well.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Okay. We talk about
4 adult literacy. It's about, if I'm
5 correct and not to be more accurate
6 but just in general, about 23%
7 adult literacy rate here in the
8 city of Philadelphia, individuals
9 illiterate, and then about around
10 56% individuals functionally
11 illiterate. Do we have a strategy
12 to tackle illiteracy, adult
13 illiteracy, here in the city of
14 Philadelphia? What's the plan?

15 And when I held a
16 workforce hearing on how we address
17 poverty through growing our
18 workforce development initiatives
19 here in the city of Philadelphia,
20 one of the key things that he said
21 was a barrier to hiring individuals
22 to allow us to grow as a city is
23 the issue of adult illiteracy.
24 Give us an idea on our strategies,

1 our plan around addressing it.

2 I think about when I was
3 in AmeriCorps, I was part of
4 something called the Center for
5 Literacy. This was a long time
6 ago, right, maybe 20 years ago, but
7 they were very, very robust. They
8 were in the community. I don't
9 even think they were around
10 anymore, but literacy was a major
11 topic of conversation at that time,
12 adult literacy at the time. I even
13 learned about English as a second
14 language by participating in this
15 program. Do we have a strategy to
16 address adult literacy?

17 DR. CARRERA: We do.
18 And so, as you shared, it is a
19 great issue. We have about 18%,
20 almost 400 adults in the city of
21 Philadelphia, that are reading or
22 doing numeracy at an 8th grade or
23 below level. So this office does a
24 few things. We are currently in

1 the process of hiring a new
2 executive director, which is going
3 to be very important with vision
4 casting and really re-establishing
5 relationships. But we receive
6 about \$2.8 million and those
7 dollars go out to about 12
8 providers that do adult basic
9 skills classes, as you said,
10 English as a second language, high
11 school equivalency and a GED as
12 well.

13 And in addition to that,
14 we have four providers in the city
15 of Philadelphia that receive Title
16 2 dollars and those Title 2 dollars
17 are focused around workforce
18 development as well. So that's
19 Lenfest and it's 1199c,
20 (inaudible), Temple. We are also
21 working closely with Phila Works
22 with Pat Clancy to ensure we
23 received a grant a few years ago,
24 about \$2 million, and that money is

1 going out now to support workforce
2 development. To your point, we
3 have the adults. We just have to
4 support them and give them those
5 skills to be able to be successful.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Awesome. Thank you very
8 much.

9 Chair recognizes
10 Councilmember Dr. Anthony Phillips.

11 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

12 Thank you, Council President.

13 I want to frame my
14 questions today around the
15 importance of a theme that I've
16 been working on throughout the
17 budget hearing, responsive
18 government. Why is this important?
19 I believe that with this Mayor, if
20 we don't figure out how to get
21 responsive government right, we'll
22 never get it right in its entirety.
23 And I'm very confident that we can
24 do this.

1 When it comes to
2 responsive government, we're going
3 to be focusing today on how we make
4 sure students, families that are
5 working in our neighborhoods
6 understand the importance and
7 investments that we are making in
8 city government they can really
9 see. So with that being said, my
10 first question goes to the Mayor's
11 Office of Education.

12 I see that there are new
13 positions being proposed to support
14 Extended Day, Extended Year
15 programming. I also have a
16 background in nonprofit leadership.
17 And I'm curious to learn if you can
18 share an impact report on
19 particular metrics that are being
20 used to evaluate the effectiveness
21 of these programs?

22 DR. CARRERA: Sure.
23 Thank you for your question,
24 Dr. Phillips. I can't see you.

1 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

2 Yeah --

3 DR. CARRERA: Okay.

4 Great. So as you shared, Extended
5 Day, Extended Year, we started two
6 years ago with 25 schools and then
7 we expanded to 40 schools. The
8 Mayor when she was on her campaign
9 really listened to families that
10 said they wanted a safe place for
11 their children to be and they
12 wanted their children to also have
13 enrichment opportunities. We have
14 been working collaboratively with
15 the district on building on those
16 metrics that you are talking about
17 to ensure success of programming.

18 So one of those metrics
19 is of course attendance. And as I
20 shared earlier, we're seeing some
21 great gains around students
22 attending. The other piece is
23 utilization. So this year we have
24 about 12,000 slots that are

1 available to students and families
2 for before care, afterschool care,
3 spring and winter camp and summer.

4 And then we're also
5 measuring belonging. So the
6 district implements their district-
7 wide survey where students can
8 self-report their sense of
9 belonging. And so, we have some
10 data around that, that I can
11 definitely send you. But we are
12 looking at attendance, we're
13 looking at utilization and we're
14 looking at students' sense of
15 belonging.

16 We're also serving the
17 parents. And so, we were able to
18 receive surveys from parents for
19 winter camp, of which we got about
20 200 surveys back from those parents
21 that attended, and we had about 90%
22 of the parents talk about how
23 satisfied they were with the
24 initiative, and we can send all

1 that to you.

2 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

3 Yes, that's extremely important
4 because we don't just want to
5 celebrate our afterschool
6 programming and pre-before school
7 programming, but we want to make
8 sure that they're having a level of
9 growth outcomes.

10 The second thing that I
11 wanted to ask you around is are we
12 making sure -- do we have an
13 understanding of growth? Are we
14 looking to do these Extended Day,
15 Extended Year in every public
16 school in the city of Philadelphia?
17 If so, what does that look like?

18 DR. CARRERA: I'm sorry.
19 So, Dr. Phillips, the question is
20 we're going to do it --

21 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

22 Are we looking to expand it to
23 every school in the city of
24 Philadelphia, every public school

1 in the city of Philadelphia? If
2 so, what does that strategic plan
3 look like?

4 DR. CARRERA: So right
5 now we are, as I shared, expanding
6 to five district schools. These
7 schools are already Community
8 Schools and two charters. What we
9 want to do this year, Councilman,
10 is really do a deeper dive into
11 program quality. So we want to
12 ensure that the programs that we
13 placed in schools are meeting, to
14 your point, those needs that we
15 want to achieve. This year we also
16 piloted an academic enrichment
17 program. So we piloted with some
18 Joyful Readers, some other
19 initiatives to do high-dosage
20 tutoring. We're seeing some great
21 results. So to answer your
22 question, we're spending this
23 upcoming year to really go deeper
24 on program quality and then we'll

1 have discussions about expansion.

2 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

3 Yeah. I'm more curious about how
4 do we have a strategic plan to make
5 this and every school in the city
6 of Philadelphia, because before and
7 after care is important. So yes,
8 do your evaluation, but I would
9 love to see how we can evaluate
10 getting this in every school in the
11 city because it's helpful to
12 parents.

13 DR. CARRERA: Noted.

14 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

15 The other part that I want to
16 mention, I've noticed in the
17 testimony this creation of a
18 Student Borrow Help Center. Coming
19 from college access, I understand
20 the importance of financial
21 education. However, can you break
22 down how much funding is being
23 allocated to the Student Borrow
24 Help Center?

1 And essentially -- also,
2 one of the things I do want to
3 mention -- actually scrap that
4 question. I'm going to go right to
5 this one. Can you tell me why
6 haven't thought about integrating
7 the Student Borrow Help Center into
8 the Neighborhood Action Centers as
9 a support service that as opposed
10 to -- and it's also other
11 organizations that do this as well.
12 So is it so important that we have
13 in the city of Philadelphia a large
14 funding mechanism to do our borrow
15 and action centers when there's
16 other organizations that do this
17 that we can send them off to?

18 DR. CARRERA: Thank you.
19 Thank you again, Dr. Phillips, for
20 that question. And that is a great
21 question. We have about 231,000
22 Philadelphians who have student
23 loan debt of about \$9 billion and
24 I'm one of them. I am one of them.

1 14% of our residents that have loan
2 debt are 65 years and over.

3 And so, what the Mayor's
4 vision is, is that the Student Loan
5 Debt Help Center is exactly that.
6 It is a help. It is working with,
7 to your point, Dr. Phillips,
8 organizations. We are working with
9 CAO. We're working with Community
10 Empowerment to do what we have to
11 do to give Philadelphians
12 information.

13 We had a webinar two
14 weeks ago. We had 850 people
15 register for the webinar and many
16 people are just confused with where
17 they stand. So this office is
18 really going to be an office that
19 is going to collaborate with the
20 nonprofit organizations and bring
21 the information to Philadelphians
22 in a way that they can digest it.

23 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: So
24 that's the point. Why don't we

1 fund a nonprofit organization to do
2 this at a less amount of money,
3 right, that we can fund to support
4 this, because it is important. But
5 why create a whole city agency just
6 to cover this particular issue?
7 It's not clicking for me --

8 DR. CARRERA: I'm going
9 to make it click. I'm going to
10 make it click. I hope so,
11 Dr. Phillips.

12 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
13 Yeah.

14 DR. CARRERA: So the
15 money that we are allotting is not
16 going to us. The money is going to
17 go out to the nonprofits. We're
18 going to RFP it and get it out to
19 people because they need additional
20 funding to support the work. We
21 are adding a position that is
22 coming out of my current budget.
23 So the dollars that are being
24 appropriated are to be able to work

1 with the nonprofits and give them
2 the funding so that they can do
3 this most important work, because
4 again it's 231,000 Philadelphians.

5 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

6 Okay. Got it. And we'll talk
7 about how much it has to be. But I
8 do notice that your office's
9 budgeted positions, the office had
10 78 budgeted positions with 54
11 filled. And now, you're proposing
12 85 positions and you haven't
13 fulfilled the other positions.
14 What are the factors that have
15 prevented this office from reaching
16 full staffing levels?

17 DR. CARRERA: Thank you
18 for that question, Dr. Phillips.
19 And I think that -- so as
20 Commissioner Ali was talking about
21 the transition, the Mayor's Office
22 of Education was under the Office
23 of Children and Families. We
24 transitioned out this year probably

1 fully where Adult Ed, Foster
2 Grandparents, Community Schools,
3 Extended Day, Extended Year are now
4 under our portfolio. So we are
5 working on filling all of those
6 positions. We actually have about
7 five Extended Day, Extended Year
8 coordinators that are in our office
9 right now getting onboarded.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
11 got you. Thank you. So I
12 understand that. Now, you believe
13 that going into this new year with
14 the transition completed now you'll
15 be able to fill these vacancies?

16 DR. CARRERA: Yes,
17 Dr. Phillips.

18 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
19 Okay. So you're saying it's going
20 to take over \$5 million to give to
21 already existing nonprofits to do
22 the work for the student loans?

23 DR. CARRERA: I'm sorry.
24 You said 5 million?

1 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Is
2 that what was quoted?

3 DR. CARRERA: No, it's
4 \$850,000 in five years.

5 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
6 I'm sorry. \$850,000. Sorry, I had
7 the wrong number in front of me.
8 So it's \$850,000 over five years?

9 DR. CARRERA: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
11 Okay. So it is 5 million. So
12 it's 5 million over -- okay, got
13 you. So it's \$850,000 over five
14 years, close to --

15 DR. CARRERA: No, it's
16 not \$850,000 each year. It's
17 \$250,000 this year, \$150,000 next
18 year. It's 850,000 across the five
19 years.

20 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
21 Oh, okay. Got you.

22 DR. CARRERA: Thank you
23 for that clarification, yes.

24 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: So

1 they would be RFP'd to nonprofit
2 organizations?

3 DR. CARRERA: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

5 Okay. Thank you. And then my final
6 question focuses on the -- how many
7 district positions would that 48 --
8 no, no, that's not a good question.
9 Would the city consider using a
10 contingency fund -- like for
11 example, does the Mayor's Office of
12 Education or the city have a
13 contingency to plan to prevent
14 reductions that affect students
15 when it comes to the \$48 million
16 that we're proposing recurring
17 revenue for the rideshare program?

18 DR. CARRERA: So,
19 Dr. Phillips, just to be clear the
20 question is, does the Mayor's
21 office have a contingency plan if
22 the \$48 million --

23 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: In
24 the event that the \$48 million

1 doesn't come through the Uber, the
2 rideshare program?

3 DR. CARRERA: No. So
4 that if it does not come through,
5 then the district will have to make
6 the budget cuts.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
8 Okay. Those are my questions.

9 Thank you, Council
10 President. I have a Round 2,
11 right?

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Absolutely.

14 Chair recognizes
15 Councilmember Cindy Bass.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

17 Thank you, Mr. President.

18 Good morning. How's
19 everybody doing? So I had a couple
20 of questions. As the former Chair
21 of Health and Human Services --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Member Bass, could you
24 speak into your microphone?

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes,
2 sir. Thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So
6 as the former Chair of Health and
7 Human Services, and we've spoke
8 extensively around DHS, and
9 particularly CUAs, and as you are
10 aware this was supposed to be back
11 in I think 2013, was it, 2014?

12 COMMISSIONER ALI: 2013.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
14 2013. When we moved to this CUA
15 system, the idea behind it was a
16 cost-cutting measure. That was the
17 thought process from the
18 Administration at that time around
19 why we were going into a brand new
20 system that was recommended, I
21 think, by the Annie Casey
22 Foundation. And so, we went into
23 the system and it leaves a lot to
24 be desired.

1 In my opinion, the first
2 thought behind it was that it was a
3 cost-cutting measure, and I just
4 don't even understand how we can
5 cut costs or how that can be a part
6 of the conversation when we're
7 dealing with our most vulnerable
8 population, which is primarily
9 children who are often displaced or
10 in very difficult circumstances,
11 living circumstances, and we're
12 trying to make sure that they're
13 okay. And so, cost-cutting should
14 have never been a part of that
15 conversation.

16 But what we did is we
17 went and we started this CUA system
18 and here we are now. And every
19 year I ask, if you could help us
20 get a better understanding, I know
21 what the numbers are, but get a
22 better understanding of how are we
23 here with the same budget almost
24 that we had in 2013 or so, and now

1 we have an added component of CUA
2 social workers. And now, as I look
3 at your CUA scorecard I see an
4 additional piece to it, which is
5 that they haven't been -- most of
6 them, not all of them, but most of
7 them have had a very difficult time
8 with staff retention. I think that
9 it's been the leading problem with
10 the CUA system.

11 And so, can you help
12 walk us through and explain some of
13 this so that it makes sense to us,
14 because it's just very difficult to
15 conceive that we're spending more
16 than we were spending? We're about
17 double what we were spending on a
18 system that really doesn't seem to
19 work because the CUAs can't seem to
20 retain staffing. Most of the CUAs
21 can't seem to retain staffing.

22 COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank
23 you for that question,
24 Councilmember Bass. So as you

1 indicated, back in 2013 we launched
2 Improving Outcomes for Children.
3 And by way of improving outcomes
4 for children, we identified
5 Community Umbrella Agency
6 providers. So we separated the
7 city geographically so a provider
8 will be responsible for providing
9 ongoing services, both inhome as
10 well as placement service for young
11 people in need of formal child
12 welfare services.

13 And so, first I want to
14 say in terms of the cost-saving
15 measure, as you indicated, that was
16 a previous Administration.
17 Certainly, I don't put a cost on --
18 when you talk about the most
19 vulnerable children, you're talking
20 about children when they are
21 formally accepted for child welfare
22 services who have been abused or
23 neglected. And so, I definitely
24 want to make sure that I

1 communicate that point.

2 Secondly, I will say to
3 you is that when we launched the
4 Community Umbrella Agencies in
5 2013, we did struggle. We
6 struggled during that particular
7 time because it was a whole system
8 transformation, and that system
9 transformation came as a result of
10 the unfortunate death of Danielle
11 Kelly, in which we had at the
12 particular time a dual case
13 management system. We had private
14 providers in families' homes as
15 well as DHS social workers.

16 And so, one of the major
17 complaints we received from
18 families, because we took the time
19 to talk to hundreds of families,
20 was around I don't know who should
21 I listen to and there are too many
22 people that are coming in and out
23 of my house. Secondly, the reason
24 why we moved to the Community

1 Umbrella Agency is because we
2 recognized that the providers are
3 the experts around providing
4 ongoing service delivery, and DHS
5 will retain our responsibilities
6 around managing the hotline and
7 doing investigations as it relates
8 to abuse and neglect and some other
9 areas in the department.

10 And so, we wanted to
11 clearly delineate the roles and
12 responsibilities between a DHS
13 social worker and a Community
14 Umbrella Agency social worker. And
15 as I indicated, early on there was
16 a struggle because you're talking
17 about a huge system transformation
18 we're introducing them. And so,
19 2017 was the first time that we
20 rolled out the CUA scorecard and we
21 have been doing the scorecard every
22 year after that.

23 And if you look at the
24 comparison between 2014 and 2025 --

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh,
2 it's a big improvement.

3 COMMISSIONER ALI: -- in
4 particular, there's been
5 some improvement.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I've
7 been paying attention.

8 COMMISSIONER ALI: There
9 has been some improvement.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So
11 can I pause you for one quick
12 second because you said that one of
13 the problems was having too many
14 people coming in and out of my
15 house and I'm not sure who's doing
16 what and who's responsible. So
17 clarify, if you would briefly, the
18 role of the CUA social worker
19 versus the role of a DHS social
20 worker?

21 COMMISSIONER ALI:
22 Absolutely. And so, the DHS social
23 worker is responsible for manning
24 our 24-hour child abuse hotline and

1 that is done by DHS social workers,
2 supervisors, administrators and a
3 director. So 24/7 I have DHS staff
4 that are in 1515 Arch Street
5 answering calls as it relates to
6 young people being abused or
7 neglected or families who are in
8 need of support.

9 DHS social workers are
10 also the only ones who can do child
11 abuse investigations, so CPS
12 investigations as well as GPS
13 investigations, so they are the
14 only ones. Community Umbrella
15 Agencies cannot. DHS social
16 workers also are responsible for
17 talking to the Law Department and
18 talking to the courts when removal
19 of a young person is necessary. So
20 CUA case managers do not do
21 removals.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So
23 on removals, and I know my time is
24 up, but I just want to lay this out

1 here and then we can come back, you
2 can think about or maybe have
3 somebody respond. So I wanted to
4 talk to you about a case. We have
5 spoken about this, but obviously
6 I'm not going to say names and
7 whatnot.

8 But I'm personally aware
9 of a case from my district in which
10 adoptive parents both died, a
11 non-relative from out of state, a
12 non-relative, so basically someone
13 from out of state came and took the
14 children. And despite orders from
15 DHS that children were not to leave
16 the state, they were taken. And
17 hearings to get in front of a judge
18 were delayed for nearly two years.
19 And after two years, finally in
20 court, a judge said they wouldn't
21 move them because -- there were
22 three children, wouldn't move them
23 because they've been living in
24 another state with these other

1 people for the last couple of years
2 and they're young children and they
3 don't want to disrupt them.

4 And so, they were also
5 aided by a staffer who wrote a note
6 that allowed a non-resident to
7 remove the children from school
8 with a note on DHS stationery that
9 said this person is authorized to
10 remove these children. And all of
11 this happened and we had just such
12 a difficult time trying to get any
13 action or intervention from DHS to
14 get those children back to the
15 family. And now they're gone,
16 they're gone. There's a court
17 order, judges ruled. They live in
18 another state now, period. And so,
19 they've been permanently separated
20 because there was no interaction
21 from our Department of Human
22 Services.

23 Also, I was contacted by
24 a citizen who has been in a legal

1 battle in family court covering
2 another jurisdiction, very similar,
3 for years despite having a partial
4 custody order issued in 2019 as a
5 grandparent. There were several
6 children by the parent who is
7 incarcerated. Now, those children
8 are divided up. The person with
9 full custody has no valid address
10 and has been in contempt of court
11 since 2022. And again, no action.
12 So you have a grandparent who is
13 trying to connect and has an order
14 for partial custody and there's
15 been no action by DHS in the last
16 four years now at least.

17 I know I'm out of time,
18 but I would really like an answer
19 to some of these things. And I
20 don't know if you need time to
21 review your case files and come
22 back.

23 COMMISSIONER ALI: No, I
24 don't need time to review the case

1 files because your office did make
2 me aware of the cases. And of
3 course, because of confidentiality
4 I won't talk about the specifics of
5 the case. However, I will say that
6 there is a distinction between
7 family court where DHS social
8 workers actually testify in family
9 court. Those courtrooms are
10 strictly child welfare courtrooms
11 versus custody court. So DHS
12 doesn't have any jurisdiction over
13 custody court and custody court
14 matters.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
16 Well, I'll say this: So even if in
17 courts that DHS does not have
18 jurisdiction over, it's my opinion
19 that the social worker who is
20 assigned to the case or whoever
21 from DHS has been involved has
22 really a duty and obligation to say
23 to the person seeking custody, this
24 is not what I'm able to do. And

1 these are the instructions in terms
2 of where you need to go and what
3 you need to do to help resolve your
4 case. Most people don't know. I
5 don't know the ins-and-outs of
6 trying to navigate family court,
7 custody court. Most people don't
8 know.

9 If you have the
10 knowledge, you're the subject
11 matter expert, then I think that
12 it's responsible for DHS to inform
13 our citizenry of what it is that
14 they should do to help their case
15 along, because most people aren't
16 lawyers, aren't attorneys, don't
17 know.

18 COMMISSIONER ALI: Oh,
19 absolutely, absolutely. And so,
20 that is definitely our role in
21 terms of informing constituents or
22 clients of DHS's role. And so, we
23 do that by way of our Commissioner
24 Action Response Office, in which

1 clients, young people call in
2 because they have a question about
3 their case and then we do it by way
4 of points of contact directly --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm
6 going to push back on that with all
7 due respect, because I know you
8 work hard and you've really made a
9 big difference at DHS. But when we
10 were trying to say why is it that
11 they are allowed to, you know, take
12 children that they're not
13 biologically related to, why are
14 they allowed to take them out of
15 state despite the fact that there's
16 an order that they're supposed to
17 stay in the Commonwealth of
18 Pennsylvania, why are all these
19 things happening. And we continue
20 to get sort of like the hand up,
21 nothing we could do, you know, this
22 is what it is, we have to wait.
23 And those delays and delays and
24 delays ended up for two years and

1 now judges saying they've been in
2 placement with these people for two
3 years so they're not coming back to
4 Philadelphia.

5 So I'll move on,
6 Mr. President, because I know I've
7 extended my time. But I just
8 really wanted to talk about that,
9 and I have another round.

10 COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank
11 you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
13 You're welcome.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes
16 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier and
17 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
19 Thank you, Council President.

20 And good morning to all
21 of you. Thank you so much for
22 everything that you do for the city
23 every day. My first question is
24 about the school facilities plan.

1 One of the things that has been
2 most frustrating for me in this
3 conversation is that there seems to
4 be no direct answer to the plan's
5 disparate impact.

6 The initial plan
7 recommended closing 20 schools.
8 And now, the current version of the
9 plan recommends closing 18. And
10 that's such a high number, that
11 some folks are referring to this as
12 a closure plan instead of a school
13 facilities plan. And certainly,
14 the recommendations for the 3rd
15 District are very concerning to me
16 and is a part of the reason why
17 I've pushed back so hard, the
18 recommendations in terms of both
19 the amount of closures recommended
20 in West and Southwest Philly and
21 the lack of investment recommended
22 for West and Southwest Philly in
23 terms of our school facilities.

24 And though I'm grateful

1 for Motivation High being moved off
2 of the closure list, the impact
3 would still be negative for my
4 community. And so, I continue to
5 push. But beyond the 3rd District,
6 the disparate impact around these
7 recommendations applies to the
8 entire city. When Dr. Watlington
9 was at this table a few months ago,
10 I brought up the inquirer
11 reporting, which showed that 68% of
12 the students impacted by this plan
13 are Black.

14 And I asked
15 Dr. Watlington if he had a response
16 for that, for that level of
17 disparate impact, and if that was
18 appropriate to continue moving on
19 with a plan that would impact Black
20 students in that way. And he said,
21 well, 51% of the students in the
22 school district are Black. There's
23 a big amount of difference between
24 a 51% Black student population and

1 almost 70% of the students being
2 impacted by closures being Black.

3 And, in fact, 90% of the
4 students impacted by this current
5 plan are Black and Latino. I've
6 asked this question at every school
7 board meeting and I've attended
8 every school board meeting that has
9 happened since the plan has been
10 released. For most of them, I've
11 stayed there to be in the room with
12 community members until the end of
13 those meetings because I feel like
14 we're all fighting together, but I
15 don't understand why there's not an
16 answer for this and I don't
17 understand why it's okay to keep
18 the train moving on a plan that
19 will hurt so many of our students
20 who are already vulnerable.

21 And so, I heard you
22 voice, Ms. Carrera, your support
23 for the school facilities plan.
24 And so, I want to ask you directly

1 is it okay to keep pushing forward
2 with recommendations that have been
3 shown or that are shown to have
4 such a negative and disparate
5 impact on our school districts,
6 Black and Brown students and on
7 Black and Brown communities?

8 And I'm often in this
9 chamber and we're talking about
10 what Trump is doing to us and we're
11 talking about what the state is
12 doing to us, but this is a process
13 that we control. And we fought for
14 a long time for local control of
15 our school board. We fight all the
16 time to have representation at
17 every level of government. But if
18 every time this conversation
19 happens, every time this closure
20 conversation happens, whether we're
21 talking about 2012 or now and we're
22 okay with hurting the same
23 neighborhoods and the same
24 vulnerable students, then I

1 question what we're doing and why
2 we're here and why the
3 representation and the local
4 control matter.

5 And so, I really want a
6 direct response on if we should
7 slow this down because that
8 negative and disparate impact has
9 been shown or do you think it's
10 okay, does the Mayor's office think
11 it's okay to move forward with a
12 plan that will hurt the same
13 communities that have already been
14 hurt by every version of this
15 closure conversation? What's our
16 responsibility on this issue?

17 DR. CARRERA: So thank
18 you so much for your questions,
19 your comments. I've seen you,
20 Councilwoman Gauthier, at these
21 meetings.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
23 I think we were next to each other.

24 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes,

1 we were sharing a beautiful little
2 baby girl that's been at the
3 meetings also. And so, this is not
4 easy, it is not easy, it is not
5 easy. When I was here, I think, a
6 few weeks ago testifying and I
7 shared a few things, the district
8 is underenrolled, and I have to
9 talk about the enrollment issue
10 because that is very important for
11 us to understand. 65% of buildings
12 are utilized -- there are 25% that
13 are -- there are 65% of buildings
14 are underutilized, right. So we
15 have a 65% underutilization rate.

16 When I was here, the
17 last time I shared that in the last
18 10 years we went from 500 children
19 in cyber charters to now 15,000
20 children in cyber charters, and we
21 also have families that are
22 choosing charter schools. About
23 80,000 families are choosing
24 charter schools. So we went from a

1 district that had over
2 200,000-something children, the
3 school district, to now they're at
4 112,000. The district is populated
5 about 51% African American, 27%
6 Latino that we have to talk about
7 as well, right. And then the
8 population of the district that is
9 White is 14%. Whatever decision is
10 going to be made, it is going to
11 impact Black and Brown children.

