

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Wednesday, October 25, 2023
1:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILWOMAN SHARON VAUGHN

RESOLUTION: 230328

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Good afternoon. Before
4 we begin the public hearing, I will
5 make the following announcement:
6 City Council Committees are currently
7 meeting remotely. We are using
8 Microsoft Teams to make these remote
9 hearings possible.

10 Instructions for how the
11 public may view and offer public
12 testimony at public hearings of
13 Council Committees are included in
14 the public hearing notices that are
15 published in the Daily News, Inquirer
16 and Legal Intelligencer prior to the
17 hearings and can also be found on
18 PHLCouncil.com.

19 I now note that the hour has
20 come. Ms. Alford, will you please
21 call the roll to take attendance.
22 Members that are in attendance will
23 please indicate that you are present
24 when your name is called. Also,
25 please say a few brief words when

1 responding so that your image will be
2 displayed on screen when you speak.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember
4 Gauthier.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
6 afternoon, Madam Chair and
7 colleagues. Present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilmember
9 Harrity.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Good
11 morning. I am present.

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember
13 Driscoll.

14 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Good
15 afternoon, Madam Chair. I'm present.

16 THE CLERK: Councilmember
17 Vaughn.

18 COUNCILWOMAN VAUGHN: Good
19 afternoon, everyone. Here.

20 THE CLERK: Vice-Chair Bass.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
22 afternoon. I am present.

23 THE CLERK: And, Chair Gilmore
24 Richardson.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: I am present. Thank
2 you. A quorum of the Committee is
3 present and this hearing is now
4 called to order. This is the public
5 hearing of the Committee on the
6 Environment regarding Resolution No.
7 230328.

8 Ms. Alford, will you please
9 read the title of the resolution.

10 THE CLERK: Resolution No.
11 230328, a resolution authorizing
12 hearings in the Committee on the
13 Environment to evaluate the
14 environmental justice impacts of the
15 City's waste management practices and
16 potential alternatives to the City's
17 contract with Covanta Delaware
18 Valley, LP.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Before we
21 begin to hear testimony from the
22 witnesses we have for today, everyone
23 who has been invited to the meeting
24 to testify should be aware that this
25 public hearing is being recorded.

1 Because the hearing is public,
2 participants and viewers have no
3 reasonable expectation of privacy.
4 By continuing to be in the meeting,
5 you are consenting to being recorded.

6 Additionally, prior to
7 recognizing Members for the questions
8 or comments they have for witnesses,
9 I will note for the record at this
10 time that we will use the chat
11 feature available in Microsoft Teams
12 to allow Councilmembers to signify
13 that they wish to be recognized. In
14 order to comply with the Sunshine
15 Act, the chat feature must only be
16 used for this purpose.

17 Again, I'd like to thank all
18 of my colleagues and all of you for
19 being here today. I am truly
20 grateful for your time and for your
21 dedication to this crucial issue of
22 environmental justice. And though I
23 am a lifelong resident of
24 Philadelphia -- as Will Smith says,
25 West Philadelphia born and raised --

1 I have many times stated and for the
2 record, I think I married into the
3 largest family in the city of
4 Chester.

5 So Chester is very close to my
6 heart and it was very important to me
7 that we hold this conversation today
8 to discuss what has been a
9 longstanding community issue in the
10 ways that the City of Philadelphia
11 contributes to the challenges that
12 are impacting our neighbors and
13 friends in the city of Chester. And
14 so, I want to thank everyone here
15 today for being willing to share
16 their perspective and for the work as
17 we embark on a journey to develop
18 collaborative solutions for our most
19 challenging issues.

20 We are taking a whole
21 government approach to addressing
22 climate change and environmental
23 justice, and that means thinking
24 about how all of our actions impact
25 our residents and their surrounding

1 communities. And I am looking
2 forward to the discussion we will
3 have today that will allow us to take
4 necessary next steps on this journey
5 together.

6 And with that, I pause to
7 recognize any colleagues who wish to
8 be recognized at the onset of the
9 hearing.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Madam
11 Chair, I just wanted to thank you for
12 this very important work that we're
13 about to undertake today. And I
14 think that recognizing that this is
15 not a local issue, this is really a
16 regional issue. It's not just
17 Philadelphia, but it's beyond, so
18 much farther beyond, that this is
19 something that we really should be
20 talking about on a regular basis.

21 So I applaud you for bringing
22 this conversation to the forefront of
23 our minds and looking forward to the
24 dialogue today. I think it's very,
25 very important. So thank you, Madam

1 Chair.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you so
4 much, Madam Vice-Chair, and thank you
5 for all of your advocacy and work in
6 the environmental space. We truly
7 appreciate you.

8 At the onset of this hearing,
9 I wanted to be very clear that we
10 have a number of individuals who are
11 slated to provide testimony today.
12 And in the best interest of time and
13 also availability, recognizing that
14 today has become a very, very busy
15 day, I am respectfully requesting and
16 asking everyone to please summarize
17 your testimony so that we can get
18 through all of the panels and all of
19 the individuals who have signed up to
20 provide public comment. And we will
21 also notate the individuals who have
22 provided written testimony for the
23 record.

24 I would like to now recognize
25 I think I see Councilmember Kendra

1 Brooks.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
3 you so much, Councilmember. I'm
4 sorry. I was having some tech
5 difficulties. I want to thank you so
6 much for holding this hearing and for
7 you examining this important issue.

8 We can feel the impacts of
9 pollution and environmental racism in
10 our families, in our children and in
11 our communities, and I know this is
12 true in my neighborhood where the
13 life expectancy is decades lower than
14 whiter wealthier neighborhoods, where
15 1 in 3 of the children in the
16 neighborhood has asthma. And it's
17 also true with Chester, a city where
18 about three-quarters (inaudible) --

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Councilmem --

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Can you
22 hear me?

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: We can hear you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: You

1 can't hear me?

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Now, we can hear you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Okay.

5 I'm sorry. Should I start all over

6 or --

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Yes, ma'am. Just start

9 with the asthma part and then you

10 went out.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Okay.

12 Thank you. Well, I was talking about

13 my neighborhood 3 -- 1 in 3 kids have

14 asthma and it's also true for

15 Chester, in a city where three-

16 quarters of the residents are Black

17 and where the asthma rate is five

18 times the national average. I

19 realized that the Covanta trash

20 incineration plant is one of the

21 largest in our country and it

22 causes -- it's a major cause of toxic

23 pollution in Chester.

24 The burning of trash is one of

25 the most dirtiest and most harmful

1 ways to dispose of waste, then
2 generate electricity but -- and we
3 can feel it. In Chester, more than
4 38 percent of the children suffer
5 from asthma, and the national
6 childhood asthma rate is 8 percent.
7 The pollution that Chester
8 experiences is not only to children
9 and the residents with lifetime
10 impacts of asthma, but we know that
11 the Covanta Chester plant is known to
12 contribute to other health conditions
13 like heart disease and lung disease.
14 We know that a study out of
15 Harvard also showed that exposure to
16 pollution from the plant increases
17 the risk of death from COVID-19. The
18 impacts of this pollution are even
19 more than its health impacts. Asthma
20 causes the society millions of
21 dollars. One study pegged the cost
22 being \$349 million per year for
23 Philly alone, and the population in
24 Chester -- and the pollution in
25 Chester destroys the community.

1 Residents say they don't sit on their
2 porch anymore and the pollution has
3 taken away their sense of
4 neighborhood.

5 Far too often our Black and
6 Brown communities suffer health,
7 economic and mental harm of our
8 systems while others make big profit.
9 We must change this. And
10 Philadelphia contributes to the very
11 serious health problem that children
12 and residents in Chester face and we
13 must work to end this. So in
14 Philadelphia, we must join them. We
15 cannot continue to dispose of our
16 trash in that way. One, the way it
17 causes asthma for thousands of
18 children in Chester and it burdens
19 communities of color with harmful,
20 expensive and community-destroying
21 pollution.

22 So thank you so much for
23 hosting this hearing, Councilmember.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: Thank you. And thank

1 you so much, Councilmember Brooks,
2 for being here and to all of my
3 colleagues for being here, for all of
4 your work that we've been able to do
5 together around environmental
6 justice.

7 And so, Ms. Alford, will you
8 please call the first panel we have
9 to testify this afternoon on
10 Resolution No. 230328. And again, I
11 want to reiterate if we can please
12 summarize our testimony so that we
13 can endeavor to hear from as many
14 witnesses as possible. Thank you.

15 THE CLERK: Zulene Mayfield,
16 Samantha Wittchen, Kirstie Pecci,
17 Russell Zerbo, Jessica Ram and
18 Michael Ewall.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
20 RICHARDSON: Okay. Good afternoon.
21 Are you all connected and ready to
22 proceed with your testimony?

23 (Nodded head.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
25 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. So

1 will you please state your name for
2 the record and proceed with your
3 testimony. We will begin with the
4 first witness.

5 Eliza, may you repeat the
6 order.

7 THE CLERK: Zulene Mayfield.

8 MS. MAYFIELD: I have the
9 order. Thank you so much. Good
10 morning, Madam Chair and other
11 members of Philadelphia Council. I
12 am Zulene Mayfield. I am the
13 Chairperson of Chester Residents
14 Concerned for Quality Living or we
15 like to be called CRCQL. We were
16 formed by residents and we continue
17 to be governed by a coalition of
18 volunteer residents and allies
19 throughout the United States and the
20 (inaudible).
21 CRCQL formed in 1992 in direct
22 response to the self-proclaimed
23 trash-to-steam plant. At the time we
24 had little knowledge of what a trash-
25 to-steam plant was. So we were

1 woefully undereducated and
2 underserved by our local government.
3 They weren't aware either. The
4 incinerator was a collaborative
5 effort between those in Delaware
6 County government and at the time the
7 Westinghouse Corporation.

8 Despite popular belief,
9 Chester City officials at the time
10 opposed the incinerator primarily
11 because they understood the financial
12 inequities that Chester would
13 receive. Residents responded at that
14 time to everything that we could see,
15 hear and smell. The impact to the
16 community was immediate. The smells
17 both from the trash burning and the
18 choking fumes from the enormous
19 18-wheeler truck traffic, the soot as
20 the residents called it, we now
21 realize that it's particulate matter
22 that lands on the cars and penetrates
23 our homes, the leaching from the
24 trash trucks, the constant noise from
25 the incinerator, et cetera. These

1 issues continue to this day.

2 As was noted, the Covanta

3 incinerator is the largest

4 incinerator in the United States.

5 They burn up to 3500 tons of trash

6 per day. Over 98 percent of this

7 trash originates from outside of our

8 City via truck or railed in from

9 towns, cities and other states.

10 Philadelphia sends more than 400,000

11 tons of trash to Chester per year.

12 Only 1.8 percent of the trash burned

13 comes from the city of Chester. So

14 it is -- I'm trying to summarize my

15 testimony. So it is burned and

16 reduced to 30 percent the trash

17 volume. The toxins are reduced to

18 ash and sent to the Delco County-

19 owned landfill. The rest goes into

20 air that we breathe.

21 So Chester's low-income

22 primarily Black and Brown community

23 is roughly bearing the brunt of trash

24 from 2 million people, including

25 Philadelphia, New York and Delaware

1 County Council -- I mean Delaware
2 County. A 2019 study from the New
3 School found that Covanta's Chester
4 plant was one of the most significant
5 polluters of its kind in the country.
6 Although Covanta will claim that they
7 are within their permit limits on
8 emissions, this is a 30-year-old
9 facility with 30-year-old technology.

10 If they were to apply for a
11 permit today, they would not be able
12 to meet today's emission requirements
13 and would be denied. The Covanta
14 Chester plant is the largest
15 incinerator. Yet they lack proper
16 pollution control devices. Covanta
17 has 39 incinerators. The Chester
18 facility has only two pollution
19 control devices, the least from any
20 incinerator they run.

21 For example, the Covanta
22 incinerator in Plymouth, a majority
23 White community, burns 1200 tons of
24 trash per day and there are four
25 pollution control devices. We have

1 demanded many times that Covanta
2 install additional pollution control
3 devices to mitigate some of the
4 pollutants and they have refused,
5 claiming that it isn't cost-
6 effective. Although the Chester
7 incinerator is Covanta's most
8 profitable incinerator, they've
9 refused to spend any of those profits
10 to minimize the harms for our
11 community in the Philadelphia region
12 as a whole.

13 Covanta ranks as very high
14 liters of pollutants in the
15 Philadelphia region. No. 2 in
16 mercury. No. 3 in sulfur dioxide.
17 No. 3 in nitrogen dioxide. No. 4 in
18 cadmium. No. 5 in carbon monoxide.
19 No. 6 in greenhouse gases which
20 contribute to global warming and
21 climate degradation. No. 6 in
22 particulate matter, PM10 and PM2.5,
23 which are asthma triggers, bronchitis
24 and cause heart attacks for those
25 suffering from heart disease, in

1 addition to being high in lead and
2 arsenic. Exposure to the toxic
3 emissions from Covanta has led to
4 equally high rates of asthma,
5 respiratory diseases, cancers and
6 other environmental illnesses that
7 the residents have suffered for
8 decades.

9 As was noted, 38.5 percent of
10 our children suffer from asthma,
11 included are incidents of low birth
12 rate babies and the mortally rate of
13 stroke, heart disease and cancer
14 rates are extremely high in Chester.
15 The life expectancy rate in Chester
16 is now 67 years, 11 years below the
17 national average. What is not
18 captured in those statistics are the
19 complaints of rashes, nosebleeds,
20 chronic issues of dry eyes, sinus and
21 bronchial health problems and the
22 list goes on and on.

23 In addition, the anxiety of
24 what is that smell now, there's a
25 high level of anxiety in our

1 community every time a smell
2 permeates our senses, and that's
3 hourly. The Tishman Environmental
4 and Design Center Research Center
5 said, Chester residents are
6 significantly more likely to develop
7 lung and ovarian cancer and die from
8 a stroke or heart disease than any
9 other Delaware county resident.
10 Every day Chester residents are
11 attacked physically by the operations
12 of the Covanta incinerator. We
13 literally cannot breathe.

14 In 2019, 41 organizations
15 requested that Mayor Kenney instruct
16 your Streets Department not to reward
17 a contract to Covanta for burning
18 trash in Chester. At the same time,
19 the City of Chester Mayor Kirkland
20 penned a letter to the Streets
21 Department in support of signing the
22 contract with Covanta. Chester
23 residents were not made of his
24 actions and were not in favor of
25 signing the trash contract.

1 In addition, what is called
2 the Chester Environmental Partnership
3 or CEP penned a similar letter. The
4 CEP is not a representative
5 organization of the residents and is
6 funded yearly by Covanta. Covanta
7 does pay the city of Chester \$4
8 million to \$5 million in what are
9 called community host fees. In 2017,
10 Mayor Kirkland signed a secret deal
11 with Covanta lowering those host fees
12 resulting in a loss of revenue of
13 about \$10 million, all the while our
14 city was heading into bankruptcy. No
15 one knew about that deal until we
16 found out about it.

17 Out of the 110 jobs at the
18 Covanta incinerator, only 6 people
19 from Chester work there. Yes, I said
20 6. And in recent months, Covanta had
21 started donating to different
22 community organizations such as our
23 local football teams, the Boys and
24 Girls Club. We're not in opposition
25 to that because this is something

1 that they should have been doing all
2 along, but we know that they're doing
3 it now in a way to try to gain
4 allies. This year they gave away 250
5 food bags, although there are roughly
6 13,000 households in Chester. Them
7 trying to buy allies, it's not
8 working.

9 As a byproduct of Covanta's
10 trash-burning, they generate
11 electricity. I want it be known that
12 to our knowledge none of that
13 electricity comes to the city of
14 Chester for the residents, and we
15 have successfully advocated that
16 Delaware County take steps to wean
17 our County off incinerator. The
18 Delaware Council are implementing a
19 true zero waste resolution strategy
20 and have started diverting their
21 trash away from Covanta and towards
22 landfilling.

23 CRCQL was also instrumental in
24 getting the Delaware County Solid
25 Waste Authority to end Covanta's put

1 up or pay up contract, which means a
2 guaranteed amount of trash. If the
3 municipality falls short of trash
4 tonnage, the municipal will still
5 have to pay that amount to Covanta.
6 Philadelphia is still locked into a
7 contract like that. This is in
8 contradiction to exploring a real
9 zero waste policy plan and putting
10 Philadelphians in a distinct position
11 of paying to poison us in the region.

12 Since the incinerator has been
13 in our community, our financial
14 status has changed. It went from bad
15 to worse. So we have to question the
16 economics of what will they do in our
17 city. Not only that, there are
18 direct real adverse financial costs
19 to the Chester residents also. Our
20 homes, the property values have been
21 devalued. We incur added medical
22 costs such as payments for doctor
23 bills or copays. Parents lose wages
24 when their child is sent home from
25 school. Some even lost their jobs

1 because of an asthmatic incident.
2 Our homes, I have experienced
3 foundational damage from the never-
4 ending truck traffic. Residents lose
5 sleep from the incinerator, the noise
6 itself or from the rumbling of trash
7 trucks that start lining up on our
8 streets as early as 2 o'clock in the
9 morning.

10 There are increased costs with
11 trying to keep our homes and cars
12 clean from the soot. And there's a
13 loss of community. There's a loss of
14 socialization in our community
15 because people don't stay outside.
16 They don't sit on our porch homes.
17 So we lost a sense of community. For
18 example, in the neighborhood where I
19 bought my house at when I bought my
20 house, it had an 81 percent owner-
21 occupied homeownership rate. It is
22 now somewhere below 40 percent. For
23 years there have been plans to
24 redevelop our waterfront. Talks and
25 actual plans of creating a source of

1 entertainment, eateries,
2 condominiums, shops and green space
3 to generate revenue for the city of
4 Chester. Covanta's incinerator is a
5 hindrance to the economic development
6 of Chester. No one is going to sit,
7 eat and smell Covanta's garbage. We
8 believe that Chester's revitalization
9 cannot be realized with Covanta in
10 our city.

11 CRCQL has been tirelessly
12 fighting to demand an end to our
13 community being targeted as the toxic
14 dumping ground and a regional hub for
15 waste. It should be people over
16 pollution. Chester residents should
17 not be profit for pollution.

18 Philadelphia Council, please commit
19 to real solutions concerning your
20 trash. Our life expectancy is being
21 reduced by years. Members in our
22 community are really suffering and
23 dying. None of us have our own
24 supply of air. We all breathe.
25 Therefore, we should all care.

1 Chester gets the pollution
2 first, but ultimately Philadelphians
3 breathe it also. This is climate
4 destruction and environmental
5 genocide, and it must end.
6 Philadelphia must decide if Chester
7 is your neighbor or your dumping
8 ground. Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you so
11 much, Zulene Mayfield. I know it's
12 hard to summarize 30-plus years of
13 advocacy in the Chester community,
14 30-plus years of leadership in that
15 community. So I do want to thank you
16 so much for the work you have done,
17 for the work of CRCQL and for how you
18 have convened the advocacy groups
19 over the years.

20 And I appreciate you providing
21 testimony and constantly pushing us
22 as members of Council to ensure that
23 we are looking at every alternative
24 and possibility to what we know you
25 all are facing in the city of Chester

1 and how it impacts your overall
2 health and life expectancy and also
3 particularly for the children and the
4 young people. So I want to thank you
5 very, very much.

6 Before we move on to the
7 remainder of the panelists for this
8 panel, I wanted to take a moment to
9 recognize the individuals who have
10 submitted written testimony. We have
11 received written testimony that will
12 be added to the record from --

13 THE CLERK: Councilwoman?

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Yes.

16 THE CLERK: Sorry. Just one
17 second. We need to pause. I'm told
18 we're having some technical issues
19 with Channel 64, so if we can just
20 pause for one minute.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Certainly. Okay. We
23 will pause the hearing to address
24 technical issues related to Channel
25 64. Thank you.

1 (Brief recess.)

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Thank you. We are now
4 resuming the City Council Committee
5 on the Environment hearing testimony
6 from Panel No. 1. We will now
7 proceed with hearing testimony from
8 Samantha Wittchen from Circular
9 Philadelphia; Kirstie Pecci, Just
10 Zero; Russell Zerbo, Clean Air
11 Council; Jessica Ram, Covanta
12 Plymouth Trash Incinerator Community
13 Information Group; and Michael Ewall,
14 Beyond Burning.

15 And I'm going to respectfully
16 request and ask particularly now
17 because of the technical difficulties
18 that we are experiencing that you
19 please summarize your testimony so
20 that we can get through this panel,
21 the other two and all the public
22 commenters and the questions that we
23 have. We must conclude this hearing
24 by 3:00 p.m. Thank you so much.
25 Okay. Are you connected, then

1 you can proceed with your testimony,
2 Samantha.

3 MS. WITTCHEN: Yes, I think
4 so. Can you hear me?

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Yes, we can hear you.
7 Please state your name for the record
8 and proceed with your testimony.

9 MS. WITTCHEN: Thank you.
10 Thank you for having me today. My
11 name is Samantha Wittchen and I am
12 the Director of Programs and
13 Operations for Circular Philadelphia,
14 a nonprofit organization whose
15 mission is to drive the circular
16 economy in Philadelphia, to reduce
17 waste and boost local economic
18 development.

19 There will be a number of
20 other people who will speak very
21 directly to the issue of the
22 environmental justice as we just
23 heard Ms. Mayfield speak so
24 passionately and forcefully about.
25 So my testimony today is going to be

1 to connect why addressing these very
2 urgent and very important
3 environmental justice issues is also
4 aligned with the City being on track
5 with its zero waste goals and
6 managing to meet those goals at the
7 same time.

8 Circular Philadelphia applauds
9 you for taking the proactive approach
10 and to anticipating the end of the
11 Covanta contract and revisiting the
12 City's waste management practices to
13 reaffirm its commitment to its zero
14 waste goal. It's our proposition
15 that the best way for the City to
16 reach the stated goal by 2035 is to
17 take a holistic approach to how it
18 manages materials and invest in
19 businesses that take a circular
20 economy approach to materials
21 management.

22 This aligns with the City's
23 own zero waste policy objectives laid
24 out in the Zero Waste and Litter
25 Action Plan, which is based on

1 industry and government best
2 practices and is guided by the U.S.
3 Environmental Protection Agency's
4 waste management hierarchy. That
5 hierarchy places source reduction,
6 reuse and recycling and composting at
7 the top as the most sustainable waste
8 management strategies while
9 incineration even with an energy
10 reduction component and landfilling
11 are least sustainable. Currently
12 with the way that the City's
13 contracts are structured it spends
14 the most money on the least
15 sustainable waste management
16 strategies, incineration and
17 landfilling. Simply put, the City's
18 waste managing contracts and
19 budgeting priorities are in direct
20 conflict with the zero waste
21 objectives.

22 To align with the zero waste
23 objectives, the City should be
24 funding source reduction, reuse and
25 recycling and composting. Waste

1 management strategy that focuses on
2 the sustainable waste practices also
3 has tangible economic development
4 rewards for the City. Recent
5 research from Accenture shows that
6 the circular economy offers a 4.5
7 trillion global economic opportunity.
8 Let me say that again, \$4.5 trillion
9 by reducing waste, stimulating
10 innovation and creating employment to
11 bring the employment benefits into
12 focus for Philadelphia,
13 The MacArthur Foundation
14 estimates that you can create six
15 times the amount of jobs when moving
16 to a circular textile industry.
17 Philadelphia currently has about
18 6,000 jobs in that sector. If the
19 City supported a circular textile
20 waste management strategy,
21 Philadelphia stands to gain another
22 30,000 jobs in that sector. We
23 believe that here in Philadelphia
24 investing in the circular economy
25 businesses to manage our municipal

1 waste will not only address these
2 very urgent environmental justice
3 issues that we will continue to hear
4 people speak about, but it will also
5 create local living-wage jobs. We
6 have already seen this with the
7 growth of Philadelphia-based
8 composting companies such as Bennett
9 Compost and Circle Compost that
10 process food waste. And it already
11 has an existing contract with
12 Philadelphia Parks & Recreation,
13 which has allowed them to grow their
14 operation, add jobs and support the
15 City's zero waste goals.

16 Remark Glass, another
17 Philadelphia-based company, has been
18 processing glass for Philadelphia
19 residents and continues to expand
20 their reach without any City support.
21 Rapid Recycling has established
22 itself as the effective recycler of
23 not just typical single-stream
24 materials but also of hard-to-recycle
25 materials that often end up in the

1 trash because they're not allowed in
2 our curbside recycling stream. These
3 local businesses provide good-paying
4 jobs to Philadelphians while
5 supporting our larger zero waste
6 goals.

7 I heard Ms. Mayfield give a
8 statistic that Covanta incinerator
9 was employing six local residents.
10 These existing companies here in
11 Philadelphia employs far more than
12 that from our local neighborhoods.
13 If the City took a holistic circular
14 approach to waste management and
15 aligned its contracts with its zero
16 waste objectives, not only could
17 these existing businesses scale to
18 meet the needs of the City, the City
19 could set the right conditions to
20 attract other circular businesses to
21 set up operations in Philadelphia, to
22 process materials for use and
23 recycling that currently end up sent
24 to the Covanta facility.

25 Older businesses like --

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Samantha?

3 MS. WITTCHEN: Yes.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: I apologize for the
6 interruption. I'm going to
7 respectfully request if you could
8 just please summarize your testimony.
9 I'm going to ask everyone if you can
10 keep it to three to five minutes
11 because we really need to get
12 through -- I have at least 30 people
13 here. Okay. And I need to hear from
14 each person within the next 60
15 minutes. Okay. So if we could just
16 keep it two to three minutes, we want
17 to get questions in after each panel
18 for the Councilmembers as well.
19 Okay.