12 What I think is being
13 lost in this conversation is what
14 are kids going to get. And I think
15 that we have to really listen to
16 that part of the story. And I will
17 say this, and I said it the last
18 time: I ran a small high school,
19 500 kids under Paul Vallas,
20 Kensington CAPA. We were a
21 creative and performing arts
22 school, but guess what we didn't
23 have? We didn't have a dance
24 studio, we didn't have a music

1 room, we didn't have a choir room.
2 And yet we were a Kensington CAPA
3 school. And so, things shifted for
4 us at Kensington CAPA because I
5 moved my program into a school
6 where I had a dance studio, where I
7 had a visual arts space, an art
8 space, where I had a choir room, I
9 had a music room.

10 What happened?

11 Achievement went up. College
12 Readiness went up. Student
13 belonging went up because the
14 students had what they needed. And
15 what's getting lost is that the
16 purpose of this plan -- two years
17 ago I was here --

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

19 And I kind of want to -- I'm sorry.
20 I don't mean to interrupt, but I'm
21 asking a very specific question
22 that I really want a direct answer
23 to. It's not enough to say there
24 are more Black and Brown students

1 in the district and it's okay to
2 have an outsized impact on those
3 students. If 51% of the district
4 students are Black and 27% of the
5 district students are Latino, but
6 90% of the students being impacted
7 by this plan, which in all fairness
8 could be called a closure plan
9 based on the recommendations, that
10 shows an outsized disparate impact.

11 Why is it okay to not
12 take a pause to ensure that there
13 is equity? Why is that okay even
14 when the numbers clearly show that
15 the plan is inequitable to just
16 keep charging forward as opposed to
17 taking a pause to ensure that a
18 plan that we are creating
19 ourselves, the state is not
20 directing this, Trump is not
21 directing this, this is
22 Philadelphia's plan. Why is it
23 okay to keep charging forward as
24 opposed to taking a pause to ensure

1 that there's equity?

2 DR. CARRERA: So thank
3 you for that and I hear you
4 clearly. And when I think about
5 equity, equity is about giving kids
6 what they should have and it's not
7 about being equitable, but it's
8 about giving kids what they need.
9 We can't advocate to the state
10 without a plan. And as the Mayor
11 has said, we have to rightsize our
12 district because we have too many
13 buildings and we don't have the
14 students.

15 We have some parts of
16 our city that are overenrolled,
17 right, that are busting at the
18 seams and we have to think about
19 equity for them as well. But to
20 answer your question when we talk
21 about equity, it is about giving
22 kids what they need. And I want us
23 to focus on what is that pathway
24 forward, knowing that we have to

1 make some difficult decisions. We
2 have to rightsize the district.
3 This is an enrollment issue as
4 well. But most importantly, it is
5 about giving Black and Brown kids
6 the programming, the quality
7 programming they deserve in modern
8 buildings.

9 And we've heard the
10 statistic. Our buildings are old,
11 73 years old is the average
12 building. This 10-year plan would
13 modernize 159 buildings.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
15 I'll close out --

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: On the next round --

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
19 Can I just close out with a few
20 quick statements?

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Just a brief statement
23 and come back in the second round.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you. I think communities can
2 tell us what they need and they're
3 speaking right now. I think with a
4 plan with such a disparate impact,
5 it deserves us to take a pause.

6 And then also just one thing that
7 has also not been addressed is that
8 the enrollment problem relates
9 directly to changes that the
10 district made against what
11 communities and principals and
12 school staff told the district.

13 And I think that schools shouldn't
14 be punished because the district
15 made policies that drastically
16 decreased enrollment. Thank you so
17 much.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Thank you. And just as a
20 follow-up, I would like to get the
21 specifics regarding that last
22 statement, so the recommendations
23 that was given to the district and
24 as a result this is how the

1 district decided to move forward.

2 I would like to see that
3 information just for the record.

4 Okay. Thank you.

5 Councilmember Dr. Nina
6 Ahmad, then Councilmember Rue
7 Landau, Councilmember Harrity, then
8 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
9 Richardson.

10 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

11 Thank you, Council President.

12 I just want to start by
13 saying thank you to the Department
14 of Human Services, particularly
15 Commissioner Ali, who is extremely
16 accessible. Any time I have a
17 question or there's an issue with
18 the constituent, you have answered
19 the call and I'm very grateful for
20 that.

21 Today we're talking
22 about a critical conversation
23 impacting our child welfare system
24 that touches over 2000 children a

1 day, right. And in my two years
2 here and being the Chair of Public
3 Health and Human Services, I've had
4 to learn very fast a very
5 complicated system. And when we
6 discussed the budget for DHS, we're
7 not just talking about dollars,
8 we're talking about children and
9 families. And our conversations
10 and decisions today should be
11 guided by compassion, fairness and
12 a commitment to supporting our most
13 vulnerable.

14 So my questions are
15 going to be guided by three
16 priorities. I want to talk about
17 the status of the department's
18 provisional license. I want to
19 find out about the status of the
20 youth emergency shelters. And then
21 finally about staffing issues,
22 including salaries, both at DHS and
23 in the CUA system.

24 So I wanted to

1 understand in the provisional
2 license issue, when was
3 Philadelphia DHS's provisional
4 license issued and what is the
5 current status? And what was the
6 reason precipitating this problem
7 and where are we today? And how
8 does this impact your services that
9 you deliver? And there's more
10 questions after that I'll ask.

11 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.
12 Thank you for that question. In
13 terms of the provisional license,
14 the first provisional license that
15 DHS received was on March 27th of
16 2025 as it relates to the
17 Philadelphia Juvenile Justice
18 Services Center. Their provisional
19 license was issued by the state as
20 a result of a boxing exposition
21 that we had at the PJJSC, at which
22 no young person was actually
23 boxing. They were viewing the
24 boxing match and a fight broke out.

1 As a result of that, we were placed
2 on provisional license as of March
3 27th of 2025.

4 However, I am happy to
5 report that as of yesterday we have
6 our full license on the PJJSC, so
7 that has been restored as a result
8 of all the hard work of the
9 dedicated staff at the PJJSC. As a
10 result --

11 (Applause.)

12 COMMISSIONER ALI: As a
13 result of that provisional license
14 at the PJJSC, we were then issued a
15 provisional license on the child
16 welfare side. That provisional
17 license was issued on May 9th of
18 2025, almost two months after the
19 provisional was issued on the
20 PJJSC. We were not in agreement of
21 a provisional license status. And
22 so, we did file an appeal. Because
23 we filed the appeal, I'm not at
24 liberty to talk about the

1 provisional license status, but we
2 are still currently on a
3 provisional license on the child
4 welfare side. We have filed an
5 appeal. When you are on a
6 provisional license, the state
7 comes in and do monitoring every
8 six months.

9 And so, on our last
10 monitoring evaluation on the child
11 welfare side, we only received one
12 citation. And so, we are hoping
13 that our license will be restored
14 on the child welfare side again,
15 given the hard work of both DHS as
16 well as the Community Umbrella
17 Agencies.

18 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
19 Could you just elaborate? I know
20 you can't speak about the current
21 process under way. That's public,
22 why they issued you that
23 provisional license for the child
24 welfare side of things?

1 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.
2 The initial provisional license on
3 the child welfare side was issued
4 again as a result of the fight that
5 happened at the PJJSC in January of
6 2025. The state accused the
7 Department of Human Services of
8 accessing a child welfare database,
9 which is their child welfare
10 database, which is an exchange to
11 our internal DHS database. And so,
12 the information is shared in terms
13 of the state database and the child
14 welfare database. So as a result
15 of that, and you could see that
16 from the issuance of the
17 provisional license, the state
18 accused DHS of looking into an
19 investigation as it related to the
20 PJJSC.

21 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
22 you're contesting that.

23 COMMISSIONER ALI:
24 Absolutely.

1 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
2 thank you for the update. I'm
3 quickly going over to a line item
4 of 8.6 million for youth emergency
5 shelter. And on there, there's a
6 vendor to be determined. And last
7 year, we also had the same
8 conversation about vendors to be
9 determined. In FY25, that service
10 was provided at 2.78 million. The
11 proposed amount is now almost three
12 times larger and there's no
13 provider selected. Can you explain
14 to us how we can approve a 8.6
15 million in critical child safety
16 services that is assigned to no
17 one? We would like some clarity on
18 that.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.
20 So we actually have an RFP that is
21 out now to identify another
22 emergency shelter. And so, that's
23 why a vendor has not been
24 identified as of yet. And so, we

1 are hopeful that we will have a
2 vendor identified by the end of
3 this fiscal year to provide short-
4 term emergency shelter services for
5 young teenagers.

6 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
7 why is the number three times more
8 as you had last time?

9 MS. PERESE: Thank you
10 for that. My name is Nadine
11 Perese. I'm the Chief Financial
12 Officer for the department. The
13 number has changed because it was
14 additional funding that we received
15 from the state. The state gives us
16 partial funding in the first year
17 of a program when we're asking to
18 start it up and then full funding
19 the following fiscal year. So
20 that's when all the funding came
21 through for that. And the RFP is
22 out right now. And so, we're
23 reviewing the proposals.

24 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And

1 this brings me to the question we
2 asked yesterday about the speed of
3 paying contractors and paying
4 people we connect with in terms of
5 vendor services. That seems to be
6 an issue with the CUAs in terms of
7 how they get paid. I also wanted
8 to wrap into this the conversation
9 about how well our social workers
10 are paid and what is your attrition
11 rate.

12 And I would have loved
13 to see an increase in your budget
14 because it's flat and we are not
15 seeing -- I don't know if you took
16 in account all the issues around
17 inflation and salary adjustments,
18 because the complaint I have heard
19 is about our social workers are not
20 paid well, that's number one, when
21 we compare to other states.

22 And the other issue is
23 the workload in terms of how the
24 state tells you how many cases you

1 can have, but if it's a case with
2 many siblings, they don't take into
3 account the increased work even
4 though you're qualifying for the
5 actual total number that's set out
6 by the state. So these are the
7 things we've been discovering as
8 issues faced by people who work in
9 DHS.

10 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.
11 So let me start with the
12 contracting question. And so, DHS
13 embraces the RFP process because of
14 the transparency of the process and
15 it gives providers an opportunity
16 to bid for opportunities. And so,
17 we have been very successful with
18 the RFP process. Additionally, we
19 have been very successful with our
20 contracting process at DHS.

21 And so, we don't view
22 the contracting as an issue with
23 DHS. To give you a sense, DHS has
24 287 professional services contracts

1 and we were at a 93% conformance
2 rate during the first quarter of
3 FY26. So between July 1st and
4 September, we had already conformed
5 93% of our contracts. We take that
6 extremely seriously because we know
7 that contracts and providers need
8 to get paid so that they can take
9 care of the most vulnerable young
10 people as well as their families.
11 And so, we don't view contracting
12 as an issue with DHS.

13 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

14 Just one point of clarity, when you
15 conform doesn't mean you actually
16 paid the contractor. There's two
17 different things for people to
18 understand.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI:

20 That's absolutely -- our invoicing
21 process and our payment process is
22 also pretty exceptional at the
23 Department of Human Services.

24 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

1 What is that percentage?

2 MS. PERESE:

3 Councilmember, I don't know the
4 percentage. But what I can tell
5 you is payment usually occurs
6 within 21 days of receiving an
7 accurate invoice.

8 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: The
9 conformance. So you conform and
10 then you get the invoice and then
11 you pay. And that is all 21 days
12 from the time of conformance?

13 MS. PERESE: No, no.
14 Once the contract is conformed, and
15 this is throughout the fiscal year,
16 we receive an invoice, payment is
17 usually remitted within 21 days.
18 And that's a review process
19 internally and then it goes through
20 central finance, the Controller's
21 Office and then we make payment.

22 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
23 we're missing what it takes from
24 actually conformed to getting the

1 actual invoice. I think the devil
2 is in the details. So we'll follow
3 up on this, because it might look
4 good that we're doing the
5 conformance at 90, but actual
6 payout is not 90. So I just want
7 to clear that up and we'll follow
8 up on that. Sorry. Go ahead. I
9 interrupted you.

10 COMMISSIONER ALI: The
11 other question you asked was in
12 terms of the salaries for DHS
13 staff.

14 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
15 Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER ALI: And
17 so, I will pull that up in a
18 second. I will tell you that a
19 Social Work Service Manager II at
20 the Department of Human Services
21 makes about \$60,000 a year, which
22 is comparable to the amount of
23 money that we also instruct CUAs to
24 give to their CUA case managers.

1 And so, it is comparable in that
2 regard. And so, Social Work
3 Services Managers II Step 1 is
4 \$62,000 and they can go all the way
5 up to Step 5, which is \$80,000 for
6 Social Work Service Managers II.

7 You asked the question
8 about also our vacancy rate. So
9 our vacancy rate as indicated is
10 20%. In order to increase the
11 retention and fill vacancies, we
12 have done a number of things. The
13 first thing that we do is we work
14 very closely with Central HR around
15 making sure that social work, the
16 test is not a written test. So we
17 do use experience so that we can
18 make sure that we get a good
19 applicant pool.

20 We also bring in classes
21 every quarter. And so, every
22 quarter we bring in social work
23 classes. We learned from doing
24 exit interviews from Social Work

1 Service Managers in terms of why
2 they left the department, they
3 talked a lot about the difficulty
4 and the transfer learning from the
5 classroom, in which they are
6 required to receive at least 120
7 hours of a state-certified
8 training, up until the time they
9 have to actually engage families.
10 And so, about a year and a half ago
11 we developed what we call Bridge
12 Units. And so, Bridge Units are
13 supervisors that we identified in
14 investigations and in hotline who
15 could mentor and train the newly
16 hired Social Work Service Managers
17 after they got out of training.

18 And so, what we find is
19 that our retention rate is higher
20 because we started with the Bridge
21 Unit. We also do a lot around
22 wellness, morale boosters because
23 this work is extremely difficult.
24 We also offer counseling around

1 vicarious trauma, again because of
2 the difficulty of the work. And
3 so, we also believe in supporting
4 social workers as well.

5 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
6 do you think \$60,000 to \$80,000 for
7 this type of work is appropriate?
8 What are best practices for other
9 urban areas? That sounds to me
10 really low, I will tell you. If
11 you look at some of our salaries of
12 our executive salaries, they're
13 massive compared to this. And this
14 is real work every day, stressful,
15 traumatic, and this sounds to me
16 they're really underpaid.

17 COMMISSIONER ALI: So
18 the Social Work Service Manager,
19 the salary that I quoted was
20 \$62,763, is the starting salary.
21 And so, we have begun to start
22 newly hired Social Work Service
23 Managers at Step 2. Recognize that
24 this is a civil service position.

1 I will tell you that we have been
2 in conversation with both the union
3 as well as Central HR about raising
4 the salary, particularly for
5 investigators, because what you
6 spoke about in terms of the level
7 of trauma. They see a lot when you
8 talk about young people who are
9 being abused. And so, we are in
10 active negotiations around that so
11 that we can give those social
12 workers in particular a higher
13 salary.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
17 we are really stuck at the civil
18 service level to figure out how to
19 increase that?

20 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: We're going to wrap this
23 up, Member Ahmad --

24 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

1 Yes. Well, I just have one last
2 question for Dr. Carrera.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: We don't have one more
5 question, Member Ahmad -- be brief
6 because I've been --

7 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

8 Very brief.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: I'm tightening y'all so
11 we can continue to move forward. I
12 want y'all to be very direct with
13 your questions, direct with your
14 responses because everybody is
15 still in the queue waiting so --

16 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

17 Quick question to follow up on my
18 colleague Jamie Gauthier's
19 question, and I'll talk about
20 specifically one particular school,
21 and the talk about the only problem
22 with that is enrollment issues.
23 When you talk about 73-year-old
24 schools and we have to --

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Member Ahmad, ask your
3 question.

4 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

5 Yeah. The question is you can't
6 use the age of a building to say
7 how appropriate it is, because
8 we're sitting in a building 126
9 years old. I live in a building in
10 my home which is over 100 years
11 old. So let's put that aside. I
12 want to talk about enrollment and
13 Lankenau.

14 Lankenau is a jewel in
15 your crown and you have made no
16 efforts to tell us -- the only
17 environmental curriculum school in
18 the city and one of two in the
19 state who have received honors all
20 over the place and yet you are
21 putting them on a chopping block.
22 That makes zero sense to me. Could
23 you please answer that? And please
24 don't say it's the same as Saul

1 because it is not. We need both
2 Saul, an agriculture school and an
3 environmental education-focused
4 school.

5 DR. CARRERA: So I would
6 be brief. Thank you, Dr. Ahmad,
7 for your question. As I shared
8 earlier, the school district used
9 four components to reach these
10 decisions. They looked at
11 neighborhood vulnerability, they
12 looked at program alignment, school
13 utilization and school building
14 score and they made those
15 recommendations. And so, that's my
16 answer.

17 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
18 Okay. It's sufficient. But we'll
19 end it here. We have much more to
20 discuss.

21 Thank you, Council
22 President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: It does beg the question

1 when you have high-quality schools,
2 and we've been dealing with this,
3 this school has 100% graduation
4 rate, right. And the fact that it
5 has 100% graduation rate and not
6 all the schools have that high
7 level academic achievement,
8 irregardless of what the building
9 looks like, if you have that level
10 of success rate, it does beg the
11 question why would the
12 Administration support closing such
13 a school?

14 Now, the district will
15 come and give their reasoning, but
16 I would also think as the Chief
17 Education Officer, the information
18 they provide to you, you'll be able
19 to opine on as to why it would be a
20 good idea to close the school with
21 such high academic performance,
22 because that's rare to be quite
23 frank. Not every public school has
24 their level of success.

1 And so, I do understand
2 the fact that my member has been
3 advocating around this particular
4 issue, and it's kind of does that
5 even make sense. If it's so
6 successful, you want to keep that
7 model more than anything else. And
8 so, we will continue to advocate.
9 And obviously, to be quite frank
10 even as we move forward through
11 this budget process, evaluate what
12 that looks like. But I just wanted
13 to add that.

14 To members, I just want
15 to ask because we have a couple
16 people in the queue and I at least
17 want to get through the first round
18 before we go to lunch, just please
19 be succinct and direct in your line
20 of questioning as well as the
21 response -- I'm okay with the
22 commentary, but also be more direct
23 as well.

24 Councilmember Rue

1 Landau, then Jim Harrity,
2 Richardson, and then we have Brooks
3 and Young to take us out the first
4 round.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

6 Thank you very much, Council
7 President.

8 Thank you all for being
9 here. I would like to think the
10 first part of my questions are
11 going to go to DHS. And thank you,
12 Commissioner, for being here. I
13 wanted to follow up, in October
14 2025 the Committee of Technology
15 and Information Services along with
16 Children and Youth held a hearing
17 on GPS use, GPS use for youth as an
18 alternative to detention in
19 Juvenile Justice Center.

20 During that hearing,
21 youth reported having a difficult
22 time engaging in activities like
23 afterschool jobs, extracurricular
24 activities. Often times they said

1 they were even worried about
2 stepping off their front porch or
3 going into their basement because
4 of problems with the GPS
5 monitoring. And there were
6 conversations about data collection
7 of this, whether or not the
8 companies knew of these failings
9 and whether or not you knew and the
10 communication here.

11 So my questions are, are
12 you currently tracking these types
13 of failings or glitches in the
14 system? And if so, can you make it
15 available? And how can we make
16 sure that if we're committed to
17 using GPS monitoring, that our
18 youth are still able to engage in
19 social activities?

20 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes,
21 thank you for that question. The
22 GPS monitors -- so DHS actually
23 pays for the monitors. We are in
24 partnership with juvenile probation

1 and the courts. And so, we do not
2 directly receive data around the
3 use of the GPS other than how many
4 are utilized. We don't get data
5 around any glitches. That
6 information is shared with the
7 courts directly based on their MOU
8 with the provider, so it's shared
9 directly with them.

10 I will tell you though
11 that we have had some subsequent
12 conversations with the courts
13 around the use of GPS. And so, I
14 know that they have been talking
15 about some strategies around making
16 sure that the use of GPS is more
17 effective based on that hearing.
18 And so, I believe the detail of the
19 questions is probably best asked of
20 the courts when they come before
21 you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
23 Okay. That leads me to a larger
24 technology question that I think

1 I'm going to use as a theme for so
2 many of the departments now. So I
3 understand you have a database that
4 shares information with the state
5 database. What other technology do
6 you use at DHS and what do you
7 need?

8 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.

9 And so, at DHS in terms of the
10 technology we use, we have what is
11 called the Philadelphia Family Data
12 System that we call PFDS. And that
13 data system actually contains
14 information about families. So
15 everything from when a call comes
16 into the DHS hotline up until we
17 close out of case, so very specific
18 information about families, about
19 the services that they received,
20 whether it was inhome or placement
21 services, so very specific, and it
22 contains all that information is
23 very confidential.

24 In terms of what

1 additional data or what additional
2 technology that we need, we don't
3 need any additional technology at
4 this time. So DHS does have an IT
5 department that certainly responds
6 to any issues that we may have
7 internally with either our database
8 and the exchange with the state,
9 because, remember, DHS has a
10 hotline, but the state also has a
11 child abuse hotline. And so,
12 there's a data exchange when the
13 state receives a call about a young
14 person from Philadelphia. And so,
15 our IT department at DHS certainly
16 supports us in that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
18 Final question, thank you, was you
19 talked about having fewer social
20 workers, I believe because the work
21 is being done by outside
22 organizations because of the
23 success that you're seeing, right.
24 I may have missed this, but my

1 understanding is unfortunately when
2 there's families that are
3 struggling and having problems,
4 there's two paths you go. If DHS
5 starts getting involved, the family
6 gets resources. And if DHS is not
7 involved, which is what we want,
8 the family doesn't get resources.

9 Do you have programs
10 that give resources to families
11 that aren't in care? And if not,
12 is there a way to utilize social
13 workers to give families the
14 resources they need so they never
15 come under DHS care?

16 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.
17 And so, the families that receive
18 services on our prevention side,
19 those services are provided to them
20 by our community-based providers,
21 some of which you are very familiar
22 with. And so they provide services
23 to the family outside of the child
24 welfare system. However, families

1 can access that service even
2 without DHS involvement.

3 We wanted to also ensure
4 that families were aware of that.
5 And so, we also in partnership with
6 the Philadelphia Health Department
7 stood up a support line because we
8 want the child abuse hotline to be
9 used for when a young person is
10 either abused or neglected, and
11 that the support line, mandated
12 reporters can use it, community-
13 based providers, community can use
14 it so that they can call and
15 request services.

16 And so, DHS helps
17 support the Health Department with
18 community navigators as well as
19 putting some concrete supports so
20 families can get the services that
21 they need outside of the formal
22 child welfare system.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
24 Great. Thank you.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Thank you.

3 Chair recognizes

4 Councilmember Jim Harrity, then

5 Majority Leader Katherine Gilmore

6 Richardson.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

8 Thank you, Council President.

9 Thank you all for your
10 service. Of course, we all know
11 that your jobs are not easy so we
12 do appreciate you even though
13 sometimes our questions are a
14 little rough. But for the sake of
15 time, just going to ask my
16 questions real quick and you can
17 answer what you can and get back to
18 me on what you can't.

19 So Human Services first.
20 Last year in your testimony you
21 stated that you rely on 165 million
22 in federal funding. What changes
23 did you see in FY26 and what should
24 we expect for FY27? You mentioned

1 that the department would continue
2 to develop and implement new tools
3 to evaluate juvenile justice
4 diversion and detention
5 alternatives in FY2026. Can you
6 provide more information on what
7 specific improvements were made?
8 What measures are currently being
9 taken to reduce juvenile
10 recidivism? And what do the
11 statistics look like today?

12 And then for the Mayor's
13 Office of Education, in light of
14 the projected school closures, what
15 role will your office play in
16 helping the needs of the community
17 when you close a school, for
18 instance, like Memphis Street
19 Academy, which is a charter school
20 in a neighborhood that we're
21 already closing three other
22 schools? So just trying to figure
23 out how we're going to fill not
24 only the needs of our kids there,

1 but also the needs that are being
2 taken care of in the community by
3 these schools through their
4 interactions.

5 COMMISSIONER ALI: So
6 I'll have Nadine talk specifically
7 about the federal funding, and then
8 I'll go into the answers.

9 MS. PERESE: Sure.
10 Thank you for your question. On
11 the federal side, we haven't seen
12 much of a shift in our overall
13 federal funding. It's been pretty
14 stable. Small shifts in the
15 funding occur when our placement
16 population changes because it's
17 based on whoever's in care. But
18 other than that, it's been fairly
19 stable. And a significant portion,
20 almost all of our federal funding
21 is passed through the state.

22 COMMISSIONER ALI: So in
23 terms of the questions around
24 diversion, community-based juvenile

1 justice providers, so we do have a
2 performance management and
3 technology division that's
4 responsible for doing all of our
5 data reporting. We recognized in
6 order to do more thorough and
7 comprehensive, look at the impact,
8 if you will, of particular services
9 that we needed some additional
10 capacity. And so, we issued an
11 RFP, we selected a provider and we
12 have been actively engaging that
13 provider so that they can help us
14 determine whether or not the
15 services that we are providing on
16 the juvenile side are actually
17 working.

18 I do want to also talk
19 about the recidivism that you
20 indicated. And so, we actually
21 looked at over a five-year period.
22 Over 4300 young people that were
23 being held at the Philadelphia
24 Juvenile Justice Services Center,

1 85% of them did not recidivate
2 after two years of their case being
3 closed out. And so, we will
4 continue to look at that and look
5 at recidivism. We believe that the
6 reason why there has been an impact
7 is because our goal is to make
8 detention more meaningful.

9 We know that it's
10 difficult for young people to be
11 held at the PJJSC. And so, we
12 offer a variety of programs to keep
13 them engaged, a lot of which are
14 vocational programming.

15 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
16 Yeah. I actually come up there and
17 speak to the kids for PTTI. Shout-
18 out to them, doing great work up
19 there trying to get these kids
20 interested in the trades. Thank
21 you. And just if you could answer
22 the question about schools.

23 DR. CARRERA: Thank you
24 so much, Councilmember. Thank you

1 for your continuous advocacy. It's
2 an important issue. I'll talk
3 about Memphis real quickly and then
4 get into the other question. So
5 just to know -- and you know this,
6 the transition process is a joint
7 conversation between the school
8 district and the charter school
9 provider, so I'll have to defer
10 that question specifically to the
11 school district.

12 And then the second
13 question is about our office
14 involvement. So as you know, the
15 school district presents a plan to
16 the board, and then the board votes
17 on that plan and they're
18 responsible to implement that plan,
19 and we will be working alongside
20 the board in the implementation of
21 what they have to do.