20 MS. WITTCHEN: Yep.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

23 MS. WITTCHEN: So just to
24 summarize, it's our position that the
25 City should consider waste management

1 alternatives to Covanta that support
2 sustainable waste strategies. It
3 should align its funding and
4 contracts to these strategies. Our
5 own Zero Waste and Litter Action Plan
6 calls for materials sent to waste
7 energy to make up no more than 10
8 percent of the total City waste
9 stream. And by taking the approach
10 to waste management and funding waste
11 management that I've outlined, that
12 will allow the City to get back on
13 track to meeting its important waste
14 goal. Thank you for your time and
15 the opportunity to speak.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: No, thank you. Thank
18 you for your testimony and your
19 passion. It really does come
20 through. And please just submit your
21 full testimony for the record.

22 We'll ask questions for this
23 panel, colleagues, at the end of the
24 testimony for this panel.

25 We'll now hear from Kirstie

1 Pecci from Just Zero. Again, please
2 state your name for the record and
3 proceed with your testimony.

4 MS. PECCI: Good afternoon.
5 My name is Kirstie Pecci. I am the
6 Executive Director of Just Zero, a
7 national nonprofit that works soups
8 and nuts on waste issues. We work on
9 pushing back against incinerators and
10 landfills but also making sure that
11 we're supporting real solutions. I
12 want to call out -- first of all, in
13 the interest of time I did submit
14 some testimony and I'm very happy to
15 follow up with anybody who wants to
16 give me a call. Our website
17 justzero.org, easy to find, call me
18 or email me and I'm happy to follow
19 up on the information or to back it
20 up with reports and other data to
21 make sure that I'm clear.

22 Also, in the interest of time
23 I'd just like to call out that
24 Ms. Mayfield has already explained in
25 detail, in great detail, what the

1 community is facing living near a
2 facility like this, an incinerator
3 like this. And also that
4 Ms. Wittchen has done a wonderful job
5 explaining the idea of the circular
6 economy and managing our waste
7 differently. So thank you very much
8 for both of those. Couldn't agree
9 more on the jobs piece and the cost
10 piece.

11 I think it's really important
12 to understand, number one, no high
13 heat technology ever works. They're
14 all toxic. They're all toxic air
15 emissions, toxic ash. They're all
16 very expensive and they all make you
17 addicted to a waste system where you
18 have to be producing waste. You have
19 to put or pay as Ms. Mayfield
20 explained the contract where you have
21 to create that much waste or you get
22 penalized. You're paying for
23 sandwiches that you're not eating in
24 other words, right. So that's the
25 first thing.

1 The second thing, landfilling
2 just as much as a problem, not going
3 to be a good alternative. The
4 question isn't what do you do with
5 your waste. The question is how can
6 you produce materials that are either
7 not waste because you kept them
8 separate. They're separated so they
9 retain their value as a material or
10 you phase them out so you're not
11 creating them anymore.

12 So I'm going to jump into some
13 solutions. I can talk all day about
14 incineration and other disposal
15 problems. This doesn't even work in
16 (inaudible) no matter what Covanta
17 tells you. There's no magical
18 unicorn that makes high heat
19 technologies no matter if they call
20 it pyrolysis or gasification, same
21 thing with landfills. But let's talk
22 about the solutions. You guys can
23 follow up with me. I'd be delighted
24 if any of you called me, Madam Chair
25 or Vice-Chair, on these issues.

1 Happy to give you any information you
2 need.

3 Solutions: First thing, get
4 out of that contract. Put or pay is
5 always a bad idea as we already said.
6 Number two, the way to avoid
7 toxicity, we need to keep things
8 separate and we need to incentivize
9 producing waste, pay as you throw.
10 Start looking -- right now I can't
11 find how much you're spending each
12 year on your trash alone. It's mixed
13 in with your Streets budget. Pull it
14 out and start taxing people. When
15 you set up the tax bill, say this is
16 how much you're paying for waste.
17 And when you say to them this is how
18 much you're paying for waste, you can
19 pay less through a pay-as-you-throw
20 program where you have a smaller bin
21 or you have to buy a bag.

22 Immediately the residents of
23 Philadelphia, just like they had in
24 other cities across the country will
25 start changing what they buy because

1 they don't want to buy that bag to
2 put it in. So you will reduce trash
3 by 40, 50 percent. Some of it will
4 end up in your recycling stream but
5 immediately you will save money. So
6 first call out how much they're
7 paying for their trash, and then put
8 a program in place to reduce it.
9 Incentivize producing less trash.

10 And also, make sure you take
11 care of your low-income folks. Get
12 them free bags or free vouchers,
13 whatever you need to do. We're not
14 trying to penalize seniors or
15 low-income folks, but you want to
16 make sure you're capturing how much
17 it really cost every person, every
18 household. If you think about
19 550,000 households in the City, how
20 much is it costing.

21 Number two, you already heard
22 of composting. You want to phase out
23 your food scraps from that trash.
24 Start slow. Do what Massachusetts
25 started doing and what Vermont did.

1 Within the next seven years you
2 shouldn't have any food or yard waste
3 in your trash. That's almost a third
4 of your trash. It's cheaper to
5 compost once you set the system up
6 and it will create nice soil that you
7 can use cleanly in the City.

8 Next -- and again, I can talk
9 all day about these things, but I am
10 jumping right through because I know
11 we have a lot of important people to
12 hear from. Next --

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Yes.

15 MS. WITTCHEN: Next, bottle
16 bill. Only got 800,000 people, they
17 have a bottle bill. Maine, I think
18 they've got 1.3 million people,
19 they've got a bottle bill. You've
20 got 1.6 million people in
21 Philadelphia. If you put a bottle
22 bill in place, you could reduce your
23 curbside immediately by 40 percent.
24 You're paying 90 bucks a ton for
25 curbside. If you could reduce that

1 by 40 percent, that is a huge cost
2 savings. You don't pay for that.
3 The producers pay for the handling
4 fee, and the deposit is what
5 incentivizes people who bring it
6 back. So I'm happy to talk about
7 that.

8 If the City doesn't want to do
9 it yourself, you can try and get the
10 state to do it. 13 million people
11 doing a bottle bill, that would be
12 fantastic. But the City could
13 definitely do it yourself -- again,
14 the producers could also pay for the
15 staff you need and the data you need
16 and get it done. So that's something
17 you should really think about. If
18 you want to cut back that recycling,
19 do that.

20 And then lastly I would say,
21 and again I could talk about this
22 stuff all day, but lastly I would say
23 anything you can do to pull out your
24 data to make sure you're making
25 everything transparent so people know

1 where the trash is going, know which
2 recycling is actually getting
3 recycled, where it's getting recycled
4 and how much all of this is costing
5 everyone, then even folks who are not
6 as aware of the environmental
7 injustice being done here or not as
8 aware of how this is impacting your
9 litter and everything else, because a
10 bottle bill has also cut litter
11 significantly by the way, which will
12 be another day. But all of these
13 pieces would also save you money.

14 So there are some folks who
15 don't care about the climate or the
16 environment or their neighbors
17 unfortunately, but everybody cares
18 about money. So please, happy to
19 help any time I can. Again, Kirstie
20 Pecci from Just Zero. Let me know
21 how I can be helpful, and thank you
22 very so much for having this hearing
23 and doing this good work.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: No, thank you, Kirstie,

1 and thank you for your
2 recommendations. I know that we
3 received and circulated testimony,
4 but we will take special note as to
5 some of the recommendations that you
6 have shared. And I'll have some
7 questions for you and for this panel
8 at the conclusion.

9 I apologize in advance. We
10 are going to start timing each
11 person. I really want to get through
12 this so I can be respectful of
13 everybody who has reached out. So we
14 will time each person, okay, moving
15 forward so that we can get through
16 this.

17 We are now moving forward with
18 testimony from Russell Zerbo, Clean
19 Air Council. Please state your name
20 for the record and proceed with your
21 testimony.

22 MR. ZERBO: Thank you, Madam
23 Chair. My name is Russell Zerbo.
24 I'm an advocate at the nonprofit
25 Clean Air Council headquartered in

1 Philadelphia. Again, good afternoon
2 Madam Chair and other members of the
3 Environmental Committee. Covanta's
4 waste incinerator in Chester,
5 Pennsylvania is one of the largest
6 waste incinerators in the country and
7 is currently operating in a high
8 priority violation of the Clean Air
9 Act while also currently operating in
10 significant noncompliance with the
11 Clean Water Act.

12 Covanta's waste incinerator in
13 Plymouth Township, Montgomery County
14 is also currently operating in high
15 priority violation of the Clean Air
16 Act. Unfortunately, the City of
17 Philadelphia sends 34 percent of its
18 waste to these two facilities with
19 the vast majority going to Chester.
20 There is no, absolutely no reason for
21 the City of Philadelphia to send its
22 trash to multiple incinerators that
23 are currently operating on a high
24 priority violation of the Clean Air
25 Act.

1 According to the Philadelphia
2 2020 Municipal Waste Management Plan,
3 the City of Philadelphia sends over
4 56 percent of its waste to landfills
5 with the rest going to the
6 incinerator. However, this can be
7 misleading. Municipal solid waste
8 has an average ash content of 27
9 percent. This means that the waste
10 Philadelphia sends to incinerators
11 still must be disposed of after
12 incineration. The incinerator versus
13 landfill paradigm is false. There is
14 absolutely no reason to expose
15 Chester and Plymouth Township
16 residents to the air and water
17 pollution associated with
18 incineration when incineration does
19 not eliminate waste.

20 Additionally, Covanta's claims
21 about reducing greenhouse gas
22 emissions via incineration are false.
23 This fallacy is based on a U.S.
24 Environmental Protection Agency
25 loophole that ignores two-thirds of

1 the carbon dioxide emissions from
2 trash incinerators. EPA estimates
3 that two-thirds of the municipal
4 solid waste stream is paper and plant
5 matter, which is highly suspicious in
6 itself because municipal solid waste
7 that enters incinerators is rarely
8 inspected.

9 Covanta only inspects 15
10 incoming truckloads of waste per week
11 out of well over 150 truckloads of
12 waste per day at its incinerator at
13 Plymouth Township, and even those
14 inspections do not include opening
15 bag waste. Further concerning,
16 Covanta's waste incinerator in
17 Chester, Pa recently received a
18 violation for accepting waste from
19 truckers without a valid Act 90 waste
20 transporter waste authorization. The
21 City of Philadelphia should not be
22 doing business with this company.

23 The make-up of the waste
24 incinerated at Covanta's facilities
25 is largely unknown, which should

1 refute any claims of greenhouse gas
2 productions. EPA's claim that
3 two-thirds of municipal solid waste
4 is paper and plant matter leaves it
5 to claim that two-thirds of carbon
6 dioxide emissions from waste-to-
7 energy facilities are biogenic,
8 meaning they would happen naturally
9 and are thus exempted. This equates
10 instant incineration with the
11 lifetime natural decomposition of
12 paper and plant matter. This is why
13 composting has been held back for
14 decades. We think it involves
15 burning trash. In reality, burning
16 trash creating 2,988 pounds of carbon
17 dioxide per megawatt hour of
18 electricity generated according to
19 the EPA. The --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Pardon me. Please
22 summarize your testimony.

23 MR. ZERBO: Okay. Sure. I
24 will skip ahead. Incinerating
25 municipal solid waste does more

1 polluting than coal. Rather than
2 equating waste incineration with
3 natural decomposition, the City of
4 Philadelphia has an immense
5 opportunity to collect residential
6 composts that can be used in gardens
7 and farms while reducing the overall
8 waste burden.

9 Additionally, the City's ban
10 on single-use plastic bags has been
11 widely adopted. The City government
12 should immediately pursue bans on
13 other single-use plastic products
14 that would further reduce the City's
15 overall waste burden. And the
16 facility that the City sends the
17 overall majority of its waste to the
18 Fairless Landfill owned by Waste
19 Management. And next year they are
20 slated to install a Renewable Natural
21 Gas gathering and distribution
22 system.

23 There are 532 currently
24 operating landfill gas projects.
25 There is plenty of landfill capacity

1 in the state of Pennsylvania. There
2 are modern landfills that capture the
3 methane gas and use it for energy.
4 Pennsylvania imports more trash to be
5 disposed of than any other state in
6 the country. And in summary, the
7 City of Philadelphia's already doing
8 the right thing by banning plastic
9 bags and sending the majority of its
10 trash to modern landfills.

11 The City must continue to
12 utilize modern landfills, ban single-
13 use plastics and additionally begin
14 collecting residential compost. And
15 just one more short thing: It is
16 frustrating that the City's contract
17 with Covanta was renewed for one year
18 in 2023 without public notification.
19 Before any new waste contracts are
20 renewed or remain in 2024, please
21 notify the public. And thank you for
22 the opportunity to speak.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: No, thank you and thank
25 you for talking about some of the

1 work that has been done in the
2 Council and the work that we need to
3 continue to pursue.

4 We will next hear from Jessica
5 Ram. You can proceed with your
6 testimony. State your state your
7 name for the record. Please try to
8 limit your testimony to three
9 minutes. We are timing everyone. So
10 at around three minutes I'm going to
11 ask you to summarize your testimony.

12 MS. RAM: Okay. Thank you.
13 My name is Jessica Ram. I currently
14 and have for the past few years lived
15 down near the Covanta Plymouth in
16 Montgomery County. Covanta Plymouth
17 is Montgomery County's largest
18 polluter and we're also abutted next
19 to some of Philadelphia's most
20 wealthiest neighborhoods in this
21 area.

22 So I know a lot of other
23 people from our community couldn't
24 make it because of the timing of
25 this, but I just want to represent

1 what it's like living near the
2 Plymouth facility, and over the past
3 few years there's been numerous
4 malfunctions. I can relate to Zulene
5 about people, they don't know whether
6 they can go outside on some days.
7 The noise is a constant, constant
8 issue. There's just -- the facility
9 is just (inaudible) all the time
10 constantly.

11 The malfunctions have led to
12 noxious odors where people don't want
13 their kids outside. They have to
14 close their windows. It's just kind
15 of unlivable and just not somewhere
16 you picture your home being in a
17 place where you have to close windows
18 and worry about your kids outside or
19 if the malfunction will continue into
20 the day, does that mean my kids
21 should play soccer on the field at
22 night. Those types of things that we
23 live with.

24 So as I mentioned, the
25 malfunctions have been just as a part

1 of living constant. The smells can
2 be acrid and just burning. People in
3 the community wonder if their
4 autoimmune issues have been caused by
5 this facility, whether them or their
6 neighbors cancers have been caused by
7 this facility. We'll never get
8 answers. And it's just kind of a
9 product of living near the facility.

10 The DEP doesn't really have
11 any teeth. Even though the facility
12 operates with an air permit, they
13 don't really seem to have any kind of
14 punishment or, you know, any way of
15 making sure that these things don't
16 happen again. One of the biggest
17 malfunctions resulted in a fine that
18 wasn't really proportional to the
19 effect that this place has on the
20 community. And the malfunctions
21 continue any way.

22 Covanta has never taken
23 responsibility of any of their
24 malfunctions. If we go to meetings
25 such as this and complain to people,

1 Covanta will show up and they will
2 gaslight some of the residents that
3 show up and say, no, we're not bad,
4 we're not operating poorly, you know.
5 You guys are complaining about
6 something that's not us. And it's
7 just kind of frustrating to be, you
8 know, trying to find anyone who will
9 listen to us. And in the meanwhile
10 have Covanta not only deny that they
11 are a problem, but only when there's
12 a violation issued by the DEP will
13 they maybe backtrack somewhat.

14 The burden that's been placed
15 on the people is exorbitant. It's
16 just absurd what people -- I had
17 mentioned trying to figure out who
18 can help us fix this problem because
19 it's clearly not the DEP and clearly
20 not Covanta. Yeah, in summary please
21 don't send your trash to these
22 archaic facilities. Nobody's
23 building incinerators anymore, you
24 know. Both of these facilities are
25 30-plus years old. There's a reason

1 for that. And even though it's not
2 being burned in Philly, these are
3 surrounding communities.

4 And the residents of Plymouth
5 stand with the residents of Chester
6 also because we know that Chester has
7 less pollution control than our
8 facility in Plymouth does, and we
9 understand the monster that they're
10 dealing with. So thank you for
11 listening.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Thank you and thank you
14 for your testimony. Thank you for
15 summarizing. Thank you for being
16 succinct and thank you for sharing
17 your story and for supporting the
18 residents of the City of Chester.

19 We will now hear from Michael
20 Ewall. He will be the last witness
21 for this first panel. Then I'll have
22 a few questions for this panel.

23 Mike, you can proceed with
24 your testimony. State your name for
25 the record and then proceed. Three

1 minutes. Okay.

2 MR. EWALL: Oh, gosh. Okay.

3 Thank you, Chair and Committee

4 members. My name is Mike Ewall and

5 I'm the founder of Energy Justice

6 Network and the new project Beyond

7 Burning. I also serve as a certified

8 zero waste consultant to county

9 governments and a few states. The

10 Covanta waste disposal contract was

11 approved and signed by the City in

12 2019 over the objections of 41

13 organizations, giving Covanta

14 one-third of the City's trash to

15 incinerate and the other two-thirds

16 to Waste Management for landfilling.

17 Both contracts were for four years

18 with three one-year renewal options.

19 So we're now in the first of those

20 three one-year renewals. It's my

21 hope that this hearing leads to

22 Council taking action that this is

23 the last renewal so we can end the

24 process of burning our trash this

25 coming July.

1 Since January 2022, just under
2 38 percent of Philly's trash goes to
3 incinerators turning trash into air
4 pollution and toxic gas (inaudible).
5 But the 62 percent goes directly to
6 landfills. Philadelphia has several
7 distinctions. We're surrounded by
8 the nation's largest cluster of trash
9 incinerators. Whichever way the wind
10 blows we breathe someone's trash.
11 The five incinerators including our
12 City are all among the top seven
13 industrial air polluters in the
14 seven-county Philadelphia area.

15 One of these five is the
16 nation's largest, not one of the
17 largest, it's the largest in Chester
18 burning 3500 tons a day. 34 percent
19 of which is from Philadelphia, the
20 largest contributor. That
21 incinerator has always been missing
22 two of the four control systems that
23 most incinerators have, the one that
24 reduces nitrogen oxides that triggers
25 asthma attacks and the one that takes

1 up the most toxic pollutants like
2 dioxins and mercury and (inaudible)
3 ash.

4 While they'll be installing
5 the first of those missing systems in
6 the next few years due to state
7 requirements, it will only reduce
8 their emissions of that one pollutant
9 by 18 percent, not the 70 to 80
10 percent reduction required if they
11 were held to moderate standards.

12 They will still be the largest air
13 polluter in Chester and one of the
14 top two in the seven-county region.

15 Philadelphia has some other
16 distinctions. We're the poorest
17 largest city with one of the worst
18 asthma and cancer rates of all other
19 cities in the nation. Each year
20 we're classified as one of the top 10
21 asthma capitals in the nation.

22 Delaware County is the second largest
23 source of waste burned on Covanta's
24 incinerator in Chester sending almost
25 as much as we do, but they're

1 determined to draw that amount down
2 to zero in the next few years. The
3 (inaudible) to develop a zero waste
4 plan to end incineration and reduce
5 waste substantially.

6 That plan includes a
7 comprehensive life cycle analysis
8 that compares incineration to across
9 nine different health criteria and
10 found that incineration was far worse
11 than landfilling across those
12 criteria including the climate.

13 Now, with this understanding I
14 urge you to follow the desires of 41
15 groups that objected to this contract
16 in the first place and many others
17 here today to say that this needs to
18 end. We urge that City Council
19 introduce and pass the waste
20 contracting for Clean Air Act, which
21 is recommended as the top priority
22 bill by the Air Quality Advisory
23 Committee, on which I serve with you,
24 Councilmember, as Chair of this
25 Committee.

1 This bill will prohibit the
2 City from signing or renewing
3 contracts to burn the City's waste,
4 recyclables or compostables. There's
5 no shortage of (inaudible) waste in
6 Pennsylvania which is the nation's
7 largest import of waste due to
8 permanent landfill capacity. So
9 while the real answer is zero waste,
10 the immediate first step needs to be
11 to stop the most harmful impacts by
12 ending incineration. The time to act
13 is overdue. Thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
15 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Mike, you
16 were at three minutes. Thank you so
17 much. Thank you kindly for your
18 testimony and for all your advocacy
19 and all the recommendations and just
20 your tireless work that you have been
21 doing, not just on the committees and
22 the extension of the Council
23 Environment Committee, but just all
24 the work that you do in the community
25 as well.

1 I have a few questions for
2 this panel. Is Zulene Mayfield still
3 here?

4 MS. MAYFIELD: Yes, I'm here.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Okay. I have a question
7 for you. What are some changes you
8 would like to see take place within
9 Covanta and what steps would you like
10 to see your Councilmembers take to
11 address some of the more overarching
12 concerns?

13 MS. MAYFIELD: Well,
14 absolutely we don't want it in our
15 community. We view it as being the
16 No. 1 killer. You know, I can't
17 think of a better word right now. We
18 are losing people in our community.
19 In the last two months, I've lost two
20 cousins from cancer. 51 years of age
21 and 62 years of age, young people in
22 my opinion. So overall we do not
23 want Covanta. There is no
24 co-existing. We don't give a damn
25 how many donations they give the

1 football teams and basketball teams
2 and poultry bags of food.

3 What they are doing to us is
4 absolutely environmental genocide.
5 They are taking years of our life
6 away from us. So the utopia is they
7 are no longer in our community. We
8 are pushing and we have transformed
9 our government, and we are still
10 transforming it. We've taken out a
11 regime that is no longer going to be
12 in power to make these bad deals. So
13 we have a lot of optimism in our new
14 incoming administration, and we are
15 also going to push them on doing the
16 right things.

17 We've been working with
18 Delaware County Council and Solid
19 Waste Authority, and we have pushed
20 them into making decisions that are
21 more beneficial to us as a community
22 and the county as a whole and the
23 entire region. If we can reduce the
24 pollution, we can reduce some of the
25 health problems that we are

1 experiencing in our community.

2 You know, we don't have one
3 primary care physician in our city,
4 but we have the largest incinerator
5 in the country. We don't have a
6 market. Our pharmacy just closed so
7 now we have one for 33,000 to 37,000
8 people because we know that we were
9 undercounted at the Census. We see a
10 lot of revitalization that could
11 happen on our waterfront. We have
12 3.9 miles of waterfront of which
13 Covanta sits on right next to the
14 Philadelphia Union Stadium, that just
15 created a sportsplex that people
16 don't know is right next door to an
17 incinerator.

18 So we want immediately -- you
19 know, they can put in the pollution
20 control devices. They are choosing
21 not to do it. They said it's not
22 cost-effective for them to do it. Is
23 it not cost-effective because you're
24 in a Black and Brown community
25 because every other community you

1 have an incinerator at they have more
2 pollution-control devices than your
3 largest incinerator.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Well, thank you. Thank
6 you very much again for your
7 testimony and for your advocacy and
8 for some of the points that you have
9 indicated in the response to the
10 question.

11 For, Samantha, really quickly
12 if you could just talk about what you
13 think are the most impactful steps
14 the City should take over the next
15 few years to put us on the right path
16 to our zero waste goal. You know
17 that you all put out a really focused
18 policy paper around reducing waste.
19 So if you can say what you think the
20 most important step that would be
21 that would be helpful.

22 MS. WITTCHEN: Yes. I think
23 we have a number of policy
24 initiatives that we could advance in
25 the City that will help us towards

1 that zero waste. The first is
2 single-use plastics legislation and
3 working on how do we make it so that
4 single-use plastics, particularly for
5 take-out containers, are not allowed
6 in the City if they are not reusable
7 or compostable or recyclable in the
8 facilities that we have available to
9 us here in Philadelphia.

10 We have a couple of other
11 policies around construction debris,
12 which although we know it's not
13 technically allowed in the
14 residential waste stream, we know
15 that it still ends up there. And so,
16 we think there's some opportunities
17 on expanding access to construction,
18 re-recycling using the City's
19 existing sanitation convenience
20 centers to collect those materials
21 and partner with one of the
22 organizations that we have here in
23 Philadelphia, like businesses that
24 actually recycle those construction
25 and demolition materials and then

1 require that construction demolition
2 recycling to happen.

3 I think the third main thing I
4 want to make a point about is I think
5 when the City is thinking through
6 these contracts and who is managing
7 our waste and where we're sending it
8 via for recycling or for ultimate
9 disposal, we need to be thoughtful
10 about how do we take a portion of
11 that and invest in our own businesses
12 here in Philadelphia that have
13 workable, scalable solutions for this
14 waste and these materials that is not
15 our typical giant mega conglomerate
16 corporations that typically deal with
17 our materials.

18 If we took even a small
19 percentage of the money that we send
20 to those places like the Covantas and
21 Waste Managements and diverted them
22 to these local businesses that are
23 ready to scale with municipal
24 investment, we could make a giant
25 dent in where our waste is headed.

1 And so, I think as you're thinking
2 through these contracts and the City
3 is thinking through how does it spend
4 its money and how does it think about
5 how it manages materials, we really
6 need to be rethinking who gets those
7 investment dollars from the City to
8 manage those materials.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Well, thank
11 you for that response. And I love
12 the idea around the sanitation
13 convenience centers. We received a
14 lot of feedback even in some of our
15 environmental groups, the ones that
16 Mike referenced earlier around some
17 creative ways so we can expand the
18 services at the sanitation
19 convenience centers since they're
20 already aptly placed throughout the
21 City of Philadelphia and have real
22 convenience as far as location. And
23 so, I appreciate that testimony.

24 I want to thank this first
25 panel for your testimony, for all of

1 your work that you have done and we
2 look forward to continuing to work
3 with you. This is not the end. This
4 is just the beginning of recognizing
5 that we are too at the end of a term
6 and that we are moving into a new
7 term, and a lot of transition and
8 changes are forthcoming but we know
9 that that can be good. And so, we
10 look forward to continuing to work
11 with you. Thank you so much, Panel
12 1.

13 We will now proceed with Panel
14 No. 2. The second panel consists of
15 our Administration in the City of
16 Philadelphia. And so, the second
17 panel we have the Streets Department,
18 and pardon me, we have Nidhi Krishen,
19 Deputy Director for Climate Solutions
20 for the Office of Sustainability;
21 Kyle Lewis, Department of Streets;
22 and Scott McGrath, Department of
23 Streets.