22 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: So
23 you have no real role in the
24 schools being closed?

1 DR. CARRERA: It's the
2 school district's plan?

3 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
4 It's school district's plan. Okay.
5 Just my concerns, as you can see,
6 is that fact that it seems like
7 certain areas get targeted and my
8 area seems to get targeted a lot.
9 And the fact that we're losing
10 three of our schools and then on
11 top of it, are going to lose our
12 neighborhood charter school. If
13 we're thinking about kids, I don't
14 know what that is.

15 But thank you for the
16 time, Council President. I
17 appreciate it.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Thank you.

20 Chair recognizes
21 Majority Leader Katherine Gilmore
22 Richardson, the Minority Leader
23 Kendra Brooks and then
24 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
3 so much, Council President.

4 And thank you so much to
5 the Mayor's Office of Education,
6 Dr. Deb Carrera. Wonderful time at
7 CCP at the CATC relative to the
8 nondestructive testing and naval
9 welding, first cohort graduation
10 last week. Very quickly I also
11 heard you mention the program
12 Joyful Readers. And when I heard
13 Joyful Readers, my ears perked
14 because that is a wonderful, proven
15 program to help young people
16 increase their reading levels and
17 their reading scores.

18 And I can attest to it
19 personally. This is my first
20 experience and first year with
21 Joyful Readers, a program I had
22 never heard of before. And so, I
23 want to give kudos to Joyful
24 Readers and the work that you all

1 are doing in the Mayor's Office of
2 Education. I hope that that
3 program can be extended to schools
4 citywide. It's an excellent
5 program.

6 And then finally, I
7 wanted to thank our Commissioner
8 Kimberly Ali from the Department of
9 Human Services, Council President.
10 You always give her kudos from
11 being from South Philadelphia. I
12 must give her kudos for being a
13 graduate of Philadelphia High
14 School for Girls. And we
15 appreciate the work that you and
16 your team are doing.

17 I must do the thank-yous
18 quickly. Katherine Garzon, who
19 helps us with the CERC work; Gary
20 Williams, you've been incredible,
21 incredible over these last six
22 years; and Cydney Irving-Dasent as
23 well as the entire team at DHS,
24 particularly the communications

1 team as well who works with my
2 team, and also Nadine, who's doing
3 the heavy lifting with some of the
4 things that I'll mention very
5 quickly.

6 I heard you say,
7 Commissioner, that we are at over
8 3000 youth service and 79,000
9 visits for the Community Evening
10 Resource Center. So thank you,
11 thank you, thank you. That is an
12 initiative that did not exist at
13 the onset of the last term and
14 together we were able to stand up
15 that operation in large part due to
16 the work of the team at DHS.

17 I wanted to briefly
18 mention, and I heard you talk about
19 this earlier with another
20 colleague, regarding the
21 professional services contracts.
22 Are you all one or two in city
23 government with the amount of
24 professional services contracts?

1 Is it 1941? Are you one or two?
2 How many professional services
3 contracts over the life of the Five
4 Year Plan?

5 MS. PERESE: So we have
6 about 287, I think it is,
7 professional services contracts.
8 So I'm not --

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
10 RICHARDSON: So who's number one
11 and number two?

12 MS. PERESE: You mean
13 who are the biggest contracts?

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
15 RICHARDSON: Meaning, ranking.
16 Meaning, city departments.

17 MS. PERESE: Oh, I'm not
18 sure.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
20 RICHARDSON: Okay. And I'm
21 bringing that up for a reason.
22 Because I heard you all say that
23 you're at 93% conformance for Q1?

24 MS. PERESE: For Q1,

1 Yes. We're at 100 now. I mean,
2 everyone's been conformed now.
3 But, yes, we were at 93 at Q1.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Right. No, I think
6 that DHS is the gold standard in
7 the Health and Human Services
8 portfolio as it relates to contract
9 conformance, getting the process
10 through the pipeline. I'm sure the
11 last --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Speak in the microphone.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: I'm sorry. I'm sure
16 the last 7% was probably related to
17 provider challenges relative to
18 invoicing on the backend. And so,
19 I just wanted to give you all kudos
20 because you have obviously, and
21 I'll check this, the largest amount
22 of professional services contracts
23 in the Health and Human Service
24 portfolio. And to have a 93%

1 conformance rate in light of the
2 recommendations that we have from
3 the Pew/Bennett Midland report, I
4 think is excellent. So I wanted to
5 give you kudos for that.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: I think this is
9 probably a question more for
10 Sabrina than for our Commissioner.
11 But I heard you talk about the 20%
12 vacancy rate. And we notice --
13 when you read the detail, you
14 notice that there's an assumption
15 baked in that the full Class 100
16 allocation will be utilized when we
17 know that departments technically
18 have a significant vacancy rate.
19 And I heard you talk about the 221
20 new hires total. I read that in
21 the detail, the 71 or 78 new social
22 service managers, and then the
23 additional complement of staff over
24 at the JJSC as well, that was 31.

1 And so, how does that
2 impact FY27 Class 100 requests in
3 particular because I did see the
4 slight bump? This on Page 285 of
5 the Five Year Plan. I saw the
6 slight bump. And then how does it
7 impact the Five Year Plan
8 projections? And I think that's
9 probably a question more for
10 Sabrina, but if you all could
11 address that because I think that's
12 an ongoing challenge across
13 departments over the plan. It's
14 extra dollars baked into these
15 Class 100 projections. And if we
16 can get that tighter, I think that
17 helps us get to a better end goal
18 relative to realizing additional
19 revenue that is right here. It's
20 right here.

21 MS. PERESE: Understood.
22 Thank you for that question. So
23 first, I'll just say that we have
24 been trying to take a conservative

1 approach with addressing our
2 vacancies and rightsizing our
3 budget. So in FY27, we proposed a
4 cut of 25 positions. And so,
5 that's something that we're going
6 to continue to evaluate as a
7 department, but we made that
8 initial cut. So that's one way to
9 address it. The second way is --

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: I'm sorry. Is that
12 FY27 estimate?

13 MS. PERESE: It's
14 proposed, FY27 proposed budget.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Okay. Because the
17 current estimate for FY26 and FY27
18 estimate, you know, it would be
19 hard to see the reduction in the
20 position because of the amount.
21 You know where I'm going.

22 MS. PERESE: I do, I do.
23 So what I would say is it's
24 counterbalanced by the fact that

1 there were contractual raises in
2 FY27 that were taken into
3 consideration. So we have D.C. 33,
4 D.C. 47, non-rep raises, so that's
5 also baked into there. So that
6 does cancel it out a little bit.
7 But we are at least addressing the
8 vacancies with the positions.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Received. No, no, I
11 heard the bell and I'm going to
12 honor the clock, but I received
13 that. But I also know that we are
14 working through, I guess, the labor
15 reserve as well. So I'll come back
16 to that on how we understand the
17 Class 100 allocation for each
18 department. It's not specific to
19 DHS. But just thinking -- and I
20 heard you answered with the 20%
21 vacancy rate. And then looking at
22 the estimates versus the proposed
23 and then the position count, you
24 try to make sense of the numbers to

1 find where there's additional
2 opportunity for revenue that's
3 sitting right there. Because then
4 we'll come back again next year and
5 we'll be sitting with a surplus in
6 the General Fund after we indicated
7 that we believe will not be in a
8 good space. Okay. So I just
9 wanted to bring that to the
10 attention of every department who's
11 listening, not just for DHS.

12 And then lastly, I just
13 wanted to ask a question how are
14 you all ensuring the safety and the
15 permanency and the well-being of
16 youth who need to remain at DHS
17 overnight, say, if they're not able
18 to get a placement? I wanted to
19 bring that up. And then the very,
20 very last question, Councilmember
21 Bass brought up a case, and we
22 don't have any specific cases, but
23 I wanted to just reiterate that we
24 have one particular constituent who

1 I'm sure has contacted many
2 Councilmembers.

3 I will give you their
4 contact information again, but just
5 want's additional feedback,
6 outreach from DHS. And I've given
7 you all this case before. I know
8 it's very delicate from a legal
9 standpoint, but I'll resubmit it
10 again because we received constant
11 outreach. And I don't know whether
12 or not the case is just stuck in
13 the legal system or where it is,
14 but I'll resend it again.

15 COMMISSIONER ALI: Okay.
16 Sounds good. Thank you for that.
17 And so, I will take the question
18 around the safety premising and
19 well-being of young people who are
20 in need of placement. And so, DHS
21 is a 24/7 operation. And so, young
22 people can come into DHS any time
23 of the day, any day of the week and
24 we receive them with open arms.

1 And so, we do have a
2 child care room. However, we had
3 to look at the number of young
4 people who were utilizing the child
5 care room and implement a few
6 strategies. First, let me say that
7 there has been almost a 50%
8 reduction in the utilization of the
9 child care room, partly because we
10 are laser-focused on making sure
11 that young people are placed with
12 individuals that they know.

13 Also, we engage them to
14 determine why are they disrupting
15 from placement or why are they
16 unable to return home. And so,
17 that is also the result of our
18 family engagement initiative that
19 we have in partnership with the
20 courts. And then finally, I will
21 say this is one of the reasons why
22 we do have the RFP out now for
23 youth emergency services so that we
24 can address the short-term needs of

1 young people until we identify a
2 more permanent placement or return
3 them back to their families.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Received. Would that
6 site be downtown or it depends on
7 the response?

8 COMMISSIONER ALI: It
9 depends on the response.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: You're not location
12 specific?

13 COMMISSIONER ALI: No,
14 not at all.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Received. Okay.
17 Thank you. Thank you,
18 Commissioner.

19 Thank you, Council
20 President.

21 COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank
22 you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Leader.

1 Chair recognizes
2 Minority Leader Kendra Brooks.
3 Then we have Member Young and then
4 we have Member Lozada.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

6 Thank you, Council President.

7 I have some questions
8 for the Department of Human
9 Services that I want to get on the
10 record. I want to begin by
11 thanking them for their commitment
12 to connecting our foster youth to
13 federal benefits. And we had a
14 very productive conversation about
15 this tough topic and I've been
16 interested about this issue since
17 I've been in Council.

18 I'm going to go straight
19 to it. So I have three clear
20 questions. In terms of the
21 accounts to hold this money, I know
22 there have been several RFPs that
23 have not worked out, and I want to
24 thank you for that work that you

1 have done. But can you let me know
2 the status of the process of
3 setting up those accounts? And if
4 the RFP process isn't going to
5 work, are there other workarounds
6 that doesn't require an RFP? And
7 could the city put that money
8 directly into a savings account
9 rather than having it gone through
10 the General Fund first? And can
11 you let us know what options you
12 are thinking through?

13 And the third question
14 is, I know there have been some
15 concerns about the tax implications
16 for providing these funds and I
17 appreciate this concern, but could
18 these be classified as gifts or
19 could these payments be made in
20 parts rather than a lump sum?

21 MS. PERESE: Thank you
22 for that question and thank you for
23 your continued support here. There
24 have been a few updates. First, I

1 would say that you're correct, we
2 had the unsuccessful RFP process
3 two times. And so, we have decided
4 that it would be best if we broke
5 up the process, did as much as we
6 could internally with the support
7 of the Treasurer's Office to push
8 out funding to individual youth and
9 then create or build up a fiscal
10 literacy program for youth within
11 an existing provider. So that's
12 our steps.

13 Unfortunately, we have
14 had some delays on actually writing
15 checks to youth. So that is our
16 goal, to be able to write checks to
17 youth upon exiting care. We've
18 looked into a grant option, a gift
19 option, and I think now we're at a
20 point where we would like to just
21 be able to write checks directly to
22 youth and then just provide them
23 the information that they need so
24 that they fully understand the

1 possible implications of receiving
2 those funds. So we just wanted to
3 take our time with this and be sure
4 that we weren't causing any greater
5 issues for the youth or tax
6 implications or worse, as they're
7 transitioning out of care, that
8 they're no longer able to qualify
9 for benefits. So that was a major
10 hurdle for us.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
12 Benefits, you mean like health care
13 or whatever or --

14 MS. PERESE: Like SNAP.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
16 Like a lump sum of money would
17 prevent --

18 MS. PERESE: Mm-hmm.

19 COMMISSIONER ALI: But I
20 did want to state that we have been
21 conserving those funds since
22 January of 2025. And so, those
23 funds are being conserved for young
24 people who receive RSDI benefits.

1 And so, we are still conserving the
2 funds. We just need to get the
3 money in the hands of the young
4 people upon their exit.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So
6 with the small lump sums, wouldn't
7 that prevent them from having
8 whatever amount of money they're
9 allowed to earn in lieu of food
10 stamps or health care? Is it a way
11 we can parse out that money so it
12 doesn't eliminate that but still
13 gives them additional funding?
14 Because if you're getting cash
15 assistance, I don't know what that
16 is, what \$200?

17 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.
18 And I will say this, we have been
19 in conversations with our Law
20 Department around what does this
21 look like in terms of taxes,
22 eligibility. And so, we have been
23 walking lockstep with them so that
24 we can make the right decision for

1 young people and not jeopardize
2 their ability to receive additional
3 funds upon their exit.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

5 Okay. Thank you. I have questions
6 for the second round. I'll wait.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

9 Chair recognizes

10 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young and
11 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada.

12 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
13 you, Mr. President.

14 First question I have is
15 for DHS. Can you tell us how many
16 or what's the deficit in the number
17 of resource families that we need
18 in order to provide a home for all
19 of the kids that need a home in the
20 city?

21 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.
22 So thank you for that question. We
23 don't have a deficit in the number
24 of resource homes for young people.

1 We actually have more than enough
2 resource homes. The issue comes if
3 the resource parent is able to
4 address the needs of the young
5 people. And so, that's where you
6 see the disconnect. And so, in
7 order to address that disconnect,
8 we actually partner with our
9 colleagues at Community Behavioral
10 Health so that we can provide
11 additional skills to both kinship
12 parents and foster parents around
13 skills, around how to handle young
14 people who have more challenging
15 behaviors. And so, we started that
16 maybe about a year and a half ago
17 so that we can help build the
18 capacity and the skills for foster
19 parents and kinship care parents.

20 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
21 you. Another thing -- I should
22 have been more specific in my
23 question. So I specifically want
24 to ask about the 22nd police

1 district because I'm getting
2 information from our CUAs to say
3 that they are in need of these
4 families in those communities in
5 North Philadelphia. So you're
6 saying we have the capacity there.
7 I just want to make sure that I'm
8 understanding how to continue to
9 help some of our CUAs.

10 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.

11 So I don't know the capacity by
12 district. I could get that by
13 district in terms of resource
14 parents. I will say to you when
15 CUA case manager or DHS social
16 workers talk about resource parents
17 or foster parents, we also like to
18 have the conversation around
19 kinship parents first. And so, our
20 goal is to place young people with
21 individuals that they know or know
22 the family. And when they don't,
23 then we place that young person in
24 foster care. But I don't know

1 specific by zip code or district,
2 but I certainly can get that. And
3 I can have more conversation
4 because the Community Umbrella
5 Agency who is responsible for that
6 area is NET, so Northeast Treatment
7 Center, who's also a foster care
8 provider. And so, I can have some
9 conversations with them around
10 their own foster care recruitment.

11 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
12 you. And you mentioned kinship
13 care. Can you talk to us about if
14 there are any issues as far as
15 housing habitability that takes
16 kids away from their families? And
17 what the city provides to those
18 residents in order to get their
19 house to a habitable state in order
20 to keep their Family intact?

21 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes,
22 I can speak to that. And so, in
23 terms of kinship care, again that
24 is our goal, to place young people

1 with someone that they know. We do
2 not allow a housing situation to
3 prevent young people from living
4 with their kin. We have resources
5 that can support that and we have a
6 60-day window in which we can
7 support them. So there are times
8 that we have to of course support
9 with beds, because to have another
10 young person into your home, you
11 may not have an appropriate place
12 for them to sleep. We help
13 certainly with food, a whole number
14 of things in order to help support
15 that.

16 There are even times
17 that we may have to do minor
18 repairs, if you will, in that
19 particular home in order to make
20 sure that young people are able to
21 stay there. But even before that,
22 if we have a parent who we received
23 a report on and they need some
24 assistance with housing, we

1 certainly will support them in
2 housing support. So that could be
3 anywhere from rent arrears and we
4 will support that, move-in costs,
5 we will support that. We do
6 whatever we need to do in order to
7 make sure that young people stay
8 with their families. We do not
9 want housing to be the reason why
10 young people come into care with
11 the Department of Human Services.

12 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
13 you. Can I ask one more question,
14 Mr. President?

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: (Nodded affirmatively).

17 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: And
18 we were talking about youth summer
19 jobs earlier today. And as we were
20 actually talking about it, I got a
21 text message from someone who said
22 a 15- to 17-year-old boys, they
23 need a summer job. Those kids need
24 a summer job being in the

1 communities where they are. I know
2 they need to be doing something
3 busy this summer, right. And so,
4 we have parents who are desperately
5 looking for these opportunities.

6 Can you just give us
7 what that number is so we can fund
8 all 14,000 slots that's needed?
9 Because I think in the long run as
10 we're making these investments in
11 our children now, it's going to pay
12 off for us in the future. And so,
13 I think we really need to figure
14 out what that cost is because I can
15 guarantee that we can fill 14,000
16 slots for young people who are
17 looking for jobs. We can do that
18 and we provide incentives.

19 So my question is what
20 type of incentives do we provide to
21 the potential employer, to
22 nonprofits in the city to host one
23 of these young people at their
24 sites? Do we give them some kind

1 of tax credit? Do we give them
2 some kind of grant other than -- I
3 know C2L pays for the paycheck for
4 the students, but are we providing
5 something to the actual host
6 businesses to incentivize them to
7 want them to participate in this
8 program?

9 MS. PERESE: Sure.

10 Thank you for that question. So
11 what I will say is I can tell you
12 that the cost per slot is around
13 \$2,700. That slot includes the
14 stipend for the youth to get paid
15 over the summer or whenever the
16 opportunity is and then also a
17 provider compensation component.
18 So the providers are compensated
19 for taking the youth and giving
20 them the opportunity so that --

21 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Where
22 are they compensated?

23 MS. PERESE: How much --

24 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Yeah,

1 how much are they --

2 MS. PERESE: It comes to
3 about 1180 per slot. So of the
4 2680, around 1180 of it goes to the
5 provider and then 1500 goes to the
6 youth.

7 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Okay.
8 Thank you, Mr. President.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
10 JOHNSON: Thank you.
11 Councilmember Quetcy
12 Lozada.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
14 Thank you, Council President.
15 I think most of my
16 questions were asked by my
17 colleagues, but I do have one
18 question for the Office of
19 Education and, that is, given all
20 of the concerns that have been
21 expressed by community members, all
22 of our school community, given the
23 fact that many of our school parent
24 advisory boards have made very

1 valid recommendations, have
2 expressed very valid concerns, is
3 there a way for your office to help
4 support the voices of the students
5 and these parents and slow this
6 decision process down some kind of
7 way where every community -- I
8 mean, I'm speaking for the 7th
9 because I've been able to attend
10 many of the online and inperson
11 meetings, I've been able to meet
12 with some of the students who feel
13 that they will be impacted in one
14 way or another as a result of the
15 changes that are being recommended
16 in the plan. Is there a way for us
17 to slow this process down until
18 every action has been considered
19 and until people feel like their
20 input has been valued and
21 respected, right?

22 I am going to refer to
23 the Moffet community, who was not a
24 part of the original list of

1 closures but who will be impacted,
2 and it is a closure when you look
3 at the decisions that are being
4 made in their K through 5 program.
5 How can your office help support
6 our on-the-ground communities in
7 the situation that we're in right
8 now?

9 DR. CARRERA: Thank you,
10 Councilwoman Lozada. As I've said
11 a few times, this is not easy at
12 all. In 2017 when Parsons came and
13 did an assessment of our
14 facilities, the price tag was
15 \$7,000,000,000, 2017 -- we're in
16 2026 -- of repairs. So our
17 buildings are old, but there's also
18 been a disinvestment because we're
19 underfunded. So I have to repeat
20 that because I think we have to
21 really understand that the state
22 discontinued Plan Con, so we
23 couldn't get those funds to get our
24 buildings to a state where all kids

1 should have.

2 The district entered
3 into a process and they're going to
4 share them. You've heard them.
5 They did -- we were on this
6 facilities project team. They had
7 35 principal sessions. They've
8 received 14,000 surveys. I'm also
9 a parent of a student in the School
10 District of Philadelphia and I
11 received the emails and the
12 contacts. And I'm not saying that
13 our families have not been listened
14 to. What I'm saying is that this
15 is a really hard process. And I
16 think if we asked anybody who wants
17 to close their school, no one is
18 going to raise their hands.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
20 get that. I understand that. That
21 is a fair statement. No one wants
22 their school closed. However,
23 decisions have been made in
24 specific communities that we know

1 will negatively impact not just our
2 student population, but our
3 teaching staff as well. Because
4 there's no teacher that's going to
5 stay through the transition year or
6 through the planning year if they
7 know their jobs are not secure,
8 right.

9 And so, there's going to
10 be a ripple effect in this
11 decision-making if we don't slow
12 down and really look at how this is
13 impacting our system as a whole.
14 Councilmember mentioned earlier,
15 right, that there's a negative
16 impact that is occurring in
17 communities like mine and hers,
18 right. But I think those
19 communities are the communities
20 that feel like the engagement that
21 was necessary did not take place.

22 And while they have all
23 of these numbers that say X number
24 of people took the surveys and

1 responded, are those real numbers,
2 right, or were those people that
3 were surveyed in those
4 neighborhoods part of the
5 Administration or a select group of
6 people? Because when I talk to my
7 families, when we're knocking on
8 doors and we're talking to our
9 families, they didn't participate,
10 right. They either don't speak the
11 language, they didn't participate,
12 weren't unaware, don't even know
13 what is happening and are not
14 comfortable moving their children
15 out of their community where they
16 go to school in a way that's
17 walkable to another neighborhood
18 where they're not going to be able
19 to walk and they don't feel safe in
20 that neighborhood, right.

21 So how do we just pump
22 the brakes a minute? We know that
23 there's tension. We know that
24 decisions are not going to be easy.

1 We know that some of our buildings
2 have not been invested in. Hell,
3 the state mentioned that they had
4 not invested in our school system
5 for many, many years. How do we
6 kind of just slow down and really
7 do the necessary engagement where
8 we allow for parents and families
9 and young people to feel like they
10 are not at fault, right?

11 We're talking about
12 underutilization, that you guys
13 continue to say that we're not
14 making this decision based on
15 scores, but the children that are
16 negatively being impacted are those
17 schools that continuously show that
18 they come out at the bottom, right?
19 How do we do that? How do we do
20 that together so that we're moving
21 our school systems, our school
22 district, our children, our
23 families forward without them
24 feeling like it is because of them?

1 DR. CARRERA: Those are
2 all -- thank you, Councilwoman,
3 because those are all very valid
4 concerns. And I will say this, and
5 you know that I led Kensington High
6 School. Even when I moved from my
7 old building, I didn't -- the
8 program moved, so I think that
9 that's a part that we also have to
10 understand in this process, because
11 we're talking about buildings,
12 we're talking about
13 underenrollment, I hear what you're
14 saying, engaging. But my program
15 went into a different location. So
16 I just want to say that. But it --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: A point of information,
19 Dr. Deborah Carrera, and that was a
20 great point you made. When your
21 program moved from one building to
22 another building, did the progress
23 change, did the progress improve
24 because you're talking about

1 continuity? And so, could you also
2 talk about that in the context of
3 you responding to Member Lozada?

4 DR. CARRERA: That's a
5 great point, question. And so, my
6 staff moved. And the district had
7 said that next year '26-27 was
8 going to be a year of planning,
9 what that's going to look like. So
10 when I moved my program, my staff
11 moved with me to this new facility.
12 And so, that continuity that you're
13 talking about, the counselors that
14 the kids knew, my climate manager
15 that the kids knew, me, the
16 principal, has an important role in
17 all of this work and they've been a
18 part of these conversations. I was
19 part of that move and --

20 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
21 But that's not what's happening
22 right now. You just said how
23 important that is, right, that not
24 just the program moves, but that

1 the leadership moves, that the
2 children feel that they're
3 supported by that move. That's not
4 what's happening right now. And
5 what I find interesting is that it
6 happens all the time.

7 Council President is
8 going to attend something.

9 Everybody goes up in front of him
10 the days before, we're planning,
11 we're cleaning it, we're making it
12 look pretty, we're putting paint
13 and we're making it look great.

14 Same thing happens with the Mayor.

15 Same thing happens with
16 Superintendent, right.

17 Superintendent is going to visit a
18 school and they know exactly where
19 they're going to walk him through,
20 they know what hallways they're
21 going to take, they know what
22 stairwell they're going to take and
23 the facilities folks go before him,
24 they make sure they're clean, they

1 make sure they smell good, they
2 make sure that there's no paint
3 chipping. But that's not the
4 reality, right.

5 And in order for our
6 children and our families to feel
7 supported, everything you just said
8 has to happen, has to happen. And
9 in this particular process, it is
10 not happening. Because when you
11 talk to our school teachers and our
12 administrators, they don't even
13 know what's going on. They're
14 confused. They don't know what
15 their future is going to be.

16 And so, I think that
17 we're putting ourselves in a
18 situation where we're going to lose
19 talent in our school district that
20 we really can't afford to lose
21 right now, given how sensitive the
22 academic process is in our schools.

23 DR. CARRERA: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Well, speaking of support
2 from our state officials as we work
3 on a school facilities plan, I'd
4 like to welcome to City Council
5 chambers the Appropriations
6 Chairman, State Representative
7 Jordan Harris.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you for joining us,
11 sir. He also hails from that great
12 part of the city known as Point
13 Breeze, South Philadelphia. Thank
14 you for stopping past here, sir.

15 We will be breaking and
16 I'm assuming, based upon the
17 feedback from my members, you would
18 like for them to come back for a
19 second round?

20 (Yes.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: I kind of figured that.
23 And so, we will be back at 1:45. I
24 will see everybody then. See you

1 back. Thank you.

2 (Lunch recess.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Brief Round 2 with the
5 Department of Human Services,
6 Office of Children and Family
7 Services and Education. Briefly.

8 Chair recognizes

9 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

10 Before we get started, just some
11 house rules. I'm asking all
12 members just please be direct with
13 your line of questioning. Short on
14 commentary.

15 Chair recognizes

16 Councilman Jamie Gauth -- I'm

17 sorry. Chair recognizes

18 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
19 Richardson.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Thank you,

22 Mr. President.

23 I have questions for the
24 Free Library and Parks and

1 Recreation. I can re-enter the
2 queue if you'd like me to.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Any last outstanding
5 questions you have for this panel?