24 Are you all connected and
25 ready to proceed with your testimony?

1 MR. McGRATH: Yes.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. All
4 right. Nidhi, you may proceed.
5 State your name for the record and
6 proceed with your testimony.

7 MS. KRISHEN: Good afternoon,
8 Chairperson Gilmore Richardson and
9 members of the Committee on the
10 Environment. My name is Nidhi
11 Krishen and I am the Deputy Director
12 for Climate Solutions at the Office
13 of Sustainability. I am here today
14 to testify in support of Resolution
15 No. 230328 authorizing the Committee
16 on the Environment to hold hearings
17 evaluating the environmental justice
18 impacts of the City's waste
19 management practices and potential
20 alternatives to the City's contract,
21 the Covanta Delaware Valley, LP.

22 Environmental justice entails
23 the equitable distribution of
24 environmental benefits and burdens
25 and redress of past harmful

1 environmental policies and practices.
2 The Office of Sustainability supports
3 the review of greenhouse gases and
4 toxic air pollutants from municipal
5 solid waste incinerators located in
6 environmental justice communities and
7 the environmental and health impact
8 of these pollutants on these
9 communities.

10 The Office of Sustainability
11 also supports the comprehensive
12 evaluation of solutions to reduce the
13 pollution burden in these
14 communities. As a city, we have a
15 responsibility to not only address
16 environmental injustices within
17 Philadelphia but also to address
18 where we may be contributing the
19 injustices in our neighboring cities.
20 Thank you, and I'm happy to answer
21 any questions you may have.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
24 kindly for summarizing your
25 testimony.

1 We will now hear from Kyle
2 Lewis and then Scott McGrath from the
3 Department of Streets, and then I'll
4 proceed with any questions we have
5 for this panel. And, colleagues, if
6 you have any questions for this
7 panel, please indicate in the chat so
8 that I may tee you up.

9 Okay. Kyle?

10 MS. LEWIS: Good afternoon. I
11 just wanted to note that my camera is
12 not working.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Understood. Please
15 state your name for the record and
16 proceed with your summarized
17 testimony.

18 MS. LEWIS: Good afternoon
19 again, Chairperson Gilmore Richardson
20 and members of the Committee of the
21 Environment. My name is Kyle Lewis
22 and I'm the Recycling Program
23 Director in the Department of
24 Streets, and I thank you for this
25 opportunity to join you in discussing

1 the challenges and solutions to
2 sustainable waste disposal.

3 The Department of Streets
4 continues to pursue sustainable waste
5 disposal options through maximization
6 of the existing practices and
7 innovation and collaboration of new
8 programs and technologies. In
9 addition to those mentioned or those
10 will be mentioned by my colleague
11 Scott McGrath, the Department of
12 Streets is increasing diversion
13 through recycling, seeking grant
14 funding to increase use of sanitation
15 convenience centers and working to
16 increase viability of waste
17 byproducts.

18 Even with these developments
19 in play, we're open to new
20 opportunities for sustainable waste
21 management for the 600,000 tons of
22 municipal solid waste produced
23 annually. Currently the viable
24 options are waste disposal,
25 waste-to-energy and energy recovery

1 and landfilling. Supporting the more
2 sustainable is multi-prong. Our
3 recycling program is rebounding from
4 the effects of COVID-19 and is on
5 track to approach pre-COVID tonnages,
6 targeted at 85,000 tons compared to
7 90,000 tons in 2019.

8 With consistent direct
9 community engagement, traditional and
10 social media and direct mail, we've
11 increased recycling tonnage and thus
12 the recycling rate, from 8 percent to
13 13 percent from 2020 to 2023, while
14 at the same time decreasing
15 contamination over this period by an
16 average of 8 percent. The city-wide
17 reduction in contamination yielded an
18 annual savings of approximately \$1.5
19 million per year beginning in Fiscal
20 Year '24 for the duration of the
21 contract.

22 The department is open to
23 discussing sustainable solutions,
24 reducing environmental impacts and
25 environmental justice challenges and

1 working with the Committee to
2 minimize these impacts regardless of
3 the disposal technology being used.
4 I'll now turn it over to my colleague
5 Scott McGrath.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Scott, if you're
8 connected, please state your name for
9 the record and proceed with your
10 summarized testimony.

11 MR. McGRATH: Good afternoon,
12 Chairperson Gilmore Richardson and
13 members of the Committee. My name is
14 Scott McGrath, Environmental Planning
15 Director for the Streets Department,
16 and thank you for providing the
17 department with an opportunity to
18 discuss the challenges and
19 alternatives to creating a path
20 toward more sustainable disposal
21 options.

22 As you know, our current
23 contracts in place with Waste
24 Management and Covanta Sustainable
25 Solutions are approximately 70

1 percent of City-collected waste which
2 goes to Waste Management and 30
3 percent or about 180,000 tons goes to
4 Covanta. I will also add that these
5 contracts include with Covanta, we
6 send them 1.5 to 2 million pounds a
7 year of electronic waste which is
8 recycled.

9 Going forward, the current
10 disposal options, although they're
11 not ideal, represent the best
12 available that are to us and when we
13 evaluate these options, we look at
14 transportation impacts and
15 operational impacts on our disposal
16 systems as well as disposal cost. In
17 an effort to provide a more
18 sustainable path toward waste
19 management, we have a pilot provision
20 in that Waste Management contract,
21 which allows us to test the
22 extraction of organics and recovery
23 of the organics to be recycled
24 through that contract. We have not
25 been able to utilize that provision

1 as yet, in part because of the
2 infrastructure that's needed to do
3 this.

4 We've been in discussions with
5 both PGW and the Water Department to
6 develop this infrastructure, and part
7 of these discussions also involve
8 leveraging federal infrastructure
9 funding such as the planned Hydrogen
10 Hub to provide some of the funding to
11 build this infrastructure. So that's
12 more our focus going forward as we
13 try to develop, move on from sort of
14 the current interim disposal options
15 that we have with Covanta and Waste
16 Management and looking toward more
17 sustainable, long-term options that
18 involve extracting the organics for
19 the waste stream.

20 We've been doing extensive
21 work in terms of evaluating the
22 composition of the trash that we
23 collect and the recycling to sort of
24 maximize what we can recover going
25 forward and developing the resources

1 in grant funding, et cetera, to
2 develop the infrastructure to manage
3 these materials in a more sustainable
4 way. So thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you,
7 Scott, and thank you to the entire
8 panel from the Administration.
9 Certainly appreciate all the work
10 that you all do on behalf of the City
11 and the work that we do together.

12 I do have a few questions for
13 this panel. And, colleagues, if you
14 have any questions, please indicate
15 that in the chat. But if you could
16 limit your responses to less than a
17 minute and then please supply any
18 additional information via written
19 response, and we will ensure that
20 that information is shared with the
21 Committee.

22 But in 2019 as one of the
23 previous witnesses from Panel 1
24 stated, the City entered into
25 contracts with Waste Management and

1 Covanta. They were four-year
2 contracts with the option of three
3 one-year renewals. We know that the
4 renewal period should have started
5 this year. So can you please provide
6 any updated contracting documents to
7 this Committee as it relates to both
8 of these contracts?

9 MR. McGRATH: We can forward
10 more information on the actual
11 contract documents to the Committee.
12 That certainly isn't a problem. As
13 you mentioned, we're in the first
14 renewal period and there's two more
15 renewal periods and I think as we
16 probably indicated to you in the
17 past, it will take some time
18 especially as we transition to a new
19 Administration to develop a new RFP,
20 which will include a greater focus on
21 alternative technologies and looking
22 at different ways to manage our
23 waste.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. Well,

1 you walked right into my next
2 question, Scott. Relative to our
3 preparation around these contracts
4 ending around 2026, we know how long
5 it does take for us to plan and we
6 recognize the transition period that
7 we're in, so if you could provide any
8 information on how the department is
9 really doing a holistic sort of
10 review and thought process around
11 addressing our City's overall waste
12 management in this next contracting
13 phase and how you all will really
14 work to prioritize zero waste or
15 using any planning studies that our
16 department already pays for around
17 helping us to address some of the
18 concerns that have been voiced by
19 some of the panelists that we've
20 heard from today.

21 MR. McGRATH: As I said
22 before, we have done some extensive
23 analysis of the composition of the
24 waste that we collect as well as the
25 recycling that we collect and direct

1 to the waste management materials
2 recovery facility. And with our
3 consultant we've been looking at what
4 portions of the waste stream we
5 should be targeting going forward.

6 And as I said before, the
7 biggest piece of that is really the
8 organics fraction. That's why as I
9 said before we're already actively
10 looking at how we can manage that --
11 better manage that portion. But the
12 challenge will be increase --
13 creating the infrastructure around
14 that. And the RFP that we'll be
15 doing for the next round of contracts
16 we'll try to address that issue.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. And
19 for the record for this hearing and
20 for all the witnesses who are able to
21 join us or listening, please note
22 that I have a number of questions for
23 the Streets Department that I have
24 submitted in writing and will await
25 those responses and share them with

1 the Committee upon receipt. But due
2 to time purposes today, we're not
3 able to go through each question that
4 I have, but I did submit several
5 pages of questions that we will await
6 responses from the Streets
7 Department.

8 So I thank you all so very
9 much for your participation this
10 afternoon and we look forward to
11 continuing to work with you during
12 this transition and then over the
13 next several years. I also wanted to
14 notate for the record relative to our
15 sanitation convenience centers
16 because that's something that
17 continues to come up, that we really
18 look forward to working with you all
19 on how we maximize the use of those
20 locations so that we can do more
21 geographically with less. Okay. All
22 right. Thank you very, very much.

23 MR. McGRATH: Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: Okay. Have a great day.

1 We will now proceed with Panel
2 No. 3. Panel No. 3 will be Alyssa
3 Wilds, Senior Manager of Corporate
4 relations at Covanta; Michael Van
5 Brunt, VP of Environmental and
6 Sustainability at Covanta and Kim
7 Bradford, PA State and Environmental
8 Manager for Covanta. Are you all
9 connected and ready to proceed with
10 your testimony?

11 MS. WILDS: I'm ready.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Excellent.
14 So you can state your name for the
15 record. Proceed with your testimony.
16 I'm going to ask for your summarized
17 version of your testimony, and then
18 we will proceed with any questions we
19 have for this panel.

20 Alyssa Wilds.

21 MS. WILDS: Good afternoon
22 everyone. My name is Alyssa Wilds
23 and I am the Director of Corporate
24 and Community Relations at Covanta.
25 My fellow panelist and colleague

1 Kimberly Bradford, PA State
2 Environmental Manager, will follow me
3 to attest to Covanta Chester
4 facility's emissions, technology and
5 reporting. Thank you for this
6 opportunity to speak before you.

7 I would first like to begin by
8 stating that Covanta fully supports
9 the resolution's call to evaluate the
10 environmental impacts of current and
11 alternative practices. We are
12 pleased to see the resolution focus
13 on not only the current facility but
14 also alternatives since downstream
15 processes have impacts that are
16 important to consider. We support
17 the City's transition to zero waste
18 while recognizing waste-to-energy is
19 preferable to landfilling per the
20 waste hierarchy.

21 Waste-to-energy is an
22 internationally recognized means of
23 reducing the life cycle of greenhouse
24 gas emissions relative to
25 landfilling. Waste-to-energy has a

1 lower overall environmental impact
2 for managing waste remaining after
3 recycling. My responsibility at
4 Covanta is to oversee our community
5 outreach efforts across the country,
6 address longstanding environmental
7 justice concerns and ensure residents
8 remain informed and heard.

9 I joined Team Covanta in
10 September 2021 as the community
11 outreach specialist for Del Val,
12 Camden, Union and Essex, our other
13 waste energy facilities in the
14 region. Delaware Valley is the
15 longstanding name for the facility in
16 Chester, Pa. Upon joining the team,
17 I was immediately educated on all
18 things Covanta, including our
19 environmental justice policy. In
20 2011, our environmental justice
21 policy was created in Chester
22 alongside residents, stakeholders and
23 activists.

24 The goal of the policy was to
25 recognize the need to engage all

1 community stakeholders, address
2 concerns, open lines of communication
3 and ultimately become a good neighbor
4 and a valued community partner.
5 Shortly after my start, I realized
6 Covanta's poor prior inconsistency
7 with community engagement caused
8 stakeholder mistrust. Each of our
9 host facilities has intricacies and
10 individual needs and cannot be
11 treated as the same. Corporations
12 have long promised and underdelivered
13 to these communities. However, they
14 collectively agree they were
15 unwilling to partner with Covanta
16 until they saw consistency from us.
17 The work that was started in
18 September 2021 has continued and
19 expanded, regrouping and revising as
20 often as necessary. I've allowed
21 myself to lead -- let the last
22 meeting lead me to the next meeting.
23 I leave every encounter asking whom
24 else in your city should I speak to.
25 That practice led me to a two-day

1 meeting with the Jean-Pierre Brice of
2 CMPradio in Chester and many more.

3 This last past April I was
4 requested and was granted a meeting
5 with Jean-Pierre Brice and a group of
6 local business and community leaders.
7 Many were unhappy to sit with
8 Covanta, yet did so because of their
9 relationship with Jean-Pierre.
10 During the meeting I was asked hard
11 questions about Covanta's
12 inconsistency and environmental
13 impacts. The meeting was intense.
14 Yet I received transparent dialogue
15 and walked away with a list of
16 requests.

17 The top three requests were
18 jobs, support for children's
19 programming and help with the City's
20 blight. We agreed to keep the lines
21 of communication open and are still
22 working collaboratively on those
23 items and other things mentioned. At
24 the time of the meeting at CMP we
25 only had 6 employees from Chester's

1 19013 area code. Today we have 21
2 Delaware Valley Covanta colleagues
3 that live in the city of Chester.

4 We hosted a series of career
5 fairs over the summer. Along with
6 the additional 158 new hires, we
7 created employment pipelines and a
8 few partnerships to address issues
9 encountered during the hiring
10 process. CareerLink is assisting
11 with training and job readiness. We
12 are working with the Chester Upland
13 School District to expand their CTE
14 program to provide necessary training
15 to students who wish to begin their
16 careers immediately after graduation.

17 Also, we are launching an
18 apprenticeship program with Delaware
19 County Community College. The
20 curriculum is currently being
21 established. Covanta Del Val has
22 expanded its support to children's
23 programs to include youth sports,
24 summer internships and opportunities
25 for students to explore education

1 without walls. We will continue to
2 provide post-high school scholarships
3 and supports to programs catering to
4 children's overall well-being,
5 educational improvement empowerment,
6 career exploration, events and
7 helping agencies working to end food
8 insecurity.

9 Del Val has also worked
10 alongside Delaware County initiatives
11 to quell the City's illegal dumping.
12 We continue to uphold our commitment
13 to the City's Adopt-a-Park program
14 through the Parks & Recreation
15 Department. At the request of
16 residents, we have cleaned areas of
17 blight and supplied dumpsters for
18 additional supplies for them to do
19 the same.

20 While we have done far more
21 than listed, I have noted the above
22 because these are the requests that
23 were made in April and again during
24 our June listening tour. We want all
25 of our host communities to trust that

1 Covanta will do what we say. I want
2 them to see that the start-stop
3 efforts of the past have ended. In
4 addition, I answer the questions and
5 concerns posed by the community on
6 our website. Sometimes I bring in
7 senior planning and corporate
8 leadership whenever necessary.

9 Covanta recognizes the
10 importance of the work being done.
11 Not only has the community relations
12 team expanded to ensure the work
13 continues, but our outreach efforts
14 are now a company-wide effort. I am
15 a product of a Covanta community.
16 Overburdened and underserved cities
17 like my hometown has been disregarded
18 forever. I am devoted to this work
19 to guaran --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: We lost you for a
22 minute, Ms. Wilds, but I'll ask that
23 you please summarize your testimony.
24 Can you hear me?

25 (No response.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Okay. We lost

3 Ms. Wilds.

4 MS. WILDS: (Inaudible).

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Okay. Ms. Wilds?

7 MS. WILDS: (Inaudible).

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Yeah, we are unable to
10 hear you so we are going to proceed
11 with Michael Van Brunt. Hello?

12 MS. WILDS: (Inaudible).

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: I am unable to hear,
15 Ms. Wilds.

16 MS. WILDS: I am here if you
17 can hear me(inaudible) --

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: May you please say that
20 again.

21 MS. WILDS: Can you hear me?

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Now, I can hear you.

24 Maybe you might want to --

25 MS. WILDS: (Inaudible)

1 camera.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Yeah, you might want to
4 turn off your camera so that can help
5 with the Internet connection
6 potentially. Ms. Wilds?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Yeah, we lost --

10 MS. WILDS: I can't hear you,
11 but you seem to be able to hear me.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: I can hear you. If you
14 can just summarize your test --

15 MS. WILDS: (Inaudible) for
16 the --

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: Yes. If you could just
19 please summarize your testimony and
20 then we'll move on to the other two
21 witnesses that we have --

22 MS. WILDS: I am a product of
23 a Covanta community. Overburdened
24 and overserved cities like my
25 hometown have been disregarded

1 forever. I am devoted to this work
2 to continue to make good on Covanta's
3 promises, speak the languages of the
4 community, offer information at
5 multiple levels of understanding and
6 is available to answer questions and
7 listen to concerns. We are open,
8 available (inaudible) --

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Ms. Wilds, I'm sorry,
11 but we are unable to hear you. You
12 did go out again.

13 I'm going to ask Kimberly
14 Bradford to proceed with your
15 testimony, with your summarized
16 testimony. We only have 30 minutes
17 left for this hearing.

18 MS. BRADFORD: Yes, ma'am. I
19 have summarized my testimony for
20 today. And the complete testimony
21 has been submitted for your review
22 and consideration. So good
23 afternoon, Council. My name is Kim
24 Bradford and I am the Pennsylvania
25 Environmental Manager for Covanta.

1 I've worked at Covanta for over seven
2 years. In my current role, I work
3 directly with environmental
4 specialists at the PA waste energy
5 facilities, providing guidance and
6 support regarding environmental
7 compliance matters.

8 Before my promotion in 2020, I
9 was the environmental specialist at
10 the Covanta Delaware Valley facility
11 for three years working directly
12 hand-in-hand with facility personnel
13 to ensure that the facility
14 maintained compliance with all
15 environmental requirements. Lastly,
16 I am a proud resident of the city of
17 Philadelphia for over six years and I
18 reside in the Wynnewood neighborhood.
19 Along with my colleague Alyssa Wilds,
20 I would like to reiterate that
21 Covanta is in full support of the
22 resolution called to evaluate
23 environmental impacts of both current
24 and alternative practices.

25 Just for the sake of time, I

1 just want to respond to some of the
2 concerns that were brought up in the
3 testimonies today. So in response to
4 our community request for greater
5 access to our realtime emissions
6 monitoring data, Continuous Emissions
7 Monitoring, CEMS, as part of our
8 environmental justice commitment to
9 transparency in our communities in
10 which we operate, Covanta posts our
11 CEMS data for our waste-to-energy
12 facilities on our website.

13 The Delaware Valley facility
14 operates over 74 CEMS points and
15 achieves a 99 percent availability
16 across all CEMS. The emission data
17 for the Delaware Valley facility is
18 available online for your review and
19 consideration or for anyone's review
20 or consideration. This is the same
21 data that is submitted to the
22 Commonwealth's Department of
23 Environmental Protection, PADEP,
24 every calendar quarter.

25 In 2022, we met our standards

1 over 99 percent of the time and we
2 continually aim for protection -- for
3 perfection, but we are proud of our
4 stellar record. In response to some
5 of the concerns regarding our air
6 pollution control devices that were
7 brought up today, consistent with our
8 environmental justice policy Covanta
9 seeks to engage in two-way
10 communication with our communities of
11 which we operate. As a result of
12 this two-way dialogue, in 2021 we
13 embarked on the extensive voluntary
14 testing program to reduce our
15 nitrogen oxide emissions.

16 Our test program involved an
17 installation of Selective
18 Non-Catalytic Reduction (SNCR)
19 technology, an established and
20 effective emission control technology
21 that utilizes ammonia injection to
22 reduce the formation of NOx. With
23 the installation of the SNCR
24 technology, the facility will meet
25 the Pennsylvania Department of

1 Environmental Protection's Recent
2 Available Control Technology, RACT
3 Rule III, which is intended to reduce
4 the ozone information in the region.
5 After we attain the PADEP
6 environmental permit approvals,
7 installation will be completed by the
8 end of 2024.

9 Once the SNCR system is fully
10 installed, we are planning to conduct
11 a trial program to add carbon
12 injection to our facility to further
13 reduce mercury and dioxin emissions.
14 Although the Delaware Valley facility
15 performs exceptionally well in terms
16 of mercury and dioxin emissions,
17 coming in more than 90 percent below
18 the EPA standards, we aim to do even
19 better and are exploring if activated
20 carbon injection may able to reduce
21 our emissions at the facility.

22 Finally, we have heard the
23 nearby community's concerns regarding
24 noise generated by the facility.
25 Noise may be created when the

1 facility has to vent steam. To help
2 mitigate this, in 2024 Covanta will
3 replace our steam vent mufflers.
4 This project will significantly
5 reduce noise impacts beyond the
6 facility's fence line.

7 In conclusion, Covanta
8 Delaware Valley acknowledges that our
9 facility is located inside of a
10 community that has long had to bear a
11 disproportionate share of
12 environmental burdens from industry,
13 transportation, large and small
14 stationary sources and neighboring
15 communities. Due to the location,
16 industrial history and prior
17 discriminatory land use decisions,
18 the city of Chester (inaudible). We
19 are sensitive to these burdens and
20 continually strive to do better.

21 We continue to welcome
22 constructive two-way communication
23 with the community stakeholders. We
24 utilize this feedback to improve our
25 outreach activities and our

1 environmental performance. This is
2 not just a commitment for today. It
3 is a commitment to the future. Thank
4 you for scheduling today's hearing
5 and for giving us a chance to present
6 to the community.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Thank you
9 very much for your testimony.

10 I want to just do a soundcheck
11 for Ms. Alyssa Wilds. Are you
12 connected?

13 MS. WILDS: I think I am. Can
14 you hear me?

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Now we can hear you.
17 Okay. I just wanted to make sure we
18 could hear you. We lost you for a
19 moment. And what I was stating was
20 that if you turned off your screen, I
21 was hoping maybe that would help with
22 the Internet connection so that we
23 may hear you. But Ms. Bradford did
24 provide a summary of the testimony as
25 well as respond to some of the things

1 that were notated thus far in the
2 hearing.

3 I do have several questions
4 for this panel. I will tell you that
5 I have several pages of questions for
6 this panel as I had for the Streets
7 Department and the Office of
8 Sustainability. I am going to submit
9 the questions, the bulk of them in
10 writing for written response, and ask
11 that Covanta please respond to all of
12 the questions that we will offer in
13 writing so that we may share that
14 information with the whole Committee
15 on the Environment.

16 I do want to ask just a couple
17 on the record as we are very limited
18 on time, and I do want to be
19 respectful of all of those who have
20 signed up, over 15 people to provide
21 for public comment. Okay.

22 Ms. Bradford, thank you very
23 much for your testimony. As of
24 yesterday, the EPA's website, it
25 lists Covanta Delaware Valley as

1 significant or Category 1
2 noncompliance under the Clean Water
3 Act and as high priority violation
4 under the Clean Air Act. Can you
5 just explain the reason for this
6 status and how is the facility
7 significantly under EPA limits for
8 emissions but out of compliance with
9 EPA, because that just does not make
10 sense to me?

11 MS. BRADFORD: Yes. So I
12 believe the Clean Air Water Act
13 violation, that is -- that's
14 incorrect as noted in the database
15 because the facility is in compliance
16 with its water standards. As it
17 pertains to the air quality, that is
18 associated with the February
19 loss-of-power event at the facility,
20 and we are currently working with the
21 Pennsylvania Department of
22 Environmental Protection to work
23 through that consent assessment.

24 I believe the database has it
25 listed or also noncompliance for

1 third and fourth quarter, which
2 that's not true because we're getting
3 ready to submit our reports for third
4 and we're currently in fourth
5 quarter, but we will be working with
6 our consent assessment associated
7 with the loss of power --

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Pardon me, pardon me,
10 Ms. Bradford, and I apologize.

11 Mr. Zerbo, I appreciate you
12 linking that information. However,
13 the chat feature per state law can
14 only be used by members of
15 Philadelphia City Council. And I do
16 want to ensure that we are in
17 compliance with the law. And so,
18 please know that it's not a slight to
19 the information being shared because
20 you know that I too -- just so you
21 see, I have a copy of the report and
22 I have the information with me here,
23 but we are getting this information
24 on the record for Council purposes.
25 And so, I just want to notate again

1 please only Councilmembers utilize
2 the chat feature at this time.

3 Ms. Bradford, please proceed
4 in summarizing your response and then
5 we'll move forward.

6 MS. BRADFORD: Yeah. So like
7 I said, we are working through that
8 consent assessment regarding the
9 January loss-of-power event at the
10 facility and then that will wrap that
11 issue up on the EPA database.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Okay. So again, what
14 I'll ask you all to do, in providing
15 detailed responses to this Committee
16 I am going to read through some of
17 the questions I have for the record.
18 I will submit the questions in
19 writing to your team. I am
20 requesting written responses back to
21 this body so that we may share them,
22 okay, and then we will do a further
23 analysis relative to our disagreement
24 regarding you all being listed on the
25 website because it is there. Okay.

1 I have the information in front of
2 me.

3 And so, I just want to make
4 sure that we are all working with the
5 same set of information so that we
6 can have official information in
7 writing for this body so that it
8 informs how we are moving forward in
9 this process, not just this year but
10 in the upcoming term which will span
11 2024 to technically the first Sunday
12 in 2028. Okay.

13 MS. BRADFORD: Yes, ma'am.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: All right. I have an
16 additional question relative to
17 Covanta. On the first page of your
18 written testimony, you show that
19 Covanta's emissions, that they are
20 below the EPA standards, but you all
21 did not provide any time frames for
22 where that data comes from and what
23 was used to make the chart. And so,
24 if you could just let me know over
25 what period that particular data

1 comes from.