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: No, sir. Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: All right. Thank you
10 very much.

11 Councilmember

12 Dr. Anthony Phillips.

13 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

14 Thank you so much, Council
15 President.

16 I just wanted to
17 state -- earlier today I got some
18 more information. As stated, the
19 budget includes \$850,000 over five
20 years with \$250,000 allocated in
21 the first year, along with the
22 hiring of new staff positions to
23 support 230,000 residents with
24 student loan debt. I just wanted

1 to get a better sense from you all,
2 \$100,000 is going to go towards
3 staffing for a grant program that
4 you're going to do an RFP for.
5 What is going to be the role for
6 the staff?

7 DR. CARRERA:

8 Dr. Deborah Carrera, Chief
9 Education Officer. Thank you
10 again, Councilmember Phillips, for
11 your support. The \$100,000 is for
12 two administrative staff, and that
13 is to support with the calls that
14 we're going to take in addition to
15 supporting the position that we are
16 purchasing from our office in the
17 many pieces to this work.

18 Because what I didn't
19 get to say in the beginning was
20 that not only is this position
21 going to support 231,000 residents,
22 this position is also going to work
23 with city employees through the
24 public service loan forgiveness

1 program. And so, that's going to
2 be also a bucket of the work that's
3 going to be really important.

4 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

5 Okay. That was helpful. Because
6 one of the things I noticed, you
7 had some other staff and some
8 vacancies. I'm like would it be
9 possible just to use the ones that
10 were already budgeted in that
11 regard? But that's pretty much
12 only questions that I have. And
13 I'll submit DHS on the record some
14 other questions that I have. I
15 want to thank Commissioner Ali. I
16 also want to say I'm really a big
17 fan of the afterschool program and
18 thank you for your work with that.
19 Thank you, Dr. Carrera, as well.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Okay. Chair recognizes
22 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

23 But before I ask any
24 other questions, any other members

1 who have questions for this panel,
2 raise your hand?

3 (Raised hands.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Okay. All right. Thank
6 you very much.

7 Councilmember Jamie
8 Gauthier.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

10 Thank you so first. And briefly, I
11 just want to thank you,
12 Commissioner Ali, for all of your
13 partnership on the youth ombuds, on
14 this body's GPS hearing and on your
15 efforts at PJJSC. We appreciate
16 you. I do have some questions as a
17 follow-up to the recent GPS
18 monitoring hearing.

19 In the hearing, we
20 learned that youth were being
21 incarcerated due to technical
22 violations related to the GPS
23 monitor. And so, my questions are
24 how many children were detained at

1 the Juvenile Justice Services
2 Center this year for technical
3 violations related to a GPS
4 monitor? And how do you plan to
5 work with the courts and other
6 systems partners to reduce the
7 number of youth incarcerated due to
8 technical violations?

9 COMMISSIONER ALI: Thank
10 you for that question,
11 Councilmember. I don't have the
12 data in terms of how many young
13 people are being held at the PJJSC
14 solely for technical violations.
15 We will work with the courts in
16 order to get that data. Because as
17 you know, probation as well as the
18 courts make the determination
19 around whether or not young people
20 will be held at the PJJSC.

21 I will reiterate what I
22 said earlier in terms of there has
23 been a decrease in the number of
24 young people held in detention.

1 And so, when I look at the full
2 year of 2025, we had 1325 young
3 people held at the PJJSC. So
4 that's individual youth. And that
5 was a decrease of 13% from just the
6 year before, which was Calendar
7 Year 2024. At that particular
8 time, it was 1524 young people
9 being held there. But I don't have
10 the specific information about the
11 reason why they were held, whether
12 it was a technical violation or
13 based on one of their lead charges.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
15 How long do you think it would take
16 to gather that information from the
17 courts?

18 COMMISSIONER ALI: I'm
19 not sure, but certainly my team is
20 here and I'm sure they'll probably
21 send in text messages in order to
22 obtain that data.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
24 Thank you. I look forward to

1 receiving it. I also want to
2 commend Councilmember Phillips and
3 Councilmember Landau for holding
4 that hearing, but I do think we
5 have to kind of keep our foot on
6 the gas. And so, it will be
7 important to, on an ongoing basis,
8 look at that data to ensure that
9 young people aren't being
10 incarcerated unnecessarily or due
11 to minor technical violations.
12 Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER ALI:

14 Understood.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

17 Councilmember Cindy Bass
18 and Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad.
19 We'll wrap up with Councilmember
20 Kendra Brooks.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

22 Thank you, Mr. President.

23 Good afternoon. I just
24 really wanted to make a little bit

1 more of a statement than a question
2 that I have -- well, I do have one
3 quick question. And that is around
4 going back to the CUAs and the
5 problem that we had with retention
6 of staff. And my assumption is
7 that the salary is what the problem
8 is in terms of them being able to
9 retain staff. So does the city
10 have a minimum requirement for
11 staffing for employees through
12 CUAs?

13 COMMISSIONER ALI: We
14 do. And so, that minimum
15 requirement for CUA case managers
16 is in alignment with our social
17 work service managers at DHS. And
18 so, that minimum requirement is
19 \$60,000 a year because it's
20 comparable to DHS employees.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Do
22 we have a caseload requirement?

23 COMMISSIONER ALI: The
24 caseload requirement for CUA case

1 managers is 10 families to 1, which
2 is lower than what the state
3 recommendation is. The state
4 recommends for ongoing service
5 delivery, a 30-to-1.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So
7 do you monitor that?

8 COMMISSIONER ALI: Oh,
9 absolutely.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
11 Okay.

12 COMMISSIONER ALI: So we
13 do monitor the caseload.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So
15 if it's not the caseload and it's
16 not the salary, then I would assume
17 -- are you all looking into what is
18 the problem, why are they having
19 such a difficult time retaining
20 staffing? Because clearly, there's
21 a problem. It's not just one CUA or
22 two CUAs. It seems to be, I don't
23 know, maybe half of them or more.
24 So if you could give us that in

1 writing as to what DHS is doing to
2 look at the staffing and turnover
3 because it's a position that we
4 need a steady hand on this.

5 COMMISSIONER ALI:

6 Absolutely. And so, I can say some
7 brief statements and then I can
8 submit it in writing in terms --

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

10 Well, real brief because I don't
11 have a lot of time.

12 COMMISSIONER ALI: I'm
13 sorry. Do you want me to continue?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: (Nodded affirmatively).

16 COMMISSIONER ALI: We do
17 utilize the same strategies we do
18 internally in terms of CUA case
19 managers and what we do with our
20 own staff, supporting them around
21 the training, number one, of their
22 employees, also making sure that
23 there is appropriate transfer and
24 learning for CUA case manager

1 staff, because it's very different
2 from being in the classroom versus
3 you knocking on the door and
4 engaging families.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

6 Well, let me -- because I want to
7 just make a statement real quick.
8 But I'll just say this, there's a
9 problem and it doesn't seem to have
10 been figured out. So if DHS could
11 do some work on that and then
12 report back to the President, that
13 would be great so he can let us
14 know.

15 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yes.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Please provide the
18 information to the Chair at the
19 appropriate time.

20 Member Bass.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: One
22 last question or statement that I
23 wanted to make regarding schools
24 and school closures. And I just

1 really wanted to say on the record
2 that, as there were questions
3 earlier, this is really quite a
4 self-created problem where the
5 district changed the requirements
6 to special admit schools. And as a
7 result, you can see how the
8 enrollment dropped year after year
9 after year. So now, we're in this
10 sort of crisis phase where you have
11 some really good schools like a
12 Lankenau, like a Parkway, like some
13 of these other schools that are
14 being identified as they have to
15 close because of low enrollment.

16 The reason we're here is
17 because of the work done by the
18 district in the first place. And
19 so, rather than going back to look
20 at the work and look at the changes
21 that were made and saying we need
22 to reverse those changes or we need
23 to do something different, the
24 first thought was just shut them

1 down, just close them, which is
2 really quite a disservice to our
3 communities and to our young
4 people.

5 I often say if you
6 create the conditions, you're
7 responsible for the results. And I
8 believe the district is responsible
9 for these results. There were
10 other options. We didn't have to
11 go immediately to we have to close
12 the schools. Again, we could have
13 revisited the special admit policy,
14 made corrections to ensure quality
15 educational options were available
16 in every neighborhood and then we
17 could move students, we could
18 transport students to spaces to
19 preserve schools and neighborhoods
20 with less attendance and provide
21 transit.

22 And I don't understand
23 why that's not an option. But if
24 you look at a map of the city of

1 Philadelphia and you look straight
2 down the line of Broad Street, 10
3 years ago when schools were closed
4 or 13 years ago, whatever it was
5 when schools were closed, most of
6 the schools closed were on the west
7 side of Broad Street, which is
8 where there's declining population.
9 Most of the schools that were kept
10 open were on -- actually all the
11 schools pretty much, I believe, on
12 the east side of Broad Street were
13 kept open, which is where growth in
14 the city was happening. But at the
15 same time, you can't say, well,
16 just because that's where the
17 population growth is, that's where
18 we're going to close schools.
19 There has to be educational options
20 for every neighborhood. Because
21 what happens when, you know, let's
22 say if we take some of these
23 buildings and we build them into
24 residential housing units, are we

1 going to say that families without
2 kids only because there's no
3 educational options or there's
4 limited educational options --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Let's wrap it up.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: --
8 in these neighborhoods?

9 Thank you,
10 Mr. President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Thank you.

13 Briefly, Dr. Deborah,
14 have we entertained one-for-one
15 schools where you tear down the
16 school and rebuild a smaller school
17 so the school could stay inside the
18 neighborhood in the process of the
19 school district's \$2.8 billion
20 initiative? Has that been a
21 serious thought?

22 Because I understand
23 clearly what you're saying, if we
24 have a school -- my understanding,

1 Lankenau has the school built for
2 800 and it's only 300 kids inside
3 the school right now. I do
4 understand that part because that's
5 also a public safety issue with a
6 little bit of kids inside a school
7 that's pretty much empty. Anything
8 could happen. And if something did
9 happen, we would be having a
10 different conversation in this room
11 as to why you have a whole bunch of
12 kids -- why you have kids in a
13 building that's pretty much empty.
14 And if something does happen, we
15 would be having a different
16 conversation.

17 But I guess my question
18 is, has the Administration
19 approached the district and had a
20 conversation saying, okay, this
21 building was built for 1000
22 students, there's only 300 students
23 in that building, but as an
24 excellent academic program as

1 opposed to us relocating,
2 combining, how about as part of
3 that \$2.8 billion budget, we tear
4 the school down, not sell it to a
5 developer, tear the school down,
6 rebuild another school at the same
7 site, maybe add a rec center, maybe
8 add a health center, right, on that
9 same campus, right. So now, you
10 have a smaller footprint, the
11 overhead is much, much less. And
12 out of that \$2.8 billion strategy,
13 the neighborhood doesn't lose the
14 school. Temporarily, the kids are
15 inside another building, maybe a
16 trailer for that particular point
17 in time, but they get to come back
18 to that very same neighborhood with
19 a smaller footprint of a school.
20 Have we actually explored that or
21 do you know if that has been
22 explored?

23 DR. CARRERA: Thank you
24 for that commentary, President

1 Johnson. So I will say that this
2 process has been a two-year process
3 of engaging with different
4 stakeholders. And so --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: I want to say
7 respectfully, and I know
8 Mr. Chairman of the school board
9 always says we are just doing what
10 y'all asked us to do, but there has
11 not been a two-year engagement of
12 the members of this City Council.
13 Now, it might have been every time
14 they may have come in front of this
15 body and say, hey, we're going to
16 rightsize the schools, but in terms
17 of an actual sit-down engagement
18 and saying, here's our plan, here's
19 how we're rolling out in the near
20 future -- and I know the surveys
21 have been done, town halls have
22 been done, but I'm just talking
23 about active conversations with
24 this body in terms of what we would

1 like to see from a facilities plan
2 standpoint. To be quite frank with
3 you, that hasn't happened in terms
4 of this body, maybe other
5 stakeholders, but I will stand and
6 say that hasn't happened.

7 So I just was wondering
8 has a one-for-one type of option
9 been put in place like, okay,
10 Lankenau, very, very nice campus.
11 We know, right, realistically, a
12 school built for 800 kids and you
13 only have 300 in there probably may
14 not be the best fit, right. But
15 however, has the option been it's a
16 nice campus, let's work on tearing
17 the building down and build up a
18 smaller one, more modern building?

19 DR. CARRERA: Not that I
20 know of, that option. But I just
21 want to reiterate respectfully that
22 the enrollment decline has been
23 happening for 10 years. It didn't
24 just happen a year ago, two years,

1 but 10 years. And so, I just want
2 to --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: I'm agreeing with you on
5 that. I understand --

6 DR. CARRERA: We still
7 have the same amount of buildings.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Point of information,
10 Member Bass.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
12 Point of information. So while
13 there have been declines over the
14 years, the last 10 years or
15 whatever, there were steep declines
16 after the changes made by the
17 district. So, you know, a drop in
18 20 students here or there is
19 different from a 50, you know,
20 based on just naturally going to a
21 charter or whatever is much
22 different than a school seeing a
23 50% drop based on changes that were
24 made by the school district. And

1 that's why I keep saying that the
2 district needs to go back to the
3 drawing board and take a look at
4 when those big drops happened and
5 what were the changes that happened
6 that got them there in the first
7 place. Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: I want to ask this
10 because this is going to be a very
11 lively conversation in the future.
12 And if y'all want to do a callback
13 throughout this process to continue
14 this conversation, you're more than
15 willing to do a callback so we can
16 get to the next panel.

17 And then I also want to
18 ask Ms. Deborah Carrera, if you and
19 your team can have a conversation
20 with our Chair of Education and the
21 members who have different issues
22 and concerns so we can work
23 collaboratively, right. It's not
24 an adversarial thing. They're all

1 of our children. So we were just
2 working the best that we can to get
3 it right.

4 And I heard you say a
5 couple different times, which I
6 think most or all of us understand,
7 there's a structural deficit. We
8 get it, right. We know the
9 politics in Harrisburg. They do
10 want us to come up there with an
11 actual plan that we're working on
12 addressing this issue, right. I
13 also remind them though, but all
14 politics are local so I rely on our
15 Chair of Appropriations, our
16 Speaker of the House, our Governor
17 Josh Shapiro to do what they need
18 to do, right, and we're going to do
19 we need to do on our end. So at
20 the end of the day, their politics
21 won't dictate ours, right, because
22 we're on the ground and we want to
23 make sure we're protecting our
24 children and supporting our

1 families.

2 But I do understand the
3 reality of how we address it, but
4 we still want to get it done right
5 so we don't have even worse of a
6 problem two, three, four, five
7 years, and we're sitting at this
8 table and we're saying, well, they
9 got rid of the special admit
10 programs and this is a result of
11 what actually happened. But I do
12 want to follow up and have a more
13 concrete conversation with members
14 of Council and the Administration,
15 particularly around this issue, if
16 that's okay.

17 And one small one,
18 Commissioner Ali. I know a couple
19 CUAs had to be shut down because of
20 the insurance issue, the liability
21 issue. What's the current status
22 and how are we addressing that
23 issue? Because at one point, I
24 thought all the CUAs would not be

1 in existence because of the cost of
2 insurance.

3 COMMISSIONER ALI: Yeah.

4 And so, you're correct in terms of
5 two CUAs making a decision that
6 they no longer wanted to provide
7 services. So I want to also
8 reiterate that we had a seamless
9 process in terms of transferring
10 all of those families as well as
11 the staff to the other CUA
12 providers that were newly
13 identified.

14 And, yes, they made
15 their business decision based on
16 insurance. We continue as a city
17 to monitor liability assurance
18 because it is a nationwide issue
19 and we'll continue to work with the
20 state. But to date, both the city
21 and the state has certainly paid
22 all the insurance premiums for not
23 only Community Umbrella Agencies
24 but placement providers as well.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

3 Chair recognizes

4 Councilmember Dr. Nina Ahmad and

5 then we'll wrap up with

6 Councilmember Kendra Brooks and go

7 into our next panel discussion.

8 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

9 Thank you, Council President.

10 Very quickly, just to

11 follow up on the CUA point, and I'm

12 glad Council President brought that

13 up, so the CUAs are getting their

14 insurance premiums paid in the

15 contract that they're doing,

16 correct? Am I understanding that

17 correctly?

18 COMMISSIONER ALI:

19 That's correct.

20 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

21 What percentage of that contract is

22 spent on insurance premiums?

23 COMMISSIONER ALI: 16%

24 of the contract.

1 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

2 That's a large amount of their
3 budget. And also, we talked about
4 the whole salary of social workers
5 who are people with Master's in
6 terms of in your office, but what
7 is the requirement for CUA social
8 workers? And second is how much
9 oversight do you actually give now
10 that you're actually not in the
11 business of doing what the CUAs
12 did, because that's what you did
13 before. Now, you're just
14 investigatory and then just a
15 follow-up.

16 I want to know, because
17 what I've heard from CUAs is
18 there's not a lot of oversight in
19 person. There are meetings, but
20 they're not onsite with actual
21 families and engagement. So
22 correct me if I'm wrong, but that's
23 the feedback I got. So I want to
24 be clear publicly, what exactly is

1 your engagement with CUA in terms
2 of supervision and what they're
3 required in their social workers to
4 produce?

5 COMMISSIONER ALI: So
6 all social workers at Community
7 Umbrella Agencies as well as DHS
8 have the same requirements around
9 having a Bachelor's degree in
10 social work or a like profession,
11 if you will. The social work
12 supervisors and the CUA
13 supervisors, they are required to
14 have a Master's degree in social
15 work. So the Master's degree in
16 social work for both CUAs as well
17 as DHS supervisors.

18 We receive the same
19 training, so it's the exact same
20 training for DHS as well as the
21 Community Umbrella Agencies. So
22 everything is the same in that
23 regard. In terms of the oversight,
24 so we do significant oversight of

1 the Community Umbrella Agencies,
2 one of which rolls up into this CUA
3 scorecard where we look at over
4 2000 families each year to
5 determine whether or not they are
6 receiving the appropriate services
7 and we rank them according to
8 domains, and that's what you see in
9 the CUA scorecard. So that is
10 completed by DHS's performance
11 management and technology division.
12 So they are DHS staff that actually
13 monitor the CUAs.

14 On the ground, we have
15 practice specialists. They are
16 employees under my DHS
17 universities, so under my training
18 arm that provides technical
19 assistance. As you can see from
20 the CUA scorecard, most of the CUAs
21 scored four or five bells, so they
22 have been doing fairly well in
23 terms of the CUA scorecard and the
24 practices that they provide and the

1 services that they provide to
2 children, youth and families.

3 And so, the technical
4 assistance looks different. So for
5 the CUAs who achieved the three
6 bells, the two that achieved the
7 three bells, we provide more hands-
8 on, on-the-ground technical
9 assistance than the ones who are
10 achieving much better. In
11 addition, we also have the family
12 team conferencing model at DHS, so
13 as DHS supervisors that facilitate
14 team meetings, so we bring together
15 the family, the Community Umbrella
16 Agency to see the progress of the
17 case. So that is our way of also
18 making sure that families are
19 receiving the services that they
20 deserve.

21 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
22 we'll circle back later, because
23 I'm visiting each of the CUAs and
24 getting feedback on each of them.

1 So we'll provide you with what we
2 saw and heard and how it shows up.
3 Quickly before I let you go, I
4 wanted to revisit the 8.6 million.
5 I didn't understand it. There's
6 8.6 million that jumped from 2.7
7 million. And you said that was
8 state money that was coming in.
9 But then why is it on the budget?

10 MS. PERESE: It's a
11 combination. It's state and
12 General Fund. The entire budget
13 that we have for DHS is leveraged.
14 So every line item that you see in
15 here is a combination of state and
16 General Fund dollars, so that
17 represents a portion of that
18 funding and then we got the full
19 year funding. That's how our
20 requests work with the state. And
21 none of that has been awarded yet.
22 So we currently have an RFP out
23 right now, and then we're hoping to
24 award that soon.

1 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
2 the 8.6 is a combination of General
3 Fund money and state money?

4 MS. PERESE: Yes.

5 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: If
6 you separate them, what is the
7 General Fund money because that's
8 what will reflect in our budget?
9 So if we are reducing it by the
10 amount the state gives, that means
11 we have more dollars available. I
12 just want to understand that
13 number.

14 MS. PERESE: Sure. So
15 from the 8.6 million, about 2
16 million -- about 1.6 million, I'm
17 sorry. Around 1.6 million is
18 General Fund dollars. COUNCILWOMAN
19 AHMAD:

20 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
21 the rest of it's all state?

22 MS. PERESE: That's
23 correct.

24 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So

1 that means we don't have to dish
2 out that money?

3 MS. PERESE: That's
4 correct.

5 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
6 that means we have more resources.
7 I'm just trying to have an
8 accounting conversation to say what
9 are we showing on the ledger to
10 show how much money is available in
11 the General Fund. If it's so much
12 money, it's like \$7 million, that's
13 a lot more revenue that we have
14 sitting in General Fund to do other
15 things with. That's the
16 clarification.

17 MS. PERESE: I
18 understand. However, you can't
19 access all of that money without
20 matching, right. So --

21 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
22 understand.

23 MS. PERESE: -- in order
24 to put that General Fund -- in

1 order to receive that state
2 funding, we have to put the General
3 Fund up and then spend all of it
4 together.

5 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
6 understand. But we need to be
7 clear, what is the revenue that we
8 are having to generate for our
9 General Fund to give services. And
10 that's only 1.6 of the 8.6. Just
11 for clarity, I wanted to make sure.
12 Because the numbers that we're --
13 we're looking for efficiencies,
14 right. We're looking to see how
15 tightly we are running our budget
16 so that people know how their
17 dollars are being used.

18 MS. PERESE: Understood.

19 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
20 There's no way for the public to
21 know this. There's absolutely no
22 way to look at the budget and say,
23 oh, it's actually only 1.6 coming
24 from the General Fund. I think we

1 need to be absolutely clear how
2 we're using tax dollars, and this
3 clarification needs to be evident
4 in some way in the budget with an
5 asterisk or something because that
6 is very misleading. And it's
7 jumped from 1. something to 8.6,
8 immediately alarm bells for us. So
9 thank you very much for that
10 clarification.

11 Thank you, Council
12 President. I'm done.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

15 Councilmember Kendra
16 Brooks.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I
18 am going to finish up the line of
19 questioning I started before. It
20 was really again about the amount
21 of benefits that you've earned
22 while in the foster program. We
23 know it's large, so providing kids
24 with money that they need to

1 support their education or start a
2 career. I want to know can we talk
3 about what kind of planning work
4 you -- you mentioned it briefly,
5 we're having with the kids about
6 what to do this money, how to spend
7 the money. Having young kids have
8 large lump sums of money at one
9 time can be pretty difficult so I
10 would love to hear what are you
11 doing to provide them with that
12 education?

13 And I know it's a
14 complicated process and I want to
15 thank you for working through this.
16 And I would like to know the
17 timeline for the next steps. And
18 will you be willing to sit with my
19 office and advocates from the
20 vendor's office about the details
21 of the next step. And the last one
22 is we want to work with
23 stakeholders to understand the gaps
24 in community-based services and

1 kind of work with you guys to help
2 recruit providers to fill in some
3 of those gaps. And I would love to
4 also have a convening with
5 stakeholders about how we can fill
6 in the gaps of services to make
7 sure nothing slips in?

8 MS. PERESE: Thank you
9 for that question. So as far as
10 the next steps, right now we're
11 working with the Law Department to
12 explore the writing checks directly
13 to youth. We're not starting
14 accounts. We're just going to
15 write checks directly to youth. So
16 we've already worked with the
17 Treasurer's Department. Now, we're
18 moving in the Law Department --
19 well, we're continuing to work with
20 the Law Department on that, and the
21 hope is that that can move along
22 quickly. And then we also want to
23 ensure that we are setting our
24 youth up for success. And so, that

1 is that financial literacy that
2 we're talking about. And we've
3 been working internally to see if
4 we can route that through one of
5 our existing providers.

6 And then that would be,
7 here's how to set up an account
8 once you receive this money, here
9 are how you could budget for this
10 money and next steps on how to be
11 fiscally responsible with this
12 money, and then also the effects of
13 receiving a lump sum amount of
14 money. So that is currently our
15 plan.

16 COMMISSIONER ALI: And
17 in terms of working with your
18 office, absolutely. I know we've
19 had some conversations in the past
20 in terms of the RSDI benefits. So,
21 yes, we are committed to continuing
22 to work with both your office as
23 well as advocates around this
24 issue. And I do understand that

1 there is some energy at the state
2 level as well, so we're waiting for
3 some further guidance around that
4 too.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

6 All right. Thank you so much. I
7 have one for the Office of
8 Education for Dr. Carrera. One of
9 the programs under the Mayor's
10 Office of Education is Octavius
11 Catto scholarship at CCP. As a CCP
12 alum, I often encourage young
13 people to apply for the CATTO
14 scholarship. One issue that
15 frequently comes up is that the
16 scholarship is limited to full-time
17 students.

18 In my experience, the
19 students that most need the
20 scholarship are those working at
21 least part-time and they aren't
22 able to take on a full course load.
23 Has it been any discussion about
24 these scholarships being available

1 part-time? I was a part-time
2 student at CCP for seven years
3 before I went to Temple to finish
4 out my first degree. So I know the
5 significance of access. So
6 limiting young people or not so
7 young people, because I know it's
8 expanded now, the opportunity to
9 acquire the education because
10 they're not able to go full-time
11 seems kind of unfair and kind of
12 against what we're trying to
13 capture. So is there any talk
14 about that?

15 DR. CARRERA: Thank you
16 for that question, Councilmember,
17 and glad to hear that you're a CCP
18 grad. My sisters are too. And so
19 thankful that they went to CCP
20 because I went to Temple because of
21 them. But we have had
22 conversations, because to your
23 point it is a real issue. So we
24 are having conversations with the

1 Community College of Philadelphia
2 about that, because I know that
3 there are certain standards that
4 the college uses or that there are
5 certain standards that assess the
6 college. And so, we have had those
7 conversations. We've been a little
8 creative around the teachers. So
9 we have the CATTO scholarship that
10 is supporting some teachers and
11 we're looking at how we can create
12 a full-time schedule for them, even
13 if they're working during the day.
14 It is an issue that we're looking
15 at and we're trying to be creative
16 around it.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

18 Thank you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. I
21 want to just say thank you for your
22 time today. Also, I just want to
23 get y'all a shout-out to just thank
24 you for your extreme

1 professionalism under three, four
2 hours of line of questioning. And
3 so, it's all in the effort of
4 moving our great City of
5 Philadelphia forward.

6 Chair will briefly
7 acknowledge Councilmember Jeffrey
8 Jay Young.

9 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
10 you, Mr. President. I just want to
11 note for the record that we'll be
12 submitting a couple more questions
13 in writing for this panel as well,
14 and we'll welcome a callback as
15 well. Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
18 That will be noted. Thank you very
19 much. Have a great day.

20 Ms. Loughhead, please
21 call the next panel.

22 THE CLERK: We have Sue
23 Slawson, Commissioner for Parks &
24 Rec; and Kelly Richards, President

1 and Director of the Free Library of
2 Philadelphia.

3 (Witnesses approached
4 witness table.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Please state your name
7 for the record and please begin. I
8 know you're not going to start and
9 you see the young lady sitting next
10 to you. I know your mom/Nana
11 taught you better than that.
12 Ladies first.

13 Commissioner Sue
14 Slawson, welcome to City Council
15 today.

16 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
17 Good morning, Council President --
18 good afternoon, Council President
19 and members of City Council. My
20 name is Susan Slawson, Commissioner
21 for Parks and Recreation.

22 MR. RICHARDS: Good
23 afternoon, Council President,
24 members of City Council. My name

1 is Kelly Richards, President and
2 Director of the Free Library of
3 Philadelphia.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Please begin your
6 testimony.

7 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

8 Good morning, Council President
9 Johnson and members of City
10 Council. My name is Susan Slawson,
11 Commissioner of Philadelphia Parks
12 and Recreation. Joining me today
13 are my colleagues Marissa
14 Washington, First Deputy
15 Commissioner and Susan Buck, Deputy
16 Commissioner for Operations. It's
17 a privilege to be here.

18 I appear before you to
19 present our proposed operating
20 budget for Fiscal Year 2027. We
21 are proposing a General Fund
22 obligation of \$89,318,447, a
23 decrease of \$518,345 from Fiscal
24 Year 2026 estimated obligation

1 levels. This decrease is primarily
2 due to one-time payments for
3 contracted bonuses and site
4 preparation costs associated with
5 2026 special events.

6 Philadelphia Parks and
7 Recreation, PPR, is entrusted to
8 manage recreation centers and
9 public spaces equitably,
10 sustainably and responsibly. We
11 fulfill that responsibility by
12 delivering programs and services
13 that strengthen the health, safety
14 and provide economic opportunity,
15 advancing Mayor Parker's vision of
16 neighborhoods that are safe, clean
17 and green with economic opportunity
18 for every resident.

19 We are proud to partner
20 closely with OHR on recruitment,
21 workforce planning and job
22 specification revisions, resulting
23 in expanded candidate pools and
24 stronger development pathways for

1 staff. Their ongoing support,
2 including job fairs, onsite
3 recruitment efforts and strategic
4 planning has helped drive
5 significant hiring progress and
6 together, we remain committed to
7 finding creative and innovative
8 ways to further reduce our
9 vacancies.

10 As stewards of
11 Philadelphia's natural lands, our
12 sustainability unit maintains,
13 increases and protects natural
14 resources across the city. We
15 recognize the importance of
16 minimizing the use of herbicides
17 and pesticides wherever possible,
18 while also ensuring that our
19 management practices are effective
20 in controlling invasive species and
21 supporting the long-term health of
22 our natural landscapes.

23 Our compost program at
24 the organic recycle center directly

1 advances the Mayor's clean and
2 green vision of diverting over 5000
3 tons of organic material from
4 landfill each year and creating
5 beneficial products like mulch,
6 wood chips and compost. Residents
7 and city departments receive free
8 services, improving environmental
9 outcomes while delivering visible
10 community-level benefits, such as
11 cleaner parks, reduce waste,
12 workforce opportunities and long-
13 term cost savings for the city.

14 PPR isn't just
15 maintaining its tree canopy. It's
16 growing a healthier, more equitable
17 future for everyone. Tree canopy
18 provides shade, cleaner air,
19 improved water quality and mental
20 health benefits. The reality is
21 that not all neighborhoods
22 experience those benefits equally.
23 Low canopy correlates directly to
24 extreme heat, higher asthma rates

1 and fewer public spaces, and some
2 areas can be 20 degrees hotter than
3 other parts of the city.

4 Our urban forestry
5 unit's focus has shifted from
6 simply planting trees to building
7 systems that help people feel
8 supported, viewing maintenance as a
9 critical form of trust-building,
10 with an estimate of 1025 trees to
11 be planted in 2026. We are
12 addressing environmental justice
13 through the urban forestry unit.
14 We know there are fewer trees where
15 there is more poverty.

16 To date, our partnership
17 with the Department of Commerce has
18 trained 40 Taking Care of Business
19 ambassadors to care for over 460
20 newly-planted trees on commercial
21 corridors. In FY27, we will expand
22 our natural land restoration,
23 building on the 3600-plus trees and
24 shrubs planted last year. Summer

1 is our most critical season for
2 service delivery and our greatest
3 opportunity for impact. And as we
4 plan, we use key points from the
5 blueprint of a Safer Philadelphia.

6 PPR will provide more
7 than 800,000 meals to children and
8 families, ensuring consistent
9 access to nutritious food. Through
10 Career Connected Learning, PHL C2L
11 is what we call it, we will provide
12 approximately 1100 jobs for teens,
13 supporting workforce development
14 and economic mobility. We're
15 preparing for a full season of
16 pools, Playstreets and our summer
17 camps. Our recruitment for the
18 American Red Cross certified
19 lifeguards begins earlier each
20 year, utilizing social media and
21 community partnerships to ensure
22 all 63 outdoor pools can open
23 safely.

24 This summer to enhance

1 our boxing programs throughout our
2 system, the youth sports anti-
3 violence funding will be used to
4 upgrade equipment, further support
5 the vital efforts of volunteer
6 coaches that have served for years
7 with incentives. Safety remains
8 our top priority. Our targeted
9 enforcement program supported by
10 PPR rangers and Philadelphia Police
11 Department will continue to operate
12 from Memorial Day through
13 September.

14 Philadelphia Police
15 Department has also agreed to train
16 our park rangers on the five new
17 electric bikes that we are
18 purchasing and train them in
19 de-escalation tactics. We remain
20 deeply committed to the Mayor's
21 initiatives in Kensington. Through
22 the Play Parks initiative, we
23 provide consistent programming at
24 McPherson, Hissey and Harrowgate

1 Park. These aren't just parks.
2 They are essential sanctuaries for
3 working families and people that
4 live in the communities.

5 I'd like to take this
6 opportunity to acknowledge my
7 amazing, talented staff that I'm
8 privileged to work with at Parks
9 and Recreation. Thank you for this
10 opportunity to present our 2027
11 budget testimony and we welcome any
12 questions that you may have.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
15 Please begin your testimony.

16 MR. RICHARDS: Sure.
17 Good afternoon, Council President
18 Johnson and members of City
19 Council. I'm Kelly Richards,
20 President, Director of the Free
21 Library of Philadelphia. Joining
22 me later today is Sade Olanipekun-
23 Lewis, Chair and Board of Trustees.
24 I'm pleased to provide testimony on

1 the Free Library's Fiscal Year 2027
2 operating budget.

3 The library's mission of
4 the Free Library of Philadelphia is
5 to advance literacy, guide
6 learning, inspire curiosity, as
7 part of the Mayor's vision, to
8 provide world-class educational
9 opportunities for Philadelphians of
10 all ages and socioeconomic
11 backgrounds. A plan for the Fiscal
12 Year 2027, libraries are open doors
13 to opportunity in every
14 neighborhood in Philadelphia.

15 Each of our 54 libraries
16 provide trusted public spaces where
17 people can gain job skills, explore
18 new ideas, connect with their
19 neighbors and participate in the
20 civic life of our city. Every day
21 Philadelphians come to the Free
22 Library to learn, to grow and to
23 find opportunity. We're grateful
24 for the city's continued investment

1 in the Free Library and have been
2 able to expand public service hours
3 across the system.

4 We now offer Saturday
5 service at libraries citywide.
6 This is a major step forward in
7 making our services more accessible
8 to working families, students and
9 seniors. Building on that
10 progress, we are preparing to
11 launch Sunday hours at several
12 libraries next year, further
13 expanding access to critical
14 community resources.

15 At the same time, we
16 must continue to invest in the
17 safety and accessibility of our
18 buildings. Many of our libraries
19 are historic and beloved
20 neighborhood landmarks, but they
21 require ongoing investment to
22 address life safety needs, building
23 systems, accessibility
24 improvements. Ensuring that every

1 branch is safe, welcoming and
2 accessible is essential to keeping
3 libraries open and available for
4 communities that rely on them.

5 We're pleased to see
6 that in addition to this operating
7 budget, the Mayor's capital budget
8 for Fiscal Year '27 through '32
9 dedicates 33 million for replacing
10 HVAC systems to keep our libraries
11 open. This is a big step toward
12 making our libraries more
13 accessible throughout the year.

14 Equally important is
15 investing in the workforce that
16 keep our libraries running. Our
17 staff provides programming,
18 technology assistance, literacy
19 support and community services that
20 make the free library such a vital
21 resource. A continued investment
22 in our workforce allows us to keep
23 libraries' doors open, provide
24 excellent service and meet the

1 involving needs of Philadelphians.

2 Over the past year,
3 we've also strengthened how we
4 communicate and engage with our
5 community. We've expanded
6 outreach, improved how we share
7 information about programs and
8 building operations and upgraded
9 internal communications to better
10 support our staff across the
11 system. These improvements help
12 ensure that Philadelphians know
13 about the opportunities available
14 to them at their neighborhood
15 library.

16 The Free Library does
17 not do this work alone. We partner
18 with hundreds of community
19 organizations, civic groups,
20 schools and other city departments.
21 Libraries are places where many of
22 the city's priorities come
23 together, from workforce
24 development, afterschool

1 enrichment, cultural programming.

2 We also join with the
3 citywide efforts to provide needed
4 warmth in the winter and cooling
5 centers in the summer to help save
6 lives. In this way, the library
7 helps weave together the social
8 fabric of Philadelphia. This work
9 aligns closely with Mayor Parker's
10 vision of a safer, cleaner, greener
11 Philadelphia with economic
12 opportunity for all. Libraries
13 provide safe and welcoming spaces
14 in every neighborhood. They are
15 where access meets opportunity.
16 They support educational and
17 economic mobility, encourage people
18 to explore new ideas and hobbies
19 and connect residents with city
20 services and strengthen
21 communities.

22 When libraries are
23 strong, our neighborhoods are
24 stronger. So thank you for your

1 continued partnership and support
2 for the Free Library of
3 Philadelphia. We look forward to
4 continuing this work together on
5 behalf of the people of our city.
6 And I brought my great, fantastic
7 team with me too today.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
10 Just a brief remark and I'll turn
11 it over to my members. I just want
12 to thank Commissioner Sue Slawson
13 for always answering my phone
14 calls, being very, very responsive.
15 Even when you're on vacation, even
16 when you were out on personal time,
17 you still would return the phone
18 call and make sure I get the issues
19 and concerns addressed.

20 I want to give a shout
21 out also to Frank Fabey as well.
22 He's on speed dial, thank him.
23 Thank Aparna Palantino, thank the
24 work that she's doing very much as

1 well as Chris Klinman as well, and
2 also Francesco for also responding
3 when I'm trying to get my design
4 right, as we build new playgrounds
5 and I have 20 different edits that
6 I would like to do, his patience
7 and always making sure that we get
8 it right. And so, to the whole
9 Parks & Rec team, just want to say
10 continue to keep up the good work
11 as well as Kelly Richards, the work
12 that you and your team is doing to
13 make sure that we continue to have
14 seven days a week when it comes to
15 opening up our libraries throughout
16 the City of Philadelphia.

17 But also, I'm excited
18 about the capital investment to
19 make sure our young people have
20 high quality libraries to enjoy
21 themselves. Our libraries are our
22 hubs, right, for growth and
23 development and academic
24 achievement as well as workforce

1 development as well. The same way
2 as our parks and our recreational
3 facilities are our safe havens for
4 our young people.

5 Just give me an idea,
6 Commissioner Slawson, as the
7 weather breaks we already know the
8 issue of public safety is number
9 one when it comes to making sure
10 our young people are safe at our
11 recreation centers and our
12 playgrounds. What is our strategy?
13 What is our plan as we go into
14 summer 2026 to keep our babies
15 safe?

16 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
17 Thank you for that question,
18 Council President Johnson. We
19 truly have been following that
20 blueprint for a safer Philadelphia,
21 and we are -- our afterschool
22 program, we're going to be hosting
23 2400 kids. We're serving 300,000
24 meals during the school year alone.

1 So for Parks and Recreation, we
2 can't just think about youth for
3 the summer. We ramp up in the
4 summer, but this is all year-round
5 for us.

6 The plan is for us to
7 serve at least 800,000 meals.
8 We're going to offer 1100 jobs with
9 our C2L. Some of the things that
10 we're doing as far as safety is we
11 are working with the Philadelphia
12 Police Department. We already have
13 scheduled our annual meeting with
14 the command staff, our leaders, our
15 program directors, phone numbers
16 exchange and we're doing
17 programming together.

18 The police department
19 has just stepped in. And in those
20 neighborhoods where it's really
21 tough where we need extra support,
22 they are supporting us. We have
23 the necessary media, social media
24 also this summer where we're trying

1 to ensure -- what we don't want to
2 hear is parents saying, I don't
3 have anything for my kids to do.
4 We have multiple programs. It's
5 not just for the young people that
6 their parents are looking for them
7 to have something to do.

8 We have visual arts. We
9 have performing arts programs.
10 That's separate from our sports
11 opportunity. And I think one of
12 the big things, Council President,
13 that I'm excited about this summer
14 is we're rolling out -- we are
15 focusing on our boxing. I
16 believe -- and we're using the
17 Mayor's anti-funding to equip all
18 12 of our boxing sites with brand
19 new equipment.

20 We're going to set aside
21 funding --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

1 Because you have coaches, you have
2 boxing instructors that have been
3 training these young people for
4 years and all they've received was
5 a thank-you. But we're trying to
6 increase the number of young people
7 that come into our boxing
8 facilities, guys and girls, because
9 we believe that if we can figure
10 out another alternative to picking
11 up a gun, I think boxing is one of
12 those alternatives. I had the
13 opportunity to have Rob Jackson,
14 our new Deputy Commissioner, he
15 took Anne Marie's place, Rob
16 Jackson is over here, and he's
17 overseeing our boxing program. I
18 think this is going to be a huge
19 opportunity.

20 Another thing that I'm
21 doing, I am starting a teen program
22 for girls, specifically for
23 girls --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Okay. Ladies gone clap
2 for that? The ladies get some
3 support.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Because I was in a
7 roundtable discussion the other day
8 and they said, we keep having all
9 these programs for the guys and the
10 boys, and what about the girls.
11 They be out there carrying on and
12 doing the flashmobs too.

13 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
14 They're struggling just like our
15 boys. And I think it's an
16 opportunity for us to -- the Teen
17 Girls Safety and Empowerment
18 program is a trauma-informed
19 initiative designed to equip young
20 women across Philadelphia with the
21 tools, awareness and confidence to
22 navigate real-world safety
23 challenges. Grounded in both
24 physical safety and mental well-

1 being, this pilot prioritizes
2 de-escalation, situational
3 awareness.

4 Sometimes our young
5 girls are in friendships with
6 people that are dangerous and they
7 don't know. We want to try to give
8 them some skills and teach them
9 what to look out for. Self-
10 advocacy, you have to speak up for
11 yourself. You have to be
12 comfortable saying, here's my
13 boundary, don't step over it, core
14 skills alongside introductory self-
15 defense techniques.

16 It's going to be a
17 pilot. I'm going to pick three
18 centers to get it started. We're
19 going to have 10 to 20 young girls
20 in each cohort. But the best part
21 about this program is that this is
22 not going to be funded by the city.
23 I reached out to a friend of mine.
24 The name of his company is

1 Jobology, it's an IT company, and
2 he's gathering a number of his
3 friends and they're going to
4 sponsor and fund this. And
5 hopefully, as time goes on they'll
6 raise additional money so I can
7 spread this across Parks and
8 Recreation. But it's to promote
9 safety and de-escalation, to build
10 confidence and just practical
11 skills that we assume that our
12 young girls have. But what we're
13 seeing as a result of some of the
14 crime that's happening, they don't.

15 And so, those are some
16 of the things that we're doing to
17 ensure that we're providing
18 opportunities. And of course, you
19 know, we need lifeguards. We need
20 PMAs, pool maintenance attendants.
21 There are opportunities for our
22 young people to work at Parks and
23 Recreation. So moms, dads, we have
24 these doors for you to walk into.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Thank you. I'm going to

3 advocate for the boxing program.

4 I'll follow up with Mr. Jackson.

5 I'm a strong advocate of the James

6 Shuler Boxing Gym as well as Marian

7 Anderson Boxing Academy as well.

8 And so, this is an opportune time.

9 And I'm an advocate for Play It

10 Safe in the 8th regarding the young

11 ladies program, to make sure that

12 we are empowering our young people

13 and Play It Safe in the 8th is a

14 model. At some point in time, it's

15 probably going to go citywide

16 because it does what you're talking

17 about, partnering with local

18 community organizations, Parks &

19 Rec, to really make sure we're

20 keeping our young people active

21 during these summer hours.

22 With that being said,

23 the Chair recognizes Majority

24 Leader Katherine Gilmore

1 Richardson, then the Chair of Parks
2 & Rec Dr. Anthony Phillips, and
3 then Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Thank you very much,
6 Council President, and thank you
7 both for your testimony. You know
8 that we typically meet and speak
9 throughout the years. So I wanted
10 to start again with our thank-yous,
11 and obviously to our Parks & Rec
12 Commissioner Susan Slawson, thank
13 you so much to you and to your
14 amazing team, particularly this
15 winter, and for the communities
16 that we work with; Sue Buck, our
17 Deputy Commissioner who works with
18 Beth on my team very often; Erica
19 Smith, one of the city foresters,
20 Frank Fabey, emergency tree removal
21 inspection and facility
22 maintenance, and all of the tree
23 management information team members
24 who handled the special email

1 around requesting tree inspections
2 and supply updates, and
3 particularly Yanni Rodriguez and
4 Damien Yasipour. I hope I got that
5 correct. But to the entire team,
6 we appreciate you. You know I have
7 to include in there Faye and the
8 entire team at the Dell Music
9 Center. They are fabulous and
10 doing wonderful work.

11 And to our team at the
12 Free Library of Philadelphia, to
13 our President Kelly Richards, thank
14 you, thank you, thank you. You
15 have certainly been a breath of
16 fresh air since being here in
17 Philadelphia. We truly appreciate
18 the work you've been doing at the
19 library; Christina Patton Kelly to
20 Priscilla Suero, Mary and Ethel at
21 Wynnefield Library, because I know
22 they're listening, I know they are
23 listening right now. So I'm
24 shouting you out, Mary and Ethel at

1 the Wynnefield Library, and the
2 wonderful autism program they have,
3 and Monique Moore Pryor and the
4 whole Free Library of Philadelphia
5 Foundation team. They have had
6 wonderful events, particularly at
7 the main branch.

8 So really quickly, I
9 just wanted to put a few things on
10 the record, and I was waiting for
11 my District Councilmember,
12 Councilmember Jones, so I'll have
13 to get this on because we don't
14 have a recreation center in
15 Wynnefield, and I've been seeing
16 the construction progress happening
17 at the John C. Anderson Cultural
18 Center. So I wanted to get it on
19 the record.

20 One, if there's any
21 update around Wynnefield Library,
22 and I know we did the project
23 that's in the middle of the
24 courtyard. And then also at the

1 John C. Anderson Cultural Center
2 right next door, updates on the
3 progress, where the capital
4 projects there. And then again,
5 I'm asking everybody the same
6 question relative to your vacancy
7 rate, how many positions have been
8 filled, your Class 100 estimated
9 obligations for this fiscal year
10 for FY26 and if they meet or exceed
11 your FY26 adopted budget
12 allocation, and if you'll have any
13 overspend in Class 100? And if
14 not, how many unfilled positions do
15 you have? And then just your
16 overall vacancy rate? I'll start
17 there.

18 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
19 Thank you, Councilmember Gilmore
20 Richardson. I'm going to ask for
21 First Deputy Commissioner Marissa
22 Washington to come and she will be
23 responding to the vacancy -- so
24 let's talk about Anderson first.

1 We are super excited, grateful that
2 we were able to come back this
3 budget hearing and talk about the
4 fact that the roof is being
5 repaired. And once the roof is
6 repaired, one, what's most
7 important is that it's fully
8 funded, which is what we had been
9 waiting for to ensure that the work
10 could be done. So it's fully
11 funded to not just do the outer,
12 the roof. The inside work will
13 start once the outer roof is
14 complete. I don't have a date.
15 Aparna may know when it will be
16 completed. Would you like for
17 Aparna to come?

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Sure. And I turned
20 around and I saw Aparna in the
21 gallery. And of course, wanted to
22 thank you for the work that you all
23 did on the courtyard project. The
24 neighbors are truly excited and

1 waiting to utilize the courtyard,
2 which is separate from Anderson,
3 but the two properties meet sort of
4 where the courtyard is located.

5 So just any updates on
6 the utilization of the courtyard,
7 number one? And then we're seeing
8 the work in realtime. So just
9 wanted to put it on the record that
10 we're thankful. I'm sure
11 Councilmember Jones will say the
12 same. So on behalf of
13 Councilmember Jones, my District
14 colleague and Councilmember, and
15 myself, thank you very much because
16 we do not have a recreation center
17 in Wynnefield, and the cultural
18 center is all we have.

19 MS. PALANTINO: Good
20 afternoon, Council Pres --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: All the rich people live
23 in Wynnefield though.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: See, that's why we
2 don't get anything.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: You know my family's from
5 Arlington Street and 53rd and
6 Lebanon though, but I support my
7 Majority Leader.

8 How are you doing,
9 Aparna?

10 MS. PALANTINO: Doing
11 well. Thank you. Good afternoon,
12 Council President, members of City
13 Council. Happy to report as you're
14 aware, Wynnefield Library, the
15 courtyard is complete. As part of
16 the Rebuild project, there was a
17 roof replacement and some interior
18 work that was done. With FY27
19 funding, we'll be able to address
20 the HVAC system, which is currently
21 in design for the library.

22 With regards to the John
23 C. Anderson Cultural Center, the
24 roof, if you've driven by recently,

1 is under construction. So as the
2 Commissioner mentioned, we will
3 wait for the roof and some
4 waterproofing to occur and then we
5 will go deal with the interior
6 renovations that are required in
7 the facility. The roof will be
8 completed by May, and then the
9 construction on the interior will
10 begin. We expect it to take about
11 8 to 10 months because there's a
12 lot of work that is required due to
13 the ongoing roof issues.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Received. And I heard
16 the bell and I'll honor the clock,
17 but I just wanted to put on the
18 record does the roofing project at
19 the cultural center impact the
20 ability to open the courtyard? I
21 want to get that on the record.

22 MS. PALANTINO: We've
23 been coordinating with the library,
24 but I'll defer to the library.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Because it's so close
3 I think that it may impact it. And
4 I just want to make sure I can say
5 that on the record for the
6 community members who will be
7 listening for the reason why we
8 cannot open the courtyard due to
9 safety protocols. I just want to
10 make sure I understand that.

11 MR. RICHARDS: We don't
12 believe that's going to be an issue
13 to open the courtyard.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: No?

16 MR. RICHARDS: No, we
17 don't believe that will be an
18 issue.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: So we'll be able to
21 utilize the courtyard? Okay.

22 MS. PALANTINO: We've
23 been coordinating with the adjacent
24 property owner as well as the

1 library for the work.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Right, and we talked
4 about that. So thank you all very,
5 very much. And to honor the clock
6 and Council President and also my
7 colleagues, I would just request
8 that I'll submit the balance of the
9 questions that I did verbally state
10 as well as others to the Council
11 President for written response so
12 that we have an opportunity for
13 other colleagues as well. So thank
14 you. Thank you very much. And I
15 was going to ask about LEAP, but
16 I'll submit them for the record.
17 Okay. Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: We got time today, Madam
20 Leader. Just ask that question
21 before I go on to Dr. Phillips.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Thank you so much,
24 Council President.

1 Of course, I'm going to
2 ask about the LEAP program. I
3 formerly served as a teen
4 leadership assistant as a teenager
5 at Wynnefield Library, so just
6 wanted to ask about the LEAP
7 program. We work with the Free
8 Library every single year on this
9 program. You all have been stellar
10 with recruiting young people from
11 different communities and schools.
12 So just wanted to get an update on
13 leap and if we need to ensure that
14 they have any additional funding as
15 a result of the Career Connected
16 Learning goals.

17 MR. RICHARDS: Actually,
18 Councilwoman, I actually got some
19 pretty good news about LEAP. We've
20 created a part time position
21 utilizing the assistant rec leader
22 position for afterschool leaders to
23 support the LEAP program year-
24 round. That's been something we've

1 been trying to do for a long time,
2 so we didn't lose good talent. So
3 there'll be permanent part-time all
4 year-round, and this will provide
5 our youth with continuous Out-of-
6 School Time programming that
7 fosters inclusive and formal
8 learning for our children and teens
9 and families.

10 Right now we currently
11 have 94 TLAs supporting the LEAP
12 program, and every library has at
13 least two teen library assistants
14 who engage in this professional
15 development opportunity for them
16 where they can actually do homework
17 assistance, but also gain job
18 skills on their own. So as you're
19 aware, it's a great program and
20 we're doing our best to make it
21 greater.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: That is awesome news.

24 It's awesome news because you're

1 creating the pipeline of young
2 people who will transfer into
3 larger roles and positions of
4 leadership and responsibility in
5 city government. And so, that is
6 exciting. I'm grateful for that
7 work and thankful that we are
8 expanding and continuing to fully
9 fund the LEAP program. Thank you.

10 Thank you, Council
11 President.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

14 Dr. Anthony Phillips,
15 Jamie Gauthier and I see
16 Mr. Harrity just came back in the
17 room, and Mr. Harrity.

18 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

19 Thank you, Council President.

20 I want to start this
21 round of questioning with the
22 Commissioner of Parks & Rec, Susan
23 Slawson. I want to thank
24 Commissioner Slawson for all of her

1 incredible work that she's been
2 doing to lead the Parks & Rec
3 system. It's not easy, but it is
4 very challenging, but she has made
5 it seem very seamless and she's
6 working every day to make it
7 better. Also want to thank her
8 team, Sue Buck, Frank Fabey and
9 Marissa, for all of their work as
10 well.

11 Over the past several
12 months, I also just briefed all of
13 our members. We've been working
14 closely with our union as well as
15 Parks & Rec to kind of address
16 different challenges in the Parks &
17 Rec system. And I also want to
18 thank you for working with me as
19 the Chair to navigate these
20 conversations.