2 MS. BRADFORD: I believe that
3 was for over a three-year period.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Okay. Which three
6 years?

7 MS. BRADFORD: Let's see here.
8 That would have been 2019 to 2022.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. And
11 then I do want to state for the
12 record that I have had a conversation
13 and had the ability to have a meeting
14 with Covanta, and I do want to thank
15 them for that opportunity because at
16 the onset I think we all know sort of
17 where I am on this issue because of
18 the ties that I do have to the
19 Chester community and how I know this
20 has really impacted people from a
21 health perspective and from an
22 overall community perspective.

23 I do not want to negate the
24 fact that I recognize that you all
25 are seeking to do work in the

1 community. However, I would
2 respectfully request that that work
3 continues and that you all are
4 willing to speak with any and all
5 stakeholders, particularly those who
6 are residents of the city of Chester
7 relative to their concerns in their
8 community.

9 We recognize where we are from
10 a city perspective right now. I was
11 not here to vote on that contract
12 relate to being a member. But what I
13 will be here for the next term God
14 willing, and what I request is that
15 you all in the interim continue to
16 have face-to-face conversations with
17 actual residents of the city of
18 Chester so that we can prioritize
19 their concerns.

20 And I recognize that we're
21 really far apart on this issue
22 relative to where they are and where
23 Covanta is, because we heard some of
24 the testimony earlier relative to
25 this being non-negotiable around

1 Covanta even being there. But for
2 the time being right now until we
3 have to address the contract renewal
4 after this contract is over, I am
5 respectfully requesting that you all
6 meet with the residents of the city
7 of Chester, particularly those who
8 are in the (inaudible), those who are
9 here today so that you can continue
10 to address some of their concerns
11 because some of these things can be
12 worked out.

13 I heard one thing that I
14 thought was easy low-hanging fruit
15 around all the other facilities that
16 Covanta runs, having the special
17 testing apparatus and the city of
18 Chester not having the apparatus. So
19 anywhere where you can find easy wins
20 in the interim, I'm respectfully
21 requesting that you do just that.

22 In the sake of time to respect
23 all of our witnesses who have signed
24 up, I will submit the balance of my
25 questions in writing for your written

1 response. I will allow closing
2 remarks from Ms. Wilds because you
3 did have testimony and I do want to
4 give you a minute to have closing
5 remarks.

6 MS. WILDS: Thank you. I
7 pretty much had finished what I had
8 to say, my testimony. I just want to
9 say that we are, in fact, here for
10 the long haul. The start-stop of
11 Covanta has ended. The
12 inconsistencies have ended. We have
13 been steadily doing this work since
14 September 2021 and it will not go
15 away. So any opportunity we have to
16 engage the community, we are willing
17 to have the tough conversations. We
18 are (inaudible) to come into our
19 facility to do a tour. Whatever it
20 is that we must do, we are willing to
21 do.

22 So please you can reach out to
23 us via the website. You can call me.
24 You can call the facility. And
25 please we would love to have a

1 sit-down and find a way where we can
2 collaborate and get some of these
3 concerns that you have worked out. I
4 would love to do that. I am open and
5 ready to do that, my team and I.
6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Okay. Excellent. Thank
9 you very much for your testimony. We
10 will await the written responses from
11 the Covanta team. We are requesting
12 that that information be sent within
13 the next seven days so that we have
14 the opportunity to review it prior to
15 the end of our Council session this
16 term. Okay. Thank you very, very
17 much.

18 MS. WILDS: Thank you. I
19 appreciate you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Thank you so
22 much.

23 We will now move forward with
24 public comment. Eliza, if you could
25 just read the names of those who are

1 connected and available for public
2 comment. I will read the names
3 quickly of those who have provided
4 written testimony that will be placed
5 in this Committee for the record:
6 Harrison Mace, Emilia Crotty, Julie
7 Simone or Julie Simon, Jim
8 McLaughlin, Emily Davis, Andrew
9 Burgess, James Bannerman and Ann
10 Dixon. We thank you all so much for
11 the submission of your written
12 testimony. We are including that in
13 the record for City Council's
14 Committee on the Environment.

15 Eliza, we can now move forward
16 with those who are here to provide
17 public comment. For the sake of
18 time, I am respectfully requesting
19 and asking that you summarize your
20 testimony, submit the balance of your
21 testimony for the record so that we
22 may get through the 15 or so people
23 that we have within the next 16
24 minutes. Thank you so very much for
25 your kindness.

1 THE CLERK: First on the list
2 is Hope Primas.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Hope, are you connected
5 and ready to proceed with your public
6 comment?

7 MS. PRIMAS: Hello?

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please state your
10 name for the record and proceed with
11 your testimony and turn the volume
12 down on your T.V.

13 MS. PRIMAS: My name is Hope
14 Primas.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Okay. Please summarize
17 your public comment.

18 MS. PRIMAS: Okay. Again, my
19 name is Hope Primas. Is this my two
20 to three minutes?

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Yes, ma'am. And we
23 actually have about 15 minutes left
24 now, so I'm just respectfully
25 requesting if you can keep it to a

1 minute and then submit the balance of
2 your testimony for the record.

3 MS. PRIMAS: Okay. Thank you.
4 Again, my name is Hope Primas. I'm a
5 citizen of West Germantown and I've
6 lived in Philly for about 20 years
7 now. And I was born and raised in
8 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania which is
9 home of the infamous incinerator
10 which was supposed to earn the City
11 \$1 billion, but instead it threw the
12 city into bankruptcy and an
13 environmental crisis.

14 I'm also a severe asthma
15 patient, had to be intubated several
16 times. And the issue here seems to
17 come from the same blueprint for
18 conducting business as the appalling
19 Harrisburg incinerator, and that's
20 why I'm here to testify. To quickly
21 give some background, in the '70s a
22 predominantly minority community in
23 Harrisburg has been housing the
24 municipal incinerator that serves the
25 entire largely White county around

1 the city. And for the three decades
2 it was running, the incinerator was
3 the highest emitting dioxin in the
4 country according to the EPA.

5 And as you know, dioxins are
6 very poisonous. They cause cancer.
7 In fact, my mother died of cancer in
8 an area that not only had the
9 incinerator but also a three-mile
10 (inaudible) incident. And on top of
11 that, although the data is old I
12 think it's relevant. In September
13 2000, a study published by the North
14 American Commission on Environmental
15 Cooperation found that women in the
16 Arctic in Nunavut, Canada were found
17 to have high levels of dioxins in
18 breast milk.

19 And the study tracked the
20 origin of these dioxins and to make a
21 long story short, they found that the
22 greatest amount of dioxins was coming
23 out of the Harrisburg incinerator.
24 So it's my understanding that Covanta
25 now operates the Harrisburg

1 incinerator and the one in Chester.
2 I also understand that the
3 incinerator in Chester is the largest
4 in the nation, the number one
5 polluter in the region and operates
6 with the fewest pollution controls.

7 So keep in mind that in 2021
8 there were close to five times more
9 Black and African American residents
10 than any other race or ethnicity,
11 which is an unforgivable example of
12 racial disparity and how it mirrors
13 the placement of Harrisburg dirty
14 incinerator. So, in fact, it was
15 determined that burning trash in
16 Chester is a violation of Title VI of
17 the Civil Rights Act for the City to
18 conform this through its contract.
19 So --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
21 RICHARDSON: Please summarize your
22 testimony.

23 MS. PRIMAS: In conclusion,
24 although Pennsylvania recently
25 strengthened their pollution

1 standards for incinerators, more
2 needs to be done to reduce or
3 eliminate the pollution and the
4 devastating impact on the public.
5 And I hereby request that the
6 legislation that was sponsored by
7 Councilwoman Richardson, which is the
8 Waste Contracting for Clean Air Act
9 be formalized, which will make it
10 illegal for the City to continue to
11 sign and renew contracts to burn the
12 City's waste, recyclables and
13 compostables. So thank you for
14 allowing me to voice my concern and
15 considering my request.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
17 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
18 kindly for being with us today and
19 for all the information you shared
20 and for the request. We do hear you
21 and we're taking copious notes and
22 appreciate your concerns.

23 Eliza, will you please call
24 the next public commenter, and just
25 as a reminder we have very limited

1 time and I'm respectfully requesting
2 that everyone please keep their
3 public comment to one minute.

4 THE CLERK: Anya Rose.

5 MS. ROSE: Yes. Hi.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please turn down
8 your television so we can hear you
9 without feedback.

10 MS. ROSE: I don't have a
11 television.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Okay.

14 MS. ROSE: It's just the
15 computer.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: The hearing, yes.

18 MS. ROSE: Okay. Sure.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: You can proceed.

21 MS. ROSE: Okay.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Anya, you may proceed
24 with your testimony.

25 MS. ROSE: Oh, I should start

1 now. Okay.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Yes.

4 MS. ROSE: Hi. My name's Anya
5 Rose and I was an elementary teacher
6 for 10 years. Many of my students,
7 especially students of color, had
8 asthma. And I know that the PES Oil
9 Refinery was the region's number one
10 air polluter for a while. But now
11 that that's gone, it's Covanta,
12 Covanta's incinerator. Philadelphia
13 is consistently ranked as the top 10
14 asthma capital by the Asthma Allergy
15 Foundation of America. And
16 incinerating this garbage and all of
17 the things that would be happening at
18 the place would just be contributing
19 to our pollution problems.

20 So as a teacher, I had to see
21 students with asthma constantly and
22 it's a sad thing. They can't
23 participate the same way as other
24 kids. They have to stay in at
25 recess. They have to carry inhalers.

1 This needs to be a choice. We can
2 choose not to incinerate our garbage.
3 We can choose a different way, so it
4 just seems like a really backwards
5 choice to be making right now,
6 especially in a time when we have
7 other things to worry about like
8 wildfire smoke and other things that
9 are contributing to air pollution.
10 So my request is that we pass the
11 Waste Contracting for Clean Air Act
12 by the Air Quality Recycling
13 Committee.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
15 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you,
16 Anya, for your public comment and
17 thank you for the recommendation.

18 Eliza, please call the next
19 public commenter. Please summarize
20 your testimony.

21 THE CLERK: Linnea Bond.

22 MS. ROSE: Am I suppose to
23 hang up now?

24 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: Yes.

25 MS. ROSE: Okay.

1 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: I
2 believe that Linnea was not available
3 so we should be moving to Jonathan.

4 THE CLERK: Oh, sorry about
5 that. Jonathan Leibovic.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
7 RICHARDSON: Jonathan, are you
8 connected and ready to proceed with
9 your testimony?

10 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: I
11 believe it's ringing for him now.
12 Sorry.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
14 RICHARDSON: Okay.

15 MR. LEIBOVIC: Hello.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
17 RICHARDSON: Jonathan, thank you so
18 much for your patience. Please state
19 your name for the record and proceed
20 with your public comment, and please
21 summarize your public comment as we
22 are very limited on time.

23 MR. LEIBOVIC: Gotcha. It's
24 okay. Mine is short. Hello. My
25 name is Jonathan Leibovic. I live at

1 1224 South 21st Street and zip code
2 19134. Thank you very much for
3 holding this hearing and I applaud
4 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson for
5 introducing this bill. Our City's
6 zero waste goal as you all know gains
7 to fully eliminate the use of
8 landfills and (inaudible). The goal
9 is reasonable because they've already
10 made so much progress towards zero
11 waste.

12 We have of course our plastic
13 bag ban, which has already kept over
14 200 million plastic bags off our
15 street and out of our storm drains.
16 We have composting facilities and
17 dozens of recreation centers across
18 the City employing dozens of people
19 and creating thousands of pounds of
20 fertilizer and Parks & Rec recently
21 published an agriculture plan
22 containing a detailed blueprint to
23 expanding our (inaudible) across the
24 City, which is on Page 147 of the
25 Urban Agriculture Plan if you want to

1 see that. Zero waste policies work
2 and they are popular, and we know
3 what we need to do to recycle and the
4 solutions are win-win.

5 We also have a long way to go
6 and our contract with Covanta is, as
7 I'm sure you've all been hearing, one
8 of our worst offenders, specifically
9 the guaranteed annual quantity clause
10 is a direct obstacle to our City's
11 stated zero waste goal. The
12 guaranteed annual quantity of waste
13 going to Covanta for incineration and
14 going to Chester's air and Chester
15 residents' lungs should be zero, and
16 that is my comment. Thank you very
17 much.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Thank you so much,
20 Jonathan. Zero waste, zero waste,
21 zero waste. Thank you so much for
22 your public comment and also for your
23 patience.

24 Eliza, please call the next
25 public commenter.

1 THE CLERK: Traci Confer.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: Traci, are you connected
4 and ready to proceed with your public
5 comment?

6 MS. CONFER: Hello. This is
7 Traci.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Yes. Thank you. State
10 your name for the record and proceed
11 with your public comment. Please
12 summarize your testimony.