21 In addition, I just want
22 to start off with just some things
23 that I hope that we can facilitate
24 more conversation on how we can

1 strengthen our Parks & Rec system
2 that I would love for us to be on
3 the record on. We recognize in the
4 city of Philadelphia, a lot of our
5 offices and certainly the 9th
6 District, we receive a high volume
7 of calls related to tree
8 maintenance and removal, with
9 neighbors waiting months and
10 sometimes longer for service,
11 including in cases that raise
12 safety concerns. Just wanted to
13 know if you can put on the record
14 how many trees are on the list
15 currently for pruning and how many
16 trees are on the list currently for
17 a removal, right? And what is the
18 service agreement that neighbors
19 should understand on when they make
20 a request how long that should
21 take?

22 And then also, I noticed
23 that there is a \$15,000 contract
24 budgeted for or expense made for

1 tree arborist, a contracting
2 company, and around \$450,000 for
3 tree cutting and pruning. I just
4 want to know that's citywide,
5 right? That's not just residential
6 trees, correct? I had three
7 questions in that.

8 MS. SMITH-FICHMAN:

9 Hello. Good afternoon. Thank you
10 for having me. My name is Erica
11 Smith-Fichman. I'm the city
12 forester here at Philadelphia Parks
13 and Recreation. So I'm going to
14 try to remember and answer the
15 questions that you just asked. The
16 first one was?

17 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

18 The first was there is a backlog.

19 MS. SMITH-FICHMAN:

20 Okay.

21 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

22 How many are in the end of the
23 pipeline for tree pruning and how
24 many are for tree removal? And

1 what is the service level agreement
2 that neighbors should understand
3 when requesting tree pruning and
4 tree removal?

5 MS. SMITH-FICHMAN: Yes.

6 So citywide we have a record of
7 about 25,000 trees that need to be
8 pruned. That's outside of the ones
9 that will be pruned this season,
10 this year, which is about 1700.
11 The reason that is so high is in
12 part because when we receive a
13 request to prune a tree on a block,
14 we actually inspect the entire
15 block to list every tree that needs
16 pruning. Often the trees are
17 around the same age, they will all
18 need pruning. And so, it kind of
19 exponentially increases that list.

20 It's also cost-effective
21 for our contractors to go and prune
22 an entire block as opposed to ping-
23 ponging around the city to do
24 individuals. So the pruning

1 backlog is about 25,000 trees.
2 That's about \$5 million. That's
3 across the entire city. And then
4 our removal backlog is smaller.
5 That's about 3500 trees and about
6 \$3 million.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: So
8 the question I -- when we talk
9 about a government that people can
10 see, touch and feel, right, I think
11 that we get more frustration from a
12 Council office where people are
13 like, my tree is about to fall
14 down, right. I just wanted to see
15 how if we were to reflect that in
16 the budget, why wasn't that
17 necessarily reflected in this
18 year's budget? I guess there's
19 many reasons for that. But if we
20 reflected it in this budget this
21 year, that \$8 million, do you
22 believe that we can in an annual
23 calendar year complete the entire
24 backlog?

1 MS. SMITH-FICHMAN: It's
2 a complicated answer. I will try
3 to do it shortly. The backlog, the
4 list of trees that need to be
5 worked on is constantly growing.
6 So we will never eliminate it 100%.
7 Also, the capacity that our team
8 has and the contractors have, we do
9 need to give them more than one
10 year to increase it, because we
11 spend about \$1 million on tree work
12 across the city, street tree work
13 specifically across the city each
14 year. And so, to multiply that by
15 eight times, we would need to give
16 them time to increase their
17 capacity to do that. So it would
18 take multiple years to get up to
19 that, that period.

20 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
21 And that's the part I was just
22 trying to say, how do we create a
23 service level agreement with our
24 residents so we can basically

1 balance their expectations so they
2 don't believe that they can get
3 this done, because I feel like we
4 have -- are you thinking about a
5 strategic plan that we could do to
6 work on addressing this tree
7 problem?

8 MS. SMITH-FICHMAN: So
9 our plan -- within the Philly tree
10 plan, one of the goals is to
11 transition from a reactive to a
12 proactive system. So that would be
13 inspecting all of our trees on a
14 regular schedule. That is going to
15 require staff. And we are
16 currently, my HR colleagues and I,
17 are doing an amazing job of
18 actually filling vacancies and
19 increasing the number of inspectors
20 we have for our street tree canopy.
21 So we will be hiring four new
22 people in the next few months. So
23 increasing our own capacity is part
24 of that, increasing our contractor

1 capacity is another part of that,
2 and communication with residents is
3 a huge part of that as well.

4 I was really excited to
5 hear Councilmember Gilmore
6 Richardson shouting out Yanni and
7 Damien at the street tree office,
8 because we have four full-time
9 people who are answering residents'
10 questions, and we have done a lot
11 of work to try to increase the way
12 the amount of communication and the
13 quality of communication to make
14 people understand that we're
15 triaging what we have, no pun
16 intended, but we have trees that
17 are in various stages of critical,
18 hazardous, poor condition.

19 If someone's tree is not
20 in the most hazardous condition,
21 it's not going to be removed
22 immediately. And so, because that
23 is a moving target, it is hard to
24 communicate about but we are doing

1 a really I would say good job of
2 communicating about that,
3 increasing the way that we
4 communicate about it and the number
5 of staff we have to answer people's
6 questions.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
8 have another question, but I just
9 want to quickly say that I just
10 know that this budget doesn't
11 really reflect a strategic plan on
12 how do you accomplish that goal.
13 And it's very important to
14 residents in the city of
15 Philadelphia, and I believe there
16 should be a plan and there should
17 be a level and investment for that.
18 And I know you want to do it. But
19 if you don't have the investment,
20 it's not going to happen any time
21 soon. So I got to wrap up, but I
22 will come around for a second round
23 of questions. Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

1 If I can respond to a little bit of
2 that question. Would we love \$8
3 million? Absolutely. If you gave
4 us \$8 million and the expectation
5 was for us to come back here next
6 year and this work to be done, it
7 would not be. It is a process that
8 will have to be staggered because
9 of the backlog, because of the
10 great need. And so, it is about
11 giving us X amount of dollars over
12 X amount of years for us to
13 actually get the work done. So I
14 just wanted to make sure I got that
15 on the record that, yes, funding is
16 needed. But could we complete it
17 all in one year? We could not.

18 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

19 Thank you.

20 Thank you, Council
21 President. I'll come back for the
22 second round.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

1 Chair recognizes
2 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, then
3 Jim Harrity, then Councilmember
4 Bass.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

6 Good afternoon to all of you.
7 Thank you so much for the work that
8 you do every day. I wasn't going
9 to really talk about trees, but I
10 just want to support my colleague
11 quickly, because I think this is
12 more than just an issue of how it
13 looks or an issue of what the tree
14 is doing to the sidewalk or
15 something like that. It's a public
16 safety issue.

17 I can remember two
18 instances last year where trees
19 fell on people, right. I know one
20 of the gentlemen who was playing
21 chess in Fairmount Park and the
22 tree fell on four elderly people
23 who were playing chess in the park.
24 And then I believe there was

1 another incident a couple of months
2 after that. And so, I think it's
3 worth doing the planning. I know
4 that you all are doing what you're
5 doing. And a part of this is that
6 you have not had the appropriate
7 appropriation. But I think it's
8 worth upping our budget for this.
9 And I think it's worth having that
10 actual strategic plan on this
11 because this can endanger people's
12 lives, right. And so, I support
13 the line of questioning.

14 But I want to talk about
15 Rebuild. After years of waiting,
16 I'm really glad that my
17 constituents in West and Southwest
18 are finally seeing their beloved
19 public spaces reopen after long
20 Rebuild construction periods. You
21 and I, Commissioner, were both at
22 Kingsessing at the ribbon-cutting
23 for Kingsessing Rec Center a couple
24 of weeks ago, which was just

1 amazing. And I know it's one of
2 the biggest Rebuild projects in the
3 city and I'm grateful for that.

4 I'm also excited for the
5 reopening of Johnny Sample Rec in
6 Cobbs Creek. And so, with this in
7 mind, can you give us a summary of
8 how staffing assignments are going
9 to change in FY27 for those of us
10 with Council Districts that are
11 seeing their sites reopened? Can
12 you tell us if we're adding new
13 staff to account for Rebuild sites
14 reopening or will non-Rebuild sites
15 lose full-time or part-time
16 staffers?

17 I've heard rumblings
18 about staffing going down at some
19 of the smaller sites in my district
20 that didn't get Rebuild money. And
21 I'm worried that they're going to
22 have fewer services and shorter
23 hours now that the larger Rebuild
24 sites are reopening. So if you

1 could tell us how we're balancing
2 that and approaching that? And
3 then I have a few questions about
4 capital projects.

5 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

6 Thank you for the question,
7 Councilmember Gauthier. We will
8 not be taking from smaller sites
9 once these facilities open. One of
10 the things that had to happen is
11 when those sites closed, we had to
12 place staff in different locations.
13 Some of the staff will be coming
14 back, some of the staff will be
15 going to different locations. So,
16 no, I'm grateful you brought that
17 up so we could kind of squash that
18 rumor.

19 It is important that
20 when we open these facilities that
21 they are fully staffed. I think
22 one of the things that was brought
23 up by Councilmember Gilmore
24 Richardson is the rate of

1 vacancies, and we've been working
2 really hard at trying to bring up
3 our vacancies. And so, we're in
4 the process of hiring additional
5 staff to ensure that those
6 facilities that are reopening will
7 have the necessary people so you
8 won't lose staff.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

10 That's so awesome. In some cases,
11 when we had larger sites closed, I
12 was able to get those staff
13 transferred to our smaller sites.
14 And so, I was worried that we were
15 going to have our numbers go down
16 again. So thank you so much for
17 that.

18 On the topic of capital
19 projects, I'm inspired by what our
20 capital programs office can
21 accomplish. Going back to
22 Kingessing, we now have a block in
23 Southwest with both a restored rec
24 center and a restored library

1 directly next to one another, and
2 it's hard to state how
3 transformative that is for a
4 neighborhood that's been waiting a
5 long time for that.

6 Now that the majority of
7 the Rebuild initiative has been
8 completed, can you tell us -- or
9 we're making good progress rather.
10 Can you tell us in as much detail
11 as possible how much of the FY27
12 budget for parks and libraries is
13 finishing out Rebuild projects
14 versus new money for capital
15 projects?

16 I'm sure I'm not the
17 only District Councilmember that
18 still has many large sites in my
19 district that desperately need
20 multiple millions of dollars of
21 help that were not even a part of
22 Rebuild, and that would take ages
23 to fundraise for if we're relying
24 on competitive grants in order to

1 get the capital funding necessary
2 for those renovations.

3 So are we budgeting
4 beyond the money that has to go to
5 completing Rebuild projects? Are
6 we budgeting for big capital
7 projects in the FY27 budget,
8 particularly for sites that were
9 never a part of the Rebuild
10 program? I'd like to hear more
11 about that. Hi, Aparna.

12 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
13 I'm going to pass this over to
14 Aparna. I want to just make a
15 note, thinking of the staff,
16 thinking of the size of the
17 facilities that are now coming on
18 board. Some of them are double the
19 sizes of the facilities that they
20 replaced. And so, when you think
21 about staffing and you think about
22 the three full-time people that you
23 may have, now you may have two
24 floors, you may have boxing going

1 on, basketball going on upstairs.

2 There is going to be a need for
3 additional staff because we are
4 bringing on larger facilities.

5 We are bringing on
6 additional opportunities for
7 community members to come in. And
8 so, that is something that we have
9 been having conversations about
10 because we recognize that the sites
11 are changing, the size of the sites
12 are changing. The number of people
13 that we will need to manage also
14 has to change.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

16 Thank you for that.

17 MS. PALANTINO: Thank
18 you. Aparna Palantino, Deputy
19 Managing Director of Capital
20 Program Office. Thank you for both
21 your comments and your question,
22 Councilmember Gauthier. With
23 regards to the FY27 budget, there
24 aren't many asks for the Rebuild

1 projects. The reason for that is,
2 as you know Rebuild was funded
3 through roughly a \$300 million bond
4 initiative, William Penn funding
5 and then grants.

6 We are still spending
7 down that money. So at this time,
8 there's not a substantial ask in
9 the capital budget for Rebuild
10 projects. If and when a particular
11 project comes up, we often work
12 with the District Councilmember to
13 then identify that need, and then
14 if need be include it in that
15 year's capital budget. But FY27
16 doesn't necessarily have that much
17 for Rebuild.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

19 Thank you. I just want to
20 encourage us to keep pushing,
21 right, for this budget year and
22 beyond. I think we got to what, 97
23 of the projects that we originally
24 wanted to get to?

1 MS. PALANTINO: So there
2 were 72 sites in the original
3 ordinance. 43 have been completed.
4 About 17 are in construction. At
5 the moment, the rest are in design
6 engagement or planning. So as we
7 continue to roll out projects,
8 we're identifying the need. But at
9 this moment, there are still bond
10 funds allocated to those sites that
11 we are spending down on.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
13 Okay. In closing, I just want us
14 to continue to keep pushing on this
15 capital project budget issue. We
16 are going to get to 72 projects,
17 and a program that originally I
18 think envisioned 250 and it's still
19 historic, it's still the biggest,
20 you know, renovation of our public
21 sites that we've ever had. But we
22 needed Rebuild because we weren't
23 continually investing in our spaces
24 and we don't want to get to that

1 place again.

2 So I just encourage us
3 every year to make sure that we're
4 putting in enough resources so that
5 we don't ever need a rebuild.
6 We're just taking care of our
7 stuff. Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Thank you. Perhaps you
10 may start thinking in the future
11 about a new funding source. I'm
12 thinking tofu.

13 But Chair recognizes
14 Councilmember Jim Harrity, then
15 Councilmember Cindy Bass, then
16 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young,
17 then Rue Landau.

18 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

19 Thank you, Council President.

20 Good afternoon, everyone
21 first. Ms. Slawson, just got to
22 say thank you to you for the
23 changes that you made from our
24 hearing. Shout-out to Cindy Bass,

1 the originator of our HOPS
2 legislation. When we have
3 problems, we asked you in public,
4 so we should also thank you in
5 public when things are getting
6 done. So I thank you for that.
7 And could you please just run me
8 through the changes that you have
9 made, kind of take the victory lap
10 on what we're doing now for our
11 children to keep them safe?

12 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

13 Thank you for that question,
14 Councilmember Harrity. Sue Buck,
15 Deputy Commissioner of Operations
16 is going to come up and respond.

17 MS. BUCK: Good
18 afternoon, Council President
19 Johnson and other Councilmembers --

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Let me take a moment,
22 first of all, to acknowledge Sue
23 Buck. Sue got one of them big
24 awards from the city before, like

1 the -- what was it, National
2 Citizens Award so many years ago.
3 Yeah, it was a while ago. I
4 remember, Sue. I just want to say
5 hello. How you doing today?

6 MS. BUCK: No, I'm fine.
7 Appreciate it. So we took into
8 account our conversation last fall
9 and we met with your staff as well
10 as Councilwoman Bass's. And our
11 first method is obviously
12 mechanical, we try to do that. We
13 made commitments and we're
14 following through with them. We're
15 not spraying ball fields at all
16 this year.

17 We went from 50 feet to
18 100 feet of play equipment. We're
19 not spraying farms, gardens rather,
20 food-producing or otherwise. We're
21 posting signage and we are keeping
22 records. And I think you will see
23 a significant decrease in the
24 amount of pesticide spraying that

1 we are doing on parks -- I should
2 say, passive parks and recreation
3 centers.

4 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

5 Yeah, I was very excited and happy
6 for our kids. I mean, you know how
7 I feel about that chemical and it's
8 really nasty stuff, that 2,4-D,
9 which is basically Agent Orange.
10 But again, when we bring you in
11 here and ask you questions and we
12 put you on the spot, we definitely
13 have to praise you when you turn
14 around and do what we ask. So
15 while I think we still have a
16 little bit more to go, I am very
17 happy for our children and for our
18 parks.

19 I know the coach is
20 probably happy. Right, Coach?

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
22 (Inaudible).

23 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: But
24 I appreciate all you're doing over

1 there in Parks & Rec to keep our
2 kids safe. And I really appreciate
3 the fact that we're really cutting
4 that chemical out for real now.
5 The 100 feet is big around the rec
6 equipment because it has a tendency
7 to stick around. So I thank you
8 again.

9 And that's all I have,
10 Council President.

11 MS. BUCK: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: And I'm sorry, Sue. I
14 was thinking about Barbara McCabe
15 with the Dilworth Award. But I
16 know you do --

17 MS. BUCK: Oh, you're
18 thinking Barbara McCabe. It's the
19 Irish --

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: -- good work. I know.
22 Yeah. But, Sue, I know you're a
23 big-wig, so I appreciate your
24 support though. Thank you for

1 being responsive when we call.

2 At this time the Chair
3 recognizes Deputy Majority Whip
4 Councilmember Cindy Bass, then we
5 will have Councilmember Jeffrey Jay
6 Young, then Councilmember Rue
7 Landau.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

9 Thank you, Mr. President. Good
10 afternoon. How's everybody doing?
11 It's good to see you all. I want
12 to give a big thank you to each and
13 every one of you and really
14 everyone who's here from the
15 departments because we work very
16 closely together. We do a lot
17 together, as Jimmy just -- excuse
18 me, Councilman Harrity just
19 mentioned about the HOPS bill and
20 the importance and the work that
21 we've done on that together for
22 years, the work in the 8th District
23 with our recreation centers and
24 getting the attention that we so

1 desperately have needed for a long
2 time, the work in our libraries.
3 Particularly Nicetown-Tioga, we're
4 still working on that one. But
5 really, all of our libraries and
6 getting them attention is greatly
7 appreciated.

8 So I just had a couple
9 of questions for you all. And the
10 first actually is in 2013 with the
11 then members of Council, my office
12 worked with them -- I was then the
13 Chair of Parks & Rec. I worked
14 with them to allocate funding from
15 their ITEF funds for cameras in
16 every rec center. And I know we've
17 made tremendous progress. I think
18 we had something like 20 cameras in
19 the whole system in 2013. And I
20 know we were just about done at
21 last year's budget hearing. I
22 think almost everything had been
23 done. So is that project complete?

24 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

1 Thank you for that question,
2 Councilmember Bass. I was actually
3 here and excited when you met with
4 your colleagues and came up with
5 this idea. I actually used that
6 same idea with Councilmember
7 Phillips about the lighting and I
8 shared with him that I got that
9 from you, because you said we need
10 to get together and make sure we
11 have cameras. So thank you for
12 that.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And
14 to that end, if there's an effort
15 to put money in from our ITEF funds
16 for lighting, I'm certainly -- sign
17 me up. I'm in.

18 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
19 We're going to sign you. So the
20 security camera sonic devices have
21 currently been installed at 178
22 sites with an approximate total of
23 2357 cameras installed. That's an
24 increase of 309. There are 9 sites

1 that are under construction. 7
2 sites are in the design phase, and
3 27 sites remain to be designed with
4 a cost of \$1.25 million.

5 And one of the things
6 that we have been mentioning is
7 that when we started the camera
8 process back then, we didn't think
9 about maintenance, we didn't think
10 about them getting old, we didn't
11 think about replacing, repairing.
12 So now, when we have the
13 conversations about the cameras, we
14 have to have -- because technology
15 changes so quick, we can't just pay
16 for cameras. We have to pay for
17 cameras, pay for maintenance and
18 pay for service. So right now
19 there are 27 sites that remain to
20 be designed, and that \$1.25 million
21 are just for the cameras.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Can
23 you give us an idea in writing,
24 could you provide to the Chair, to

1 the Council President, where those
2 27 sites are, just all members?

3 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

4 Definitely. Would you like me to
5 name them or would you like me to
6 present it?

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: If
8 you can do it briefly.

9 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

10 Herron, Sacks, Cibotti, Guerin,
11 Stinger Square -- oh goodness,
12 Wharton Square, Laura Sims Ice
13 Rink, 39th and Olive Playground,
14 Gustine Rec Center, Hillside Rec
15 Center, John C. Anderson Cultural
16 Center, Shuler Playground, Amos
17 Playground, Francisville
18 Playground, Holme Playground,
19 Holmesburg Playground, Monkiewicz
20 Playground, Mullin Playground, Ramp
21 Playground, Carmella Playground,
22 Cruz Rec Center, Gambrel Rec
23 Center, McPherson Square and
24 Ramblers Rec Center.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

2 Okay. All right. Thank you for
3 the list. Appreciate that. Pools,
4 I heard you say pools were going to
5 be opening on time?

6 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

7 Yes.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All
9 the pools?

10 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

11 63 pools.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is
13 that the total number?

14 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

15 The total number is 70. Some of
16 them are still part of the Rebuild.
17 Some of them maintenance needs to
18 be done. But 63 of our pools will
19 be open this summer.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

21 Okay. Will they be open -- will
22 the other pools be open at all this
23 summer or they're offline this
24 summer?

1 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

2 They're offline this summer.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

4 Okay. Can you give us a list of
5 where they are?

6 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON: I
7 don't have that in front of me, but
8 I can make sure that I send that
9 information in.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
11 Okay. Overall I do want to say
12 that you all have done a fantastic
13 job of working with us, keeping the
14 pools open, having the pools open.
15 For a lot of kids, they're not
16 going to the shore. They're not
17 leaving the neighborhood. So pools
18 are incredibly important.

19 And how are we doing
20 with improvements to the pool
21 sites? One of the things that we
22 noticed when we've been out doing
23 tours is that the pool, you know,
24 you either have to be in the pool

1 or out of the pool because of lack
2 of pool furniture. Pool furniture
3 is really not a luxury. It really
4 is a requirement. Because the
5 concrete surrounding the pool is so
6 incredibly hot, on a day in July,
7 you know, it'll just burn your
8 feet.

9 So I know at some pools
10 you've added furniture and
11 umbrellas that protect from
12 shading, the sun is so hot. And
13 these are not -- again, I don't
14 want people to think these are
15 luxury items. These are really
16 necessities to be able to use the
17 pool. Are we online for those kind
18 of improvements this summer as well
19 with some of our pools?

20 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
21 We have some funding for pools, but
22 that's not -- we don't have funding
23 specifically for pools for us to
24 ensure that there's equipment at

1 all of our sites, we do not.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Are
3 we working towards a plan? Could
4 we work towards a plan to get
5 there?

6 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
7 Yes. And it is important, because
8 to go into one community and see
9 that it's furnished --

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
12 With all the --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
14 JOHNSON: Yeah, Quetcy got it nice.
15 Linden(ph) Park, you ride up that
16 jawn. That jawn's nice.

17 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
18 Yeah, to see that one facility is
19 furnished and other facilities are
20 not, it is a challenge. It just
21 shows the disparity in our system
22 that we are working on.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
24 Right. So Pleasant Playground,

1 which is completely fitted out, and
2 just a few miles down I have
3 Awbury, which has nothing and it's
4 quite a stark contrast.

5 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

6 Yeah. There was a fundraiser and
7 this was before I came back, and
8 somebody can share this
9 information, there was a specific
10 fundraiser. It was Tiny WPA. They
11 raised funds to make sure that
12 pools had the furniture to go
13 around the pools and not just the
14 furniture. And so, that was
15 something that was done separate
16 from the budget.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: We shouldn't have to
19 raise funds. We shouldn't have a
20 public-private partnership, and
21 this is just about priorities. We
22 have a \$7 billion budget. And so,
23 the reality is it's just a matter
24 of priority. But I think you're

1 probably going to hear from some
2 members that -- and I just want to
3 be frank -- in the event that we
4 were to allocate appropriations to
5 Parks & Rec to address some of
6 these issues, would you be able to
7 use it or would the Administration
8 frown upon it and ask you to give
9 it back and you can't spend it?

10 I'm just being
11 transparent, because we've tried to
12 help a lot of departments before in
13 the past and they say, that's not
14 in the context of what we can do.

15 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
16 Council President Johnson, we will
17 find a way to --

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Spend the money?

20 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
21 Spend the money.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Okay. All right. That's
24 all I wanted to hear.

1 Point of information.

2 Councilmember Young.

3 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
4 you, Mr. President.

5 Along those same lines,
6 if we allocate money and your
7 executive branch is the ones who
8 spend it but Council has a pocket
9 of funds as well through our ITEF,
10 are we able to use our ITEF to
11 purchase these types of equipment
12 if our pools need --

13 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
14 Your ITEF serves only for capital.
15 And that's \$15,000 or more, sir.
16 And it has to be something that's
17 in place, that's not movable,
18 immobile.

19 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
20 you. And I only bring that up
21 because again, these are measures
22 that Council has in place, but
23 we're handcuffed, I mean, providing
24 those types of services that our

1 pools would like to see so because
2 we don't have -- that's our funding
3 ability, so we can't fund those
4 type of things and our communities
5 are asking for it, then what can we
6 do to really to get that
7 implemented?

8 Thank you,
9 Mr. President.

10 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
11 Council President Johnson, Marissa
12 Washington, First Deputy, just
13 mentioned that there are four sites
14 that will be equipped and 12 more
15 sites will be refurbished.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: Please provide to the
18 Chair.

19 Very briefly.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I
21 wasn't done yet.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
23 JOHNSON: Very briefly.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

1 Thank you, Mr. President.

2 So I was told that the
3 improvements to Pleasant were
4 around the range of 25,000 or so.
5 Is that about average? Did you say
6 15?

7 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

8 No, that's for -- the 15 that I was
9 I was responding to was using ITEF
10 funding. It has to be \$15,000 or
11 more and it has to be capital.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

13 Okay. Two things real quick. One,
14 as a mother of a 16-year-old, I
15 want to thank you and applaud you
16 for the program for young girls.
17 So thank you very much for your
18 work around the issues surrounding
19 growing into adulthood for young
20 women today. So I just wanted to
21 thank you for that.

22 And the last question I
23 had was actually for the Library.
24 Kelly, Mr. Director, I just had a

1 question for you. Digital literacy
2 classes in libraries, is that
3 happening? And are we using AI in
4 any way in those classes? Are we
5 teaching AI or can we just do that?

6 MR. RICHARDS: We've not
7 really moved forward --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Could you speak into the
10 microphone please?

11 MR. RICHARDS: Sorry.
12 We've not really moved forward with
13 teaching AI at this particular
14 time. It's something that we want
15 to do. We have digital resource
16 specialists that work in 18 of our
17 libraries. They do provide support
18 and help for any patron or anyone
19 who comes into the buildings who
20 wants some special support. And
21 some of them may have some
22 expertise in that particular area,
23 but it hasn't been something that
24 we have moved forward on,

1 concerted, I mean, as a, you know,
2 from the senior level on down. But
3 it's a direction we want to go in.

4 Our biggest focus has
5 been trying to build up our staff
6 and keep these buildings open and
7 continue to provide the basic level
8 library service. But it's an area
9 we want to move into.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I
11 just want to encourage the use of
12 AI as much as we possibly can,
13 because our young people are
14 getting left behind. Look, our old
15 people are getting left.
16 Everybody's getting left behind. I
17 just think as a city we have to
18 step it up. So thank you so much,
19 and thank you all for the work that
20 you all do.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
22 JOHNSON: Thank you, sir. And
23 thank you, Member Bass.

24 Chair recognizes

1 Councilmember Rue Landau, then

2 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada --

3 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: I

4 think Jay was --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: I'm sorry, Jay. You must

7 have pressed the button and it went

8 down to the bottom. Councilmember

9 Jeffrey Jay Young, then

10 Councilmember Rue Landau, then

11 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada.

12 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank

13 you, Mr. President.

14 I want to start with I

15 want to say thank you to Parks &

16 Rec and the Library. I think that

17 you two are probably literally the

18 most important departments to our

19 families and our communities

20 because we rely on you to kind of

21 fill those gaps and voids in our

22 communities.

23 I want to start with

24 Parks & Rec first. It was

1 mentioned today about combat
2 sports, and particularly boxing in
3 our rec centers. But I want to
4 note just for the record that the
5 fastest growing high school sport
6 is girls wrestling. So just keep
7 that in mind when we're talking
8 about combat sports.

9 I really think that
10 combat sports is a way for our
11 communities to kind of channel some
12 of that energy that we have. When
13 I was growing up and I was a youth,
14 I went to wrestling practice at MLK
15 Rec Center. Sometimes I had
16 wrestling practice at the
17 Blackhawks Field at times. So I do
18 think that having more combat
19 sports in our communities, in our
20 rec centers is a positive for our
21 communities because it gives us a
22 way to learn discipline, to channel
23 that energy, to channel that
24 frustration in a more positive way.

1 So anything that we can do to
2 improve or to invest in those types
3 of activities, I'm all for it.

4 I want to also commend
5 Parks & Rec for partnering with the
6 police department in the 22nd
7 District for the Summer Nightlife
8 Series. There are activities every
9 single day at two recreation
10 centers in the 22nd District, at
11 Winchester and at Penrose. And
12 those community members have said,
13 although there were activities
14 happening every single day at the
15 rec center, that's the quietest
16 their neighborhoods have ever been,
17 right.

18 And so, we want to
19 continue to invest in these types
20 of programs, these types of
21 positive programs that go to uplift
22 our communities, provide our young
23 people and our residents in general
24 with things to do during the summer

1 months that are positive, get us
2 away from a certain mindset of what
3 the past has been, because our
4 kids, our communities deserve this
5 type of investment.

6 The one question I do
7 have is regarding lifeguards and
8 lifeguard training every year. It
9 seems like we have a shortage of
10 lifeguards. We're opening up
11 60-plus pools. That's great. But
12 it seems like we have a shortage of
13 lifeguards every year. So what
14 proactive measures is the
15 department taking to ensure that we
16 have enough trained lifeguards? And
17 this is going to be a good summer
18 job, right.

19 You mentioned that the
20 Parks & Rec is already hiring 1100
21 C2L kids to work at Parks & Rec.
22 What else are we doing to encourage
23 our teenagers specifically to
24 become lifeguards? And I'll say

1 there's an indoor pool in my
2 district at Hartranft that's owned
3 by the Housing Authority that can
4 be used all year-round to train our
5 residents to become lifeguards. So
6 what types of things are you at
7 Parks & Rec doing proactively to
8 train and hire more lifeguards?

9 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

10 Thank you for that question,
11 Councilmember Young. Well, the
12 first thing that we're doing, I
13 think it's one of the biggest
14 incentives that we're offering to
15 young people, that additional
16 \$1,000 if they sign up by -- that's
17 just how much we're trying to make
18 sure we have lifeguards in time at
19 our pools.

20 If you sign up by April
21 15th, you get an additional \$1,000.
22 Because the struggle was real and
23 we just did not have young
24 people -- and it doesn't have to be

1 young people to be lifeguards. It
2 doesn't matter how old you are.
3 And on top of that, if you didn't
4 make the April 15th deadline,
5 there's an additional \$500 if you
6 make May 15th. And you don't have
7 to pay for the certification. That
8 certification is \$400. It's free.

9 We're doing a ton of
10 social media. Our leaders are
11 putting the information out. And I
12 actually go on radio and on TV
13 pushing the need for lifeguards.
14 And so, it's there and we're going
15 to continue to do what we can with
16 the incentives, with the social
17 media, me going on radio, going on
18 television, having flyers in the
19 community. If you have something
20 else that you'd like to suggest,
21 we'd be happy to hear.

22 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
23 you. I do think that some of the
24 critical life safety jobs for our

1 kids, they seem to be underfunded,
2 but we're not underfunded. But we
3 have a hard time hiring for
4 lifeguards and crossing guards,
5 right. I mean, those things should
6 be the easiest, I think, that we
7 should fill for our communities.
8 Maybe we should start cross-
9 marketing and say, hey, you're a
10 crossing guard during the school
11 year, schools close during the
12 summertime and we'll train you to
13 be a lifeguard now, right. That's
14 something that those folks can
15 continue working all yearlong. I
16 mean, just some other ideas that we
17 can have to be more creative when
18 we have these lows when we seem
19 like we can't find certain people
20 for jobs. So I just think that we
21 can be a little more creative.

22 Mr. President, I do have
23 one question for the Library as
24 well. Capital improvements to our

1 library I think is very critical.
2 I have my staff do some of the
3 math. It looks like per unique
4 visit, the City of Philadelphia is
5 spending \$1.08 per unique visit on
6 capital expenditures while we are
7 spending \$2.50 per unique visit for
8 our Art Museum, right, for capital
9 improvements.

10 And so, can you talk to
11 us about essentially the need for
12 more capital funding for our
13 libraries? What are our actual
14 goals? I know many branches face
15 recurring closures, reduced hours,
16 patron discomfort because of HVAC,
17 plumbing, electrical and
18 accessibility issues. What do we
19 really need to resolve this issue
20 and what's the timeline to resolve
21 these issues that face our
22 libraries all across our city?

23 MR. RICHARDS:
24 Councilman, that is a very good

1 question. I am extremely excited
2 about this particular budget the
3 Mayor is proposing. I'm also
4 really excited at what has taken
5 place the last couple of years. In
6 '25, I believe it was like 49
7 million spent on deferred
8 maintenance. I think this year
9 we're headed toward about 28
10 million.

11 From my understanding,
12 this has been something that has
13 not happened in the history of the
14 Library district. So we are moving
15 in the right trajectory to deal
16 with the impact of our deferred
17 maintenance issues at the Library.
18 We are a system that's very
19 historic, beautiful buildings. We
20 are experiencing the consequences
21 of global warming and experiencing
22 the consequences of the success of
23 hiring staff and our buildings
24 opening more hours than they have

1 been in decades, which is impacting
2 some of the older systems that we
3 have in our building, from some of
4 the air-conditioning or HVAC units
5 that were installed in the '60s.

6 So to answer your
7 question, I think we're moving in
8 the right path right now and it's
9 been happening the last few years.
10 We just need to continue to do this
11 as we circle around the system,
12 working on and fixing the
13 infrastructure. We are now -- last
14 year we went out and did 10
15 building condition assessments,
16 which gives us a strategic
17 guideline on what areas of the
18 building are in critical need of
19 health safety issues or immediate
20 closing, and it puts those in a
21 hierarchy to where we can follow
22 that particular plan.

23 We've did 10. It took a
24 long time to get that process done

1 and we're going to do some more
2 this year. But that doesn't stop
3 us from using our own skill set,
4 working with the Library's team and
5 the Capital Project Office --
6 Aparna's team, sorry -- and
7 utilizing our own strategies to
8 determine what needs, health,
9 safety needs or immediate closure,
10 because that's the one most
11 important thing, is the building
12 going to close immediately and what
13 can we do to stop that.

14 So good question. I
15 think we're moving in a trajectory
16 to deal with longstanding deferred
17 maintenance in a way that we have
18 not done before. And every day
19 we're improving in that process as
20 our team is learning some of these
21 needs, working with other city
22 departments to develop that
23 strategy as we're utilizing
24 consultants to help us develop a

1 more strategic strategy.

2 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: I
3 know that there are libraries in my
4 Council, the 5th Council District,
5 that any day now some of the
6 systems can just go, right. I'm
7 sure it's like that throughout the
8 city. Can you provide us with a
9 number of libraries where the
10 systems, any type of system that's
11 there it's past its useful life,
12 right, so we can get an idea of
13 what this problem really is?

14 MR. RICHARDS: We can
15 give you a number based on the date
16 that some of these systems went in,
17 which would kind of give you a
18 better idea. I don't have that,
19 but that's something we can provide
20 you. I've got it all broken up.
21 But I think we could put something
22 like that in the spreadsheet to be
23 able to help you. But just know
24 it's just not HVAC, it's sewer

1 lines --

2 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:

3 That's why I said systems. I
4 didn't just say HVAC. All the
5 systems in general, right. Our
6 buildings are old. I mean, I say
7 this often. The Cecil B. Moore
8 Library was built in 1961. So
9 someone in her 70s today used to
10 use that library when she was 8 or
11 9 years old. So 8 or 9 years old
12 today, my son and other
13 Councilmembers' kids who are that
14 age, right, why are we using the
15 same facilities, right, the same
16 systems that were being used back
17 in the '60s, right.

18 The world is a very
19 different world today. And I think
20 that we really have to take a look
21 at really investing in what the
22 real issue is. We need newer
23 facilities. We need updated
24 facilities. We have to stop

1 piecemealing together the solution
2 for some of these projects and
3 realize that it can be cheaper in
4 the long run to just build anew,
5 right, and figure out what we can
6 do elsewhere.

7 So thank you,
8 Mr. President.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

11 Chair recognizes
12 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada, then
13 Councilmember -- did I miss
14 somebody, Rue? Oh, you know what,
15 when you pressed the button, it
16 went off the screen. So it's Rue
17 Landau, then Quetcy Lozada, then
18 Mike Driscoll, then Brooks.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
20 Thank you. Thank you guys so much
21 for being here and for what you
22 provide to our communities every
23 single day. I'm just going to
24 repeat what my colleague said, you

1 are the backbones, the lifebloods
2 of our communities. And if my one
3 vote was the answer to all of this,
4 I would give you much more money
5 than what is being allocated now.
6 Because the fact that we come here
7 every single year talking about
8 what piecemeal little things we're
9 going to do to make our
10 institutions and our functions
11 stronger and better, it doesn't
12 make any sense to me.

13 I think my colleague
14 Councilmember Young just said it
15 perfectly, he had a community tell
16 him it's never been so quiet and
17 the kids have never had so much to
18 do. When you provide facilities
19 programming and whatnot, that's
20 what we need. It's just so simple.
21 It's illogical to do anything but
22 that.

23 I wanted to stay with
24 the Library for a little bit. We

1 have had -- Commissioner, we've had
2 a talk. I've talked to your staff,
3 I've talked to you a little bit
4 about this facilities plan. And we
5 were told there was going to be
6 this big facilities plan. I'm
7 At-Large and I get complaints about
8 library closures due to HVAC
9 systems and whatnot. And you said,
10 we finally hired someone, they're
11 going to do a full plan. And I
12 think you just said they've looked
13 at 10 libraries.

14 This was in the fall.
15 If the person's job is to just go
16 in and assess the building and the
17 actual operating functions of the
18 facilities, I don't understand why
19 it's not fully done now? So I
20 start by asking you that. And then
21 wondering if the amount of money
22 that you're asking for could
23 possibly fix these problems.

24 I'm so torn when we talk

1 all the time and you hear about the
2 pools, either you get a rec center
3 or a library that has everything
4 and then other rec centers and
5 libraries that have nothing. We
6 come to this part of the road and
7 we have two choices. Everybody
8 gets a little or we do it the way
9 that we're doing it, everything or
10 nothing. And it's just insane for
11 me.

12 We've got to just invest
13 in all of them and then we will not
14 have this problem, that you drive a
15 mile down the road and you've got
16 nothing. I am literally sitting
17 here thinking, oh, we could move
18 some pool chairs from this pool
19 over to that -- that's just crazy.

20 So I want to ask you, we
21 know that there are problems with
22 HVAC systems. And I wanted to know
23 how many libraries are closed
24 because of it? What is the closure

1 rate? How are we going to fix
2 them, it's already getting warm
3 now, to make sure that this happens
4 throughout the summer? And what do
5 we actually need? I really want to
6 know what the plan is. And I'll
7 start right there.

8 MR. RICHARDS: Thank
9 you, Councilperson. Appreciate
10 that. Right now we're focusing in
11 on what would immediately close,
12 health safety issues, equity, and
13 then we're looking across
14 Councilmanic Districts. So we have
15 went out and did building condition
16 assessments. But that doesn't stop
17 us because we only can do so many
18 of those a year, but we still are
19 evaluating and looking at each one
20 of the systems as far as from an
21 HVAC issue, but then there are some
22 of them that just fail and that may
23 supersede some that were on the
24 list that had not failed yet.

1 To talk more about the
2 building condition assessment and
3 what they are, if you want to know
4 a little bit more about that and
5 more detail, we can submit some
6 information to you or I can have my
7 Property Management Deputy Director
8 come up and talk a little bit more
9 in detail about that.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: I
11 just want to be clear on something.
12 Did you hire somebody whose full-
13 time job it was to come up with
14 this plan and was the plan done? I
15 think I'm calling it something
16 different than you are. So let's
17 just call it what you call it.

18 MR. RICHARDS: The
19 building condition assessments are
20 per building and it breaks down the
21 issues related to HVAC to any of
22 the mechanical issues with the
23 building. So each building has its
24 own strategy in plan. It isn't one

1 overall strategy.

2 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

3 Did you do this for each library?

4 MR. RICHARDS: No. At
5 this particular time, we've only
6 did it for 10 library branches and
7 we're going to go out again for
8 another number of branches, I
9 believe. We're in the process of
10 going out with an RFP to do another
11 tier.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: So
13 I have to ask this: If you're
14 thinking about buying a house and
15 you get a housing inspector who
16 comes in and does a full assessment
17 top to bottom of the house, it
18 takes about three hours or four
19 hours. Why is it that you've only
20 done 10 buildings?

21 MR. RICHARDS: Because
22 these are very big buildings,
23 they're very old and you have
24 experts -- this is my property

1 management. He'll give you
2 probably a little bit more detail
3 than what you want, but he'll talk
4 to you about it.

5 MR. DUPASS: Good
6 afternoon, Mr. President. My name
7 is Ty Dupass, the Property
8 Management Director, the Deputy
9 Director for the Free Library of
10 Philadelphia. When I first arrived
11 two and a half years ago, there was
12 no building condition assessment.
13 So basically we're working in
14 triage.

15 So what I did, I have an
16 internal assessment where I
17 evaluate the buildings. So
18 basically that involved me driving
19 around going from building to
20 building, trying to get some sense
21 about what I should be attacking
22 first. This is what Mr. Richards
23 hired me to do. And one of the
24 first things I wanted to ask for

1 was a total comprehensive
2 assessment by someone more
3 professional, capable of doing it.
4 Because we want to move the library
5 forward, so I have a document that
6 I use that evaluates all of the
7 buildings. And part of the
8 strategy on the capital side,
9 working with the capital program
10 office, we meet every month. We're
11 strategizing from the 10 that we
12 already did, the highest -- within
13 that building condition assessment,
14 we have what you call a facilities
15 condition index.

16 So based on the current
17 value of the building, and we
18 estimate all the stuff that you
19 need to do in the building, if that
20 number exceeds the current value to
21 building, we have to have a serious
22 conversation whether we're going to
23 keep that building or demolish it
24 and build something else.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: I
2 hear you. I must admit I'm fully
3 confused. I was told by more than
4 one person that you were hiring
5 somebody who just got hired in the
6 fall whose entire job was to create
7 this plan. You can't get a full
8 picture of your portfolio until you
9 do an assessment of the full
10 portfolio. I understand that you
11 might get some outliers while
12 you're doing the assessment, wait,
13 we have serious problems in this
14 building, maybe we might need to
15 demolish this building. But you
16 got to do the whole thing. We
17 don't know that. And it's a big
18 city. We should know what's going
19 on in our libraries throughout the
20 city.

21 MR. DUPASS: Well, the
22 first 10 buildings that we did,
23 along with the capital program
24 office, we hired a group of

1 architects and engineers to perform
2 these assessments. From the time
3 we started to the time we ended,
4 they wrote up the information we
5 needed. That took several months.
6 So out of the 10 -- in a perfect
7 world, I would like to do all 55
8 libraries, but it's just a lot of
9 information to take in.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
11 I'm at the point now I'd really
12 love to ask you how much we've
13 spent on architects and all of
14 these other folks in order to have
15 a basic assessment --

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: Excuse me just for a
18 second. So I'm going to have our
19 Commissioner Sue Slawson, I'm going
20 to dismiss her at the moment
21 because we're dealing with a major
22 issue at the moment.

23 Do you have someone you
24 want to sit in on your behalf to

1 answer any questions or we can do
2 it in follow-up?

3 THE CLERK: Thank you,
4 Council President Johnson. Marissa
5 Washington, First Deputy
6 Commissioner, she'll sit.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Okay. thank you. Please
9 join us at the table,
10 Ms. Washington.

11 The Chair recognizes
12 Councilmember Rue Landau.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
14 Thank you. I really think for
15 Council we would really appreciate
16 you submitting the findings of the
17 10 buildings, a plan of when the
18 other 45 will be done. And also,
19 how much we've spent to assess
20 these 10 buildings up until now
21 because what we need to do is spend
22 the money on the buildings, right.

23 If you don't have that
24 number now, that is fine. I think

1 the hour is running late and you
2 can submit at a later date.

3 MR. RICHARDS: We'll
4 give you a little more detail.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
6 The problem is this comes down to
7 closures and staffing and all of
8 the other issues, right. So we
9 have to crack the first nut first,
10 but we really need to know when
11 these buildings are being closed
12 for issues like HVAC, staffing
13 issues associated with it and when
14 these can be fixed.

15 MS. PALANTINO: Good
16 afternoon, Councilmember. I'd just
17 like to give a very brief overview
18 of how the sites were selected and
19 why we started with 10. So over
20 the past decade or so, there's been
21 a number of different initiatives
22 that have led to investment in
23 libraries. Rebuild, for example,
24 has already touched a certain

1 number of libraries. 12 will be
2 addressed in total.

3 Beyond that, there's
4 been other initiatives that have
5 improved certain facilities. So
6 we're not looking at the whole
7 portfolio because a certain number
8 of them have already received
9 improvements. Beyond that, there
10 has been a certain number of HVAC
11 upgrades and building upgrades. So
12 one-by-one, based on the category
13 of improvements, we narrowed down
14 the number of sites.

15 The other issue with
16 doing an assessment of all the
17 sites at once, a holistic
18 investment, is that those
19 assessments tend to get dated by
20 the time you actually get to the
21 point of addressing them. 10
22 libraries alone, if you were to
23 look at the estimate that came back
24 for what those need, it's tens of

1 millions I'll say, and we're happy
2 to provide those numbers.

3 So we are looking at it
4 strategically to be able to assess
5 a certain number and be able to
6 react in future years based on
7 capital budget allocation. That
8 doesn't mean that the Library along
9 with our office is not actively
10 looking at certain infrastructure
11 systems that could fail in the near
12 term.

13 So, for example, last
14 year we had done about 10 HVAC
15 projects, HVAC system upgrades.
16 This coming year we are planning to
17 do another 8 to 10, knowing those
18 that are sort of in danger of
19 closing, those branches that are in
20 danger of closing. So it's not
21 that we are not looking at those
22 systems. It's that we're not doing
23 holistic assessments for every
24 library at one time.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

2 I'm --

3 MS. PALANTINO: And we
4 can share that with you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

6 Yeah, I find this frustrating.

7 This should be raised to the
8 emergency level that it is. I find
9 it frustrating, I've just got to
10 tell you. I know my time is up.

11 I had one tiny follow-up
12 question that might or might not be
13 able to be answered by Rec, please.
14 We talked about your cameras
15 failing at the rec centers and that
16 you would need to maintain those
17 cameras. I'm the Chair of the Tech
18 Committee and I've been asking
19 questions about centralizing some
20 of this. We've got cameras at rec
21 centers. We've got cameras on
22 street corners.

23 And why do we not have
24 one part of the city that's

1 maintaining all of our cameras?

2 Why would you have to pay for this
3 out of your budget?

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Point of information. We
6 do. It's called the DVIC Center in
7 South Philadelphia at 20th and
8 Oregon. I don't know if Parks &
9 Rec is tied into it, but it's our
10 central hub that monitors pretty
11 much every major camera we have in
12 the City of Philadelphia, including
13 SEPTA as well.

14 MS. WASHINGTON: So good
15 afternoon. My name is Marissa
16 Washington, First Deputy
17 Commissioner, Parks and Recreation.
18 The cameras that we have in our
19 facilities, they are not monitored
20 by a company. So they kind of
21 record -- like sometimes in your
22 home, your home cameras, they
23 record, the recordings stay there
24 for 30 days, and if we need to pull

1 something as far as the recordings
2 to use for some situation or
3 incident that may have happened.

4 But most of the cameras in our
5 facilities are not monitored by a
6 company.

7 I do believe we have
8 some of those cameras are monitored
9 for some of our parks, especially
10 those that are hotspots for dumping
11 and other kind of activity that we
12 need to monitor in conjunction with
13 the police department. So that's
14 kind of an overview of the cameras
15 at Parks and Recreation.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
17 Okay. So I understand, it's like
18 you're a small business, your own
19 camera for your own space?

20 MS. WASHINGTON: Yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
22 Okay. I still would like somebody
23 else to pay for the maintenance so
24 you can pay for the pool equipment,

1 but thank you.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

4 Councilmember Quetcy

5 Lozada, then Councilmember Brooks.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

7 Thank you, Council President.

8 I want to follow -- I
9 want to kind of continue along the
10 lines of Councilmember Landau as it
11 relates to assessments in some of
12 our libraries. I want to really
13 focus on the library at McPherson
14 Square. We know that we are doing
15 some improvements in that space,
16 but I'm trying to figure out, you
17 know, have assessments been done in
18 all of our libraries, right.

19 And using McPherson as
20 an example, what is the role of the
21 Library's Foundation to be able to
22 invest in some of these spaces to
23 be able to make these improvements
24 possible, right? Because I feel

1 like in the McPherson Library
2 project, there should be more
3 support on the Foundation side if
4 we're going to earmark some of
5 these spaces as historical spaces.
6 And what's the investment in order
7 to protect those historical spaces
8 from the Foundation?

9 MR. RICHARDS: Thank
10 you. Thank you, Councilperson, for
11 the question. I will say this
12 about foundations and how they work
13 with the Library, especially the
14 Free Library Foundation, which has
15 been a significant supporter to the
16 tune of hundreds of millions of
17 dollars for the Free Library. It
18 is utilized or we utilize the
19 Foundation as a way to go and get
20 grants from nonprofit institutions
21 or other foundations for capital
22 projects and for library
23 programming.

24 There are also

1 possibilities through the
2 Foundation, from some of the
3 members in the Foundation or Board
4 members or adjacent groups. There
5 may be individuals who want to
6 donate to individual libraries and
7 that's not unusual, that happens.
8 It's just a matter of, lack of a
9 better word, curating or finding
10 those people who have an interest.
11 Sometimes it's an interest in just
12 specific locations or branches or
13 neighborhood libraries rather than
14 an initiative that the Library
15 wants to do. So it really varies.

16 But we have a strong
17 team of people over at the
18 Foundation who's always looking for
19 opportunities or funding that may
20 support the Library in a variety of
21 different ways. Sometimes we're
22 very fortunate and find people or
23 grants and sometimes we're not.
24 Over the years, there have been

1 initiatives spearheaded by the
2 Foundation to support the Library
3 to the tune of millions of dollars
4 to help at some of our neighborhood
5 libraries. It is something we're
6 thinking about. And I may have
7 more information later, but it is
8 an opportunity and it is something
9 that is possible.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

11 Can you share with us or with the
12 Chair a list of which of your
13 libraries have had these
14 assessments and in which cases any
15 improvements have been made to the
16 Library, the support that they've
17 received from the Foundation and
18 what that support is? Can you
19 share that?

20 MR. RICHARDS: Yes, we
21 can. We can look through our
22 history and see what libraries have
23 been supported by donors over the
24 years and which neighborhood

1 libraries have had building
2 condition assessments. We can get
3 that information.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

5 Thank you. I also would like to
6 thank the team over at PP&R, Sue,
7 Anthony, Frank, Aparna, all of
8 them, Commissioner, thank you all
9 for your support. You all have
10 made working with the department so
11 much easier because you all are
12 kind of rowing in the same
13 direction. I do have multiple
14 projects that are going on in the
15 district. They've been going on
16 for many, many years.

17 I go into neighborhoods
18 and community residents, they're
19 like when is my part going to get
20 done. And considering that the
21 cost in materials and construction
22 and all of that is rising, when do
23 you all believe you will be able to
24 complete all of those projects that

1 were in the pipeline that were at
2 one time considered Rebuild?

3 MS. PALANTINO: Thank
4 you for that question,
5 Councilmember Lozada. They're on
6 different sort of schedules, each
7 project. As you know, for example,
8 McPherson Library and Park was
9 stalled for a period of time and
10 now has been restarted. The roof
11 work was completed last year and
12 the building envelope. The next
13 phase we are continuing through
14 design and construction will begin
15 shortly this year on that overall
16 building project and site work.

17 McVeigh is another site,
18 a Rebuild site, in your district.
19 We had to change the model of
20 delivery at that particular site,
21 so we have fortunately been able to
22 find an alternate delivery method
23 and we are restarting that. The
24 design will be revisited and

1 construction is expected to
2 probably start late this year or
3 early next year. So both are
4 moving. They'll be on different
5 timelines. They anticipate,
6 because of the scale of both
7 projects it will take about 18
8 months of construction for both of
9 those.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: 18
11 months you said?

12 MS. PALANTINO: Yes, of
13 construction.

14 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
15 Thank you for that. And then the
16 Commissioner mentioned 27 sites,
17 \$1.25 million, 2000 cameras. We
18 were having a conversation with
19 another panel about cameras that
20 have been installed in different
21 places. And it's great that we
22 have the cameras, but what good are
23 the cameras if no one is monitoring
24 them?

1 And so, can you tell us
2 or can you give us a list, that
3 list that you ran off very quickly
4 to Councilmember Bass, can you
5 submit that list to the Council
6 President's office by district?
7 And can you also share with us
8 other locations that you believe
9 are very problematic that you
10 recommend we get cameras and what
11 would it cost us because I know
12 that I have multiple centers that
13 could use some of those cameras?
14 But there's a conversation about
15 budget, right. So I want to know
16 where do I focus my priorities on
17 in the future in order to better
18 work with you and the community.

19 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
20 Thank you for that, Councilmember.
21 Lozada. Yes, we will ensure that
22 we will submit that. I do want to
23 share something else because of
24 some of the recent advances in

1 equipment. We're able to install
2 cameras at sites without buildings
3 now and house the recording
4 equipment in a box, because some of
5 our parks there are no buildings.
6 And so, we're able to now install
7 cameras, which I think is another
8 benefit that assists us in dealing
9 with some of our crimes, dealing
10 with some of the, you know, it's
11 warm outside, some of our young
12 people, that's something else also
13 that will be helping us throughout
14 the summer.

15 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

16 Thank you. And lastly, I want to
17 just reiterate the importance of
18 partnerships. I've had the
19 opportunity to work with the Tacony
20 Creek Watershed folks, and I've
21 seen the impact that they've had
22 along the trail from Whitaker
23 Avenue right up into Friends
24 Hospital. I can't tell you how

1 important it is to strengthen that
2 relationship.

3 I think a lot of the
4 things that they are doing are
5 helping to take the pressure off of
6 us as a department and I think
7 they're willing, they have
8 community support. And so, I'd
9 like to figure out a way of better
10 strengthening that relationship and
11 growing that partnership so that we
12 can respond to making sure that the
13 community can benefit from that
14 trail the way that they do in other
15 neighborhoods.

16 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

17 Thank you, Councilmember Lozada.
18 That's really important because
19 these partnerships are important.
20 We can't do anything that we do
21 without the community. And Parks
22 and Recreation functions because of
23 the people and we rely on our
24 public spaces and the learning from

1 people, the physical activity.

2 And one of the things
3 that I'm doing is I'm going to have
4 a strategic engagement unit that
5 will just expound on our success.
6 Everything that we do is public-
7 facing, and this is a way to
8 elevate our commitment to making
9 our public spaces more accessible.

10 And so, this person will work
11 directly with as opposed to them
12 trying to figure out who they can
13 connect with. And so, we're going
14 to have a strategic engagement
15 person who will have a couple of
16 people under them so we can ensure
17 that we're hearing what's happening
18 in communities, because a rec
19 leader is only going to hear what's
20 happening at that rec center. But
21 we're trying to make sure we're
22 hearing all the voices. So thank
23 you for that and we will work at
24 being a better partner, not just in

1 that area but throughout the city.

2 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

3 Thank you.

4 Thank you, Council

5 President.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

8 Chair recognizes

9 Councilmember Kendra Brooks.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

11 Thank you, Council President.

12 I have a few quick

13 questions. One is about the

14 Carousel House. So it's been an

15 important home for the disability

16 community in Philadelphia since the

17 '80s. I spent a lot of time at the

18 Carousel House. My previous

19 position was a recreation

20 therapist, so I did a lot of work

21 within that community. And I was

22 wondering it's been closed since

23 2020. Can you give us an update on

24 the status of the construction

1 along with a timeline for
2 completion?

3 And Part 2 of that is
4 since they have been closed, we
5 also know that we don't want there
6 to only be one accessible
7 supportive recreation center for
8 the 17% of Philadelphians who are a
9 part of the disability community.
10 What does the disability program
11 and accessibility look like at
12 other rec centers? And what level
13 of funding is provided for that to
14 happen?

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
16 JOHNSON: And also, additional
17 point of information. Can you give
18 us the timeline for the
19 rehabilitation or the rehabbing of
20 the Carousel House? And also,
21 where are the individuals who would
22 normally tend to Carousel House
23 that are disabled, where they
24 spending their time at now? And

1 I'm only passionate about this
2 issue because around the issue with
3 gun violence, I have several
4 friends who play basketball there
5 who are in wheelchairs. That's
6 like their safe haven. So they
7 have reached out to me before in
8 the past.

9 And also, before your
10 response, I just want to ask for us
11 to aggressively, you know, I-95 in
12 the Northeast, the bridge fell
13 apart and the Governor found out a
14 way to get it put back together in
15 10 days. And the reason why I say
16 this is because the disabled
17 community, separate from Minority
18 Leader Brooks, right, they don't
19 have a big-time lobbyist coming
20 down here advocating on their
21 behalf. They don't have people
22 walking the halls of power saying,
23 this is the agenda. So if it's not
24 us inside this room speaking on

1 their behalf, then it probably
2 won't be a super priority. Not
3 saying it's not, but at the end of
4 the day, I know how sometimes
5 things can work if you're not being
6 aggressive about advocating for it.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. PALANTINO: Thank
9 you, Council President. Thank you,
10 Councilmember Brooks. So
11 fortunately, we have been very
12 aggressive with that project. I
13 know it was closed in 2020 because
14 of existing structural issues. It
15 was a Rebuild project. The
16 challenges early on, on that
17 project was to be able to
18 accommodate the program that that
19 community needed, we needed more
20 funding. So there was a period of
21 time in which additional funding
22 was being gathered to be able to
23 move forward on that project.

24 I'm very happy to sit

1 here today and say over the past
2 year the funding was confirmed. We
3 were able to deliver. It's going
4 to be the largest Rebuild project.
5 Actually it's about \$40 million in
6 construction value alone. It will
7 have all the amenities that the
8 community had requested through
9 many, many programming sessions
10 with the community.

11 We have been keeping the
12 community abreast of the status of
13 the project. We've been very
14 active and proactive in holding
15 several community meetings. We do
16 a monthly update. We have members
17 of our team who have been going out
18 into the community to provide
19 updates. It's currently in
20 construction. We actually -- I'm
21 sorry. It's currently in design.
22 We're getting final documents
23 within this month, early next
24 month. And it will be bid and go

1 into construction this year. And
2 we are doing everything in our
3 power to make that as fast as
4 possible.

5 It is a very large
6 facility. We'll have a very large
7 gym with a walking loop to house,
8 you know, exactly that, the
9 wheelchair basketball tournaments.
10 It will have -- and other
11 communities are going to get mad --
12 but two pools, one that's a lap
13 pool, that's something to help
14 train lifeguards, and then a very
15 special pool, zero entry, so folks
16 that are in wheelchairs have an
17 easy access to the pool.

18 So it is a very large
19 facility. I want to say that to be
20 able to provide in the construction
21 timeline, we will do our best to
22 move at I-95 speed. It will take
23 about 18 to 24 months. So in 2028
24 it will likely open.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

2 And what about the programming for
3 folks now? What's happening at
4 other rec centers to accommodate
5 some of the programs that were at
6 Carousel House?

7 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

8 Thank you for that question,
9 Councilmember Brooks. The programs
10 that were happening at the Carousel
11 House were moved immediately to
12 Gustine Lake, which is accessible.
13 And I think with the new Rebuild
14 facilities it is so important
15 because I think Council President
16 Johnson's question is key. Because
17 when these facilities were built
18 years ago, they weren't built with
19 handicap in mind.

20 So now, with these new
21 facilities coming online, we have
22 more sites -- well, all of these
23 sites, they have to be handicapped
24 accessible. And on top of that, we

1 had a position and I am in the
2 process now of hiring an
3 accessibility manager because we
4 need to make sure that we are
5 mindful of people that might need
6 some special attention.

7 And so, we'll have an
8 accessibility manager that we can
9 identify those basketball players,
10 especially along with our
11 engagement director, we can
12 identify those people that need
13 specific needs and we can direct
14 them now to facilities that they
15 can actually get in and play
16 basketball. And so, we are working
17 on that.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
19 Just a point of clarification. So
20 will the accessibility manager be
21 checking accessibility needs at all
22 Parks and Recreation centers?

23 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
24 Absolutely, not just one location.

1 They're being hired to take an
2 overlook at the entire system.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

4 Thank you for that. That's really
5 important because it came up at our
6 Accessibility hearing around
7 voting, because some of the Rebuild
8 projects were built and it was an
9 accessibility issue for folks to
10 get in, which is illegal. But I
11 digress from that. So thank you so
12 much for hiring someone to make
13 sure that all of our Parks and
14 Recreation centers are accessible.

15 What about programming?
16 Because I know right now that
17 Carousel -- well, not right now.
18 Carousel was the hub. However,
19 people with various abilities live
20 all over the city. What type of
21 program is available in other
22 communities? As you know, the
23 population continues to grow from
24 gun violence or just aging, what

1 programs are available for folks?

2 And I ask this every year, will all
3 the wheelchair lifts at the pools
4 around the city be open this
5 summer?

6 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

7 Well, the 63 pools that we plan to
8 open, Frank Fabey has been working
9 to ensure that we have the pool
10 lifts because there is a major
11 need. And so, yes, we will have
12 those lifts at the pools,
13 Councilmember Brooks. As far as
14 the programming, I cannot say --
15 oh, I'm going to ask for Deputy
16 Commissioner Rob Jackson.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So
18 to that point, as they talk about
19 the accessibility manager, even if
20 it's not a specific program, is it
21 someone available to help a program
22 be adapted to accommodate a child
23 with special needs because it
24 doesn't always have to be a whole

1 new program? It could also be just
2 a few tweaks that are made for the
3 children to be able to enjoy what
4 everyone else is enjoying and we
5 need to take that in consideration.

6 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

7 You can tell that this was your
8 field because one of the questions
9 that we had for the person that we
10 were interviewing, that was pretty
11 much the question. So I mean, if
12 you think about accessibility, it's
13 a lot broader than people
14 recognize. And so, we're not just
15 looking at one piece of
16 accessibility. We're looking at
17 the totality, and we're bringing
18 someone on that has had some skill
19 and some background and not just in
20 one area of it being an accessible
21 facility or an accessible pool.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: And also, just from a
2 point of information standpoint,
3 something that I saw the Department
4 of Parks and Recreation do that was
5 a little different than I saw in
6 the past was I refurbished all my
7 playgrounds, right. And I like
8 bright colors. That's my thing. I
9 like the bright reds, the bright
10 yellows, the bright greens.

11 You know, I said, wait a
12 minute, Mr. Johnson, our new
13 standard is making sure we adapt to
14 children who have autism, right.
15 So we have a different type of
16 standard regarding the playground
17 equipment that we are utilizing to
18 make sure we are meeting the needs
19 of young people who have autism.
20 And so, you hiring an accessibility
21 manager I think puts us in a new
22 direction in terms of making sure
23 we be more accommodating to those
24 who have disabilities. And I even

1 saw some playground equipment also
2 making sure we take in
3 consideration our senior population
4 as well, which is a different
5 conversation, but it also is more
6 inclusive of everyone who want to
7 enjoy our parks and our
8 recreational facilities. But I
9 just want to -- again, I think it's
10 great having the accessibility
11 manager and also, whatever we can
12 do to make sure that the disability
13 community is a key priority as we
14 move forward. I think it's great.

15 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

16 Can I call --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: You can respond. You
19 sure can.

20 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

21 Okay.

22 MR. JACKSON: Good
23 afternoon. Rob Jackson, Program
24 Deputy Commissioner, Parks & Rec.

1 To answer your question, we have --
2 gosh, I would say more programs
3 than I could say our name now, so
4 we can provide a full list. But we
5 have tons of basketball programs.
6 All of our gyms that have
7 accessibility entry are available
8 for basketball.

9 We hosted the youth
10 basketball wheelchair tournament at
11 Mayfair Rec Center this year, the
12 Katie Kirlin Tournament. That went
13 off as a huge success. We have
14 quite a few facilities with sensory
15 corners that take that into
16 account. Our summer camp directors
17 adjust their activities to
18 accommodate all special
19 populations. And we've been
20 working countlessly with our
21 colleagues in capital to make sure
22 that that's reflected in any new
23 construction.

24 And at Champions Park,

1 we have Joey's Place, which is an
2 inclusive playground for special
3 populations. So for a full list,
4 I'll make sure that I get that
5 information over to you after the
6 hearing or to Council President.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

12 One more question --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Sure, Member Brooks.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: --

16 for the Library. This is a quick
17 question. So one significant use of
18 the Free Library is printing. So
19 as folks come in to get their
20 printing needs, we've heard from
21 constituents that the library does
22 not take electronic credit card or
23 debit payments for printing. What
24 types of payments are accepted and

1 when will electronic payments be
2 accepted or readily able to use at
3 the library?

4 MR. RICHARDS: Thank you
5 for the question. I believe my IT
6 Manager is here. Jen, why don't
7 you come up and explain it. I
8 don't want to give you my
9 explanation. I want to go to the
10 source.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
12 JOHNSON: And this will be the last
13 follow-up, everyone. Today is
14 Passover so we're going to be
15 respectful. Individuals need to
16 get home as well. Is that all
17 right?

18 MS. MAGUIRE-WRIGHT: I'm
19 Jen Maguire-Wright, Director of
20 Performance Management and
21 Technology here at the Library.
22 The equipment that we use is leased
23 equipment and that is something we
24 will look into. It is not yet up

1 for renewal, but we will look into
2 that when it's up for renewal.
3 It's ancient coin-operated machines
4 at the moment, so we hear you and
5 that is something we'll put on our
6 list.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
8 Renewal this year?

9 MS. MAGUIRE-WRIGHT: I
10 need to check when that lease is up
11 for renewal. I don't have it off
12 the top of my head.

13 MR. RICHARDS: And,
14 Councilperson, I just wanted to say
15 this, for us to even be able to
16 look into it is showing the
17 trajectory of the resources that
18 you have given the Library.
19 Because Jen said it's coin-operated
20 and she said it was ancient, it's
21 beyond that. And as we are going
22 through and modernizing the Library
23 and modernizing how we provide
24 service to our community, this is

1 one of those areas where we're
2 going to be making a change. But I
3 wanted her to explain it because
4 I'm always asking for something.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

7 And last, Member
8 Phillips, are you going to put on
9 the record --

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

11 Yeah.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: -- the question from
14 Member --

15 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

16 Yeah.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: Go ahead, sir.

19 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
20 have a question from Member
21 Driscoll, but just want to put on
22 the record I'll send you the rest
23 of my questions for in writing,
24 particularly around potential

1 municipal guards and camera
2 maintenance and also some staffing
3 questions that I didn't get a
4 chance to ask that I wanted to do
5 in the second round.

6 But Member Driscoll, as
7 many of you know we just recently
8 learned unfortunately that there
9 was a small plane crash in the
10 Northeast section of Philadelphia
11 and we're going to recess very
12 quickly.

13 But on his behalf, he
14 couldn't be here, he had this
15 question for the record: PPR
16 sustainability work and illegal
17 dumping efforts, particularly
18 around the cleanup efforts in
19 Pennypack Park, can you just talk
20 about sustainability work and
21 illegal dumping efforts in
22 Pennypack Park on behalf of Member
23 Driscoll, who just had to step out
24 to deal with the recent

1 circumstances?

2 MS. BUCK: Thank you,
3 Councilman, for that question. My
4 Sustainability Director Natalie
5 Walker and I have been working with
6 Clean and Green, the Office of
7 Clean and Green, meeting weekly as
8 part of the Illegal Dumping Task
9 Force. And this is really a true
10 example of One Philly. We have PPD
11 there. We have Sanitation. We
12 have Streets, PWD. And we have
13 William Penn funding for four Park
14 ambassadors. And these Park
15 ambassadors we'll be hiring
16 probably within the next month. I
17 think we're in the process of doing
18 interviews.

19 They'll be working with
20 the community in certain areas to
21 educate, inform and get out there.
22 And they are able to write CVNs
23 along with our rangers. So the
24 specific illegal dumping in the

1 Pennypack is similar to the one
2 that was in Councilwoman -- I'm
3 sorry, was it Tacony? Sorry. Last
4 year, so we've identified this, and
5 it's really where we all come
6 together and put our resources.
7 It's tons of construction debris,
8 house clean-outs. You name it, we
9 can find it in the Pennypack,
10 right, and probably a lot of other
11 parks.

12 But this material is
13 getting into our waterways, right,
14 and it's so unsafe. So we are
15 coordinating these efforts to clean
16 them out, restore them, grade them,
17 seed and then, right, that's not
18 enough. You have to add barriers,
19 whether it's fence, bollards,
20 boulders, signage, cameras,
21 lighting, right, so it doesn't keep
22 recurring at these locations.

23 So our next stop is
24 Cobbs Creek and Whitby. I think,

1 Councilwoman, your team has reached
2 out to us about that, so we're
3 going down there. And we look at
4 it from a holistic approach how we
5 can resolve this and stop it from
6 happening in our parkland.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

8 And just to follow up on that
9 particular part, what is the
10 vacancy rate for programming staff
11 that can help out with things like
12 that, do you know, programming
13 staff in Parks & Rec?

14 MS. BUCK: Well, this
15 particular park is a watershed.

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

17 Oh, watershed, I'm sorry. But just
18 in -- well, I still want that
19 question answered for our
20 programming staff. What's the
21 vacancy rate for that? And how
22 many in our programming, is it 25?
23 I saw rec leader trainees.

24 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

1 Thank you for that question. We
2 don't have that broken down. We
3 have an overall, but we can get you
4 that information, Councilmember
5 Phillips.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

7 All right. Thank you again. I
8 wish I could ask the other
9 questions, but I'll submit it for
10 the record since we were out of
11 time together. Thank you so much,
12 Commissioner, for your work.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: One second. You had a
15 question?

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
17 did. I just wanted to ask for the
18 record in what ways can municipal
19 guards support public safety? As
20 we know, some of the staff members
21 have been talking about how they
22 are quasi, they have to do work,
23 security sometimes at our rec
24 centers. In what ways from your

1 perspective could the municipal
2 guards that we see at our libraries
3 be supportive of public safety?

4 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

5 Thank you for that question,
6 Councilmember Phillips. I think
7 there's several positive reasons to
8 have them inside the rec centers
9 and outside of the rec centers.
10 Municipal guards could provide
11 valuable support to the community.
12 They could deter potential criminal
13 activity, providing a safer
14 environment. Guards can possibly
15 respond quickly, address
16 disturbances or medical emergencies
17 or unauthorized activities,
18 minimizing potential harm. Guards
19 can support staff in managing large
20 crowds or organized events,
21 allowing activity to run smoothly.

22 But, you know, along
23 with the pros, there are always
24 some cons. There are some concerns

1 about municipal guards being
2 present at recreation centers.
3 Also, perception of safety. The
4 presence of guards might create a
5 perception that the area or the
6 facility is unsafe, which could
7 deter visitors or some individuals
8 making them feel uncomfortable.
9 Some community members, especially
10 young people, might feel
11 intimidated by guards affecting
12 their willingness to use the
13 facilities.

14 Funding and resources
15 needed for staffing guards could be
16 a challenge. Diverting some of the
17 resources that we need for other
18 staff inside the facility will be
19 taken away to go towards guards.
20 Managing community relations and
21 addressing concerns regarding the
22 need for guards requires
23 sensitivity and transparency. So I
24 think there are pros and cons.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Point of information.

3 Excuse me one second.

4 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young.

5 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
6 you, Mr. President.

7 I just have a point of
8 information for Mr. Richards. Our
9 libraries have municipal guards and
10 you hear some of the concerns that
11 our Rec Commissioner is outlining.
12 Are these concerns that patrons
13 have when having municipal guards
14 at our libraries as well?

15 MR. RICHARDS: Well,
16 what I would say, Councilman Young,
17 is in our libraries we have
18 multiple floors, we have basements,
19 restrooms in multiple parts of the
20 building. Our buildings are
21 utilized by everyone at any time of
22 the day, and our forward-facing
23 staff who are in our libraries are
24 always distracted with helping

1 patrons, working with children,
2 working with everyone, and that
3 municipal guard is necessary in our
4 buildings to walk through the
5 buildings, to keep an eye on what's
6 going on, to walk outside to keep
7 an eye on what's going on. Because
8 of the nature of the services that
9 our staff are providing, they don't
10 have the opportunity, for lack of
11 better words, to watch their own
12 back. They need someone there
13 looking out for what's going on all
14 day.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: So let me wrap this up.

17 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

18 Well, thank you, Commissioner.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: Just on that line of
21 questioning, the questioning is, is
22 there a proposal for you to hire
23 municipal guards?

24 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON: I

1 do not have a proposal to hire
2 municipal guards.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Is the question should we
5 get municipal guards?

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

7 Yeah -- no --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Was that the question?

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

11 Yeah, it was something around
12 that because --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: I'm wrapping up though,
15 but is that the question?

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

17 Yeah, that's the question.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: I agree that we should
20 have municipal guards, right. And
21 I heard all the responses, public
22 perception, should feel safe. I
23 did a roundtable on gun violence
24 here in the city of Philadelphia.

1 You know what the babies said at
2 the roundtable? We want armed
3 guards at our rec centers,
4 particularly the basketball courts
5 because the guys are doing the
6 shootings. They come over there,
7 they're not playing basketball and
8 then they start shooting at
9 everybody and we have nothing to do
10 with it and we don't feel safe.

11 I know it's not the
12 whole city, right. I think it's
13 some parts. And I know when we
14 talked about this before,
15 Commissioner, I remember you said,
16 well, maybe also we'll partner with
17 community groups, right. But until
18 we get to the point where maybe
19 Parks & Rec do a contract with
20 organizations like PAAN that's
21 intervention, groups that could be
22 on the ground or Philadelphia
23 Ceasefire or we hire boots-on-the-
24 ground organizations to be there,

1 I'm still an advocate of the
2 presence of somebody official will
3 give some of these young people an
4 opportunity to think twice.

5 Sometimes the presence of a uniform
6 just slows things down.

7 The classic example, and
8 I have to wrap up because several
9 members have to leave -- we can
10 have a longer conversation if y'all
11 want to do a callback -- but even
12 in University City, right,
13 University City District has the
14 bicycle patrols that ride through
15 the neighborhoods, right. They
16 don't have any guns on them, but
17 the fact that they ride down the
18 street at 2:30 in the morning,
19 keeping their eyes on who's trying
20 to go inside people's cars is just
21 a presence.

22 So I do think it's
23 something as a city we might want
24 to be forward-thinking about in the

1 near future, because I believe the
2 investment will outweigh any
3 offsetting, I'm not going to say
4 negative consequences, but if
5 somebody feels like, oh, I don't
6 want to go over there because
7 there's a guard and because it
8 feels more safe or -- I don't ever
9 want to talk about resources
10 because it's just that important
11 from a public safety standpoint.
12 Just something to think about.
13 That's all.

14 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:
15 Can I ask a question, Council
16 President Johnson?

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
18 JOHNSON: A very brief one because
19 then I'm calling for adjournment.
20 But, yes. And y'all can talk.
21 He's the Chair and y'all can have a
22 personal conversation.

23 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON: I
24 didn't know we were talking about

1 armed guards because --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: No, we weren't talking
4 about armed. I'm not talking about
5 armed.

6 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

7 Okay. Because armed guards is
8 something totally different.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm not talking
11 about armed. You're talking about
12 armed?

13 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

14 No, I wasn't talking about -- we
15 were just talking about the same
16 guards at the Library.

17 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

18 Okay.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: Just the presence.

21 COMMISSIONER SLAWSON:

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Listen, we thank all of

1 you for your testimony. I thank my
2 members though because we were
3 supposed to be done at 4:00, but
4 this shows that we're committed to
5 doing a deeper dive and addressing
6 these issues. And thank you very
7 much for being here today.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilmember Isaiah Thomas for a
10 motion to adjourn.

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
12 moved.

13 (Duly seconded.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: It has been moved and
16 properly seconded that the public
17 hearing and meeting on the bills
18 and resolution before the committee
19 today stand in recess until
20 Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at
21 10:00 a.m.

22 All those in favor
23 signify by saying aye.

24 (Aye.)

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Anybody opposed?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: The ayes have it and the
6 motion passes. This committee
7 stands in recess. Happy Easter and
8 Resurrection Sunday.

9 (Committee of the Whole
10 concluded at 4:45 p.m.)

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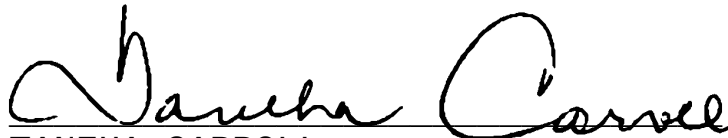
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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 that this is a correct transcript of the same.


TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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City of Philadelphia

Recessed Hearing Notice

The **Committee of the Whole** of the Council of the City of Philadelphia held a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026** and recessed the public hearing until **Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 10:00 AM**, in **Room 400, City Hall**, to hear further testimony on the following:

- 260199** An Ordinance adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

- 260200** An Ordinance to adopt a Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Budget.

- 260201** An Ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for the six Fiscal Years 2027-2032 inclusive.

- 260202** An Ordinance amending Chapter 19-2400 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Hotel Room Rental Tax,” by providing for an additional excise tax on hotel room rentals, all under certain terms and conditions.

- 260203** An Ordinance amending Subcode “A” (The Philadelphia Administrative Code) of Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code (The Building, Construction and Occupancy Code), by adding and revising Zoning Board of Adjustment fees and provisions regarding hearing scheduling, all under certain terms and conditions.

- 260204** An Ordinance amending Title 3 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Air Management Code,” to modify the amounts of license and permit fees, under certain terms and conditions.

- 260205** An Ordinance amending Section 19-1806 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Authorization of Realty Use and Occupancy Tax,” to clarify the imposition of the tax on the use or occupancy of real estate with respect to cell towers; all under certain terms and conditions.

- 260206** An Ordinance amending Chapter 6-600 of The Philadelphia Code (“Asbestos”), by adding and revising provisions related to various fees, all under certain terms and conditions.

- 260208** An Ordinance amending Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “School Tax Authorization,” to add a new Section 19-1808, entitled “Authorization of Rideshare Use Tax,” to authorize the Board of the School District of Philadelphia to levy a tax upon the use by a passenger of a transportation network company for a prearranged ride that originates in Philadelphia; all under certain terms and conditions.

City of Philadelphia

Recessed Hearing Notice

Committee of the Whole

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 10:00 AM

- 260209** An Ordinance amending Title 19 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled “Finance, Taxes and Collections,” to add a new Chapter 19-4800, entitled “Retail Delivery Tax,” to establish a tax on orders for the delivery in Philadelphia of retail consumer and other tangible goods, all under certain terms and conditions.
- 260227** Resolution providing for the approval by the Council of the City of Philadelphia of a Revised Five Year Financial Plan for the City of Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years 2027 through 2031, and incorporating revisions with respect to Fiscal Year 2026, which is to be submitted by the Mayor to the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority pursuant to an Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement by and between the City and the Authority.

Immediately following the public hearing, a meeting of the Committee of the Whole, open to the public, will be held to consider the action to be taken on the above listed items.

Copies of the foregoing items are available in the Office of the Chief Clerk of the Council, Room 402, City Hall.