13 MS. CONFER: Traci Confer,
14 resident of Philadelphia. As far as
15 underjustice or, sorry, environmental
16 justice as concerns go, incinerators
17 tend to be in our region in populated
18 areas and landfills tend to be in
19 less populated areas. So just on the
20 basis of environmental justice
21 concerns, sending trash to landfills
22 is better than sending them to
23 incinerators.

24 The most important thing to
25 keep out of landfills is organics.

1 So I would say to the priorities is
2 ending incineration and getting
3 organics as a first priority out of
4 the stream. Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
7 kindly for your testimony and for
8 your feedback. We appreciate you
9 being here this afternoon.

10 Eliza, please call the next
11 public commenter and please summarize
12 your testimony.

13 THE CLERK: Ogbonna Hagins.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Ogbonna, are you
16 connected and ready to proceed?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Ogbonna, are you
20 connected and ready to proceed?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: His
23 number is ringing. I think I spoke
24 to him earlier so I think he should
25 be answering.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Okay. Ogbonna -- oh,
3 okay.

4 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: I guess
5 he's not available.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Okay. Sorry about that.
8 Are we ready for the next public
9 commenter?

10 THE CLERK: Lynn Robinson.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Okay. Lynn Robinson,
13 are you connected and ready to
14 proceed with your public comment?

15 MS. ROBINSON: Hello?

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: Yes. Lynn Robinson, are
18 you connected and ready to proceed
19 with your public comment? Please
20 summarize your public comment. State
21 your name for the record.

22 MS. ROBINSON: Lynn Robinson.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Okay. You can proceed.

25 MS. ROBINSON: Okay. Thank

1 you for taking my comment on
2 Resolution No. 230328. As a
3 resident, I strongly urge City
4 Council to pass the Waste Contracting
5 for Clean Air Act. This legislation
6 would end the practice of burning
7 trash and recyclables collected by
8 the City and collected by companies
9 who contract with the City.

10 Parents tell their children
11 not to talk to a stranger offering
12 candy, and I'm asking City Council to
13 stop accepting the sweet-looking
14 business deal from your old friends
15 at Covanta. Each time you make this
16 deal, you incinerate the health of
17 people who never harmed you. It's
18 past the time for Philly to enact
19 zero waste practices without any more
20 pilot project procrastination and put
21 all of our diminishing amounts of
22 waste in landfills which is less
23 harmful than incineration.

24 Philly should collect table
25 scraps across the City and compost

1 them. We should set up a
2 multi-stream recycling system because
3 we know single stream doesn't work.
4 And you should let the public
5 volunteer to advise you on how to
6 reduce single-use plastics. The
7 incinerator industry like Covanta
8 marketed the idea that burning trash
9 disappears waste in the form of green
10 energy, but the process is dirtier
11 than burning coal and the waste
12 doesn't disappear. It's goes into
13 the lungs in Chester and when the air
14 travels north to our lungs in Philly.

15 It lands as toxic soot on
16 surfaces inside and outside of homes
17 including land where food grows.
18 Incinerator ash gets dumped in
19 landfills and quickly reaches toxins
20 through any imperfect liners. Also,
21 ash gets added to road pavements
22 where it leaches toxins. We as
23 Philly have to take responsibility
24 for the destination of our waste.

25 Last year the UN finally

1 declared that a healthy environment
2 is a human right. By poisoning the
3 air in Chester (inaudible) with
4 Article I, Section 27 of the
5 Pennsylvania Constitution says that
6 we all have the right to breathe
7 clean air. Our trash is creating
8 illnesses and (inaudible) pursuit of
9 happiness. In Chester, 38 percent of
10 residents have asthma and
11 approximately 1 in 5 Chester babies
12 die in infancy, which is twice the
13 Philadelphia rate --

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Lynn, Lynn --

16 MS. ROBINSON: Yes?

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: Please summarize your
19 public comment. I apologize. We are
20 very limited on time and we have
21 about 10 more people.

22 MS. ROBINSON: Okay. One
23 sentence.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: Okay.

1 MS. ROBINSON: I don't think
2 that City Council would approve a
3 City contract to slowly poison family
4 dogs like Golden Retrievers, but does
5 the City of Brotherly Love consider
6 Chester residents inanimate objects
7 or maybe rats. Please not another
8 contract with Covanta. Pass the
9 Waste Contracting for Clean Air Act.
10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
12 RICHARDSON: Thank you. And thank
13 you, Lynn. I just want to also thank
14 you for your participation in
15 Council's Civilian Advisory
16 Committees and all the work that
17 you've done with the Civilian
18 Advisory Committees as well.

19 Eliza, please call the next
20 witness for public comment. Please
21 summarize your testimony.

22 THE CLERK: Marta Guttenberg.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Marta, are you connected
25 and ready to proceed with your public

1 comment?

2 MS. GUTTENBERG: Hello?

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Yes. Good morning,
5 Marta.

6 MS. GUTTENBERG: Hi.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: How are you? Please
9 state your name for the record and
10 proceed with your public comment.
11 Please summarize as we have a number
12 of additional public commenters.

13 MS. GUTTENBERG: Thank you.
14 My name is Marta Guttenberg. I'm
15 going to try to be quick. I believe
16 that what we have learned about
17 Covanta and its practices today rise
18 to the level of criminal. They can
19 field their data. They lie to
20 residents. They harm the
21 environment. When they are called
22 out by agencies, they pay a fine
23 which is chump change to them.

24 I think that City Council is
25 correct in promoting legislation that

1 will allow them to cut ties with this
2 kind of criminal enterprise and I
3 endorse the measure under
4 consideration. Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you so
7 much. We certainly appreciate your
8 feedback and testimony.

9 And for the record, I just
10 want to be very clear that the
11 contract that everyone is referring
12 to was not approved this term. It
13 was approved last term. We are
14 concluding the 2020 to 2023 term and
15 the new term begins in 2024. So I
16 just wanted to ensure that I stated
17 that for the record.

18 Eliza, please call the next
19 public commenter. Are you connected
20 and ready to proceed with your
21 testimony?

22 THE CLERK: Lisa Hastings.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Lisa. Lisa?

25 MS. HASTINGS: Hello?

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Yes. Hello, Lisa.

3 Please state your name for the record

4 and proceed with your public comment.

5 Please summarize your testimony as we

6 have several additional witnesses.

7 MS. HASTINGS: Hello. My name

8 is Lisa Hastings.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Please turn your

11 computer down. We're receiving

12 feedback.

13 MS. HASTINGS: Yeah. Sorry

14 about that.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Excellent. Thank you.

17 MS. HASTINGS: The City should

18 not renew its contract to pay Covanta

19 to turn trash into breathable poison.

20 It should adopt the Waste Contracting

21 for Clean Air Act. Until

22 Philadelphia reduces its waste stream

23 landfilling is a better choice than

24 Covanta. And in addition to mercury

25 and other toxins, Covanta's emits

1 many ozone precursors. Given that
2 our regional ozone nonattainment area
3 has recently been downgraded, the
4 City should reduce its contributions
5 to ozone by not feeding the
6 incinerators.

7 The direct cost of Covanta
8 (inaudible) --

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Lisa?

11 MS. HASTINGS: Yes.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

13 RICHARDSON: Okay. I'm sorry. We
14 lost you for a moment. Please
15 proceed.

16 MS. HASTINGS: Okay. The
17 direct cost between Covanta and
18 landfill are possible to switching
19 low cost money. However, additional
20 and indirect costs make landfilling a
21 better economic and policy choice for
22 the City for waste reduction. Most
23 pollutants are not easily eliminated,
24 but there are good alternatives to
25 burning trash. Landfill now. Then

1 reduce, reuse and recycle better, but
2 don't burn. Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: No, thank you. Thank
5 you so much for your public comment.

6 Eliza, please proceed with the
7 next public commenter.

8 THE CLERK: Mitch Chanin.

9 MR. CHANIN: Hello?

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: Yes. Mitch, are you
12 connected and ready to proceed with
13 your public comment? And also,
14 please turn your computers down so
15 that we do not receive feedback.

16 MR. CHANIN: Got it. Yes.
17 Thank you very much. Yeah. Thank
18 you for the opportunity to testify.
19 My name is Mitch Chanin. I'm
20 speaking on behalf of POWER
21 Interface, which I think as folks
22 know is a multi-racial, multi-faith
23 organization that works for racial
24 and economic justice on the livable
25 planet here in Philadelphia and in

1 other parts of Pa. I'll be really,
2 really quick. We are in solidarity
3 with folk in Chester who are fighting
4 to end the practice of incinerator in
5 their community and support the call
6 to end incineration of trash produced
7 here in Philadelphia in order to
8 protect public health.

9 Just to add one thing that
10 maybe hasn't been spoken yet in these
11 testimonies is that I think Philly
12 has been on what I think is a very,
13 very slow journey towards ending
14 incineration. We used to have
15 multiple incinerators here in the
16 City of Philadelphia to burn trash.
17 Several were closed in the 1970s.
18 Two more were closed in the late '80s
19 including a huge one on Spring Garden
20 Street right on the Delaware River.
21 And then in 1988, City Council made
22 the decision to reject the proposal
23 from Mayor Goode to build a very
24 large we'll call it trash-to-steam
25 plant, another incinerator at the

1 Navy Yard because of concerns about
2 public health.

3 And so, we've made a serious I
4 think very good decision not to allow
5 incineration in our City, but we've
6 allowed our trash to be sent to be
7 burned in another city polluting
8 other lungs of Chester residents and
9 folks in Plymouth Meeting and
10 elsewhere. And so, now that we've
11 stopped incinerating in Philly
12 decades ago it's time to finally stop
13 the practice of sending our trash to
14 be burned in other communities. And,
15 yeah, I'll leave it there. Thank you
16 very much.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: No, thank you very much,
19 Mitch, for your public comment but
20 also for your participation on the
21 committees. Truly appreciate your
22 feedback and your work.

23 Eliza, please call the next
24 public commenter.

25 THE CLERK: Mary Ann Duffy.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Mary Ann Duffy, are you
3 connected and ready to proceed with
4 your public comment?

5 MS. DUFFY: Hello?

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Yes. Thank you. Please
8 turn down your computer. And for all
9 the forthcoming public commenters,
10 please turn your computers down so
11 that we do not receive feedback.

12 MS. DUFFY: Okay.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Okay. Please state your
15 name for the record and proceed with
16 your public comment.

17 MS. DUFFY: Hello. My name is
18 Mary Ann Duffy. I'm an architect, a
19 local member of AIA here with the
20 Committee on Environment and a South
21 Philadelphia resident. Here's my
22 summary: There's absolutely nothing
23 good that comes from incinerating
24 trash. I want to highlight the
25 outrageous greenwashing about energy

1 by Covanta because incineration is
2 even worse than coal.

3 To make the same amount of
4 energy at the coal power -- power
5 plant trash incinerator, in 2018
6 really 65 percent more carbon
7 dioxide, as much carbon monoxide,
8 three times as much nitrogen oxide,
9 five times as much mercury, nearly
10 six times as much lead, 27 times as
11 much hydrochloric acid. The
12 comprehensive Delaware County Life
13 Cycle Assessment Study conducted last
14 year stated incineration in Covanta,
15 then landfilling, incineration as
16 it's far more harmful to human health
17 and the environment than just simply
18 sending its trash directly to
19 landfill.

20 Covanta's greenwashing plan
21 filled roads with incinerator ash
22 will also only further pollute our
23 groundwater. Pennsylvania has
24 landfills across the state making it
25 the largest importer of trash from

1 other states. So on the short-term,
2 as many others have suggested, the
3 lesser of two evils to end
4 incineration immediately and use our
5 landfills when we must as a first
6 step to solving our waste pollution
7 issue.

8 So I'm asking Councilmembers
9 to step up and show your love for our
10 City and region, the people, the
11 environment and your own health and
12 the health of your children by
13 signing the Waste Contracting for
14 Clean Air Act to make it illegal for
15 the City to continue to sign or renew
16 contracts that burn our City's waste.
17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
20 very much for your public comment and
21 for being with us today.

22 We only have a few more
23 witnesses, colleagues, and I
24 appreciate you all being here and
25 thank you so much for everything that

1 you do to help our Council. I see my
2 colleague Jim Harrity there.

3 And so, for the next public
4 commenters please turn your computers
5 and/or televisions down so that we do
6 not have additional feedback. Please
7 summarize your public comment.

8 Eliza, please call the next
9 witness.

10 THE CLERK: Shari Hersh.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Shari, are you connected
13 and ready to proceed with your public
14 comment?

15 MS. HERSH: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: Shari?

18 MS. HERSH: Yes.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please state your
21 name for the record and proceed with
22 your public comment.

23 MS. HERSH: My name is Shari
24 Hersh. I'm from Trash Academy.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please proceed
2 with your summarized public comment.

3 MS. HERSH: Okay. So we
4 support the Resolution 630328(sic),
5 and we are in solidarity with CRCQL,
6 Chester Residents Concerned for
7 Quality Living, and we are totally
8 against incineration and we want to
9 point out something I'm not sure that
10 came up today. We support material
11 diversion. We want to see a
12 reduction of trash much more
13 effective and really it's at 8
14 percent right now. We were at 6
15 percent in 2007. In 2015, we were up
16 to 21 percent.

17 I just want to compare it to
18 LA, who's at a 76 percent of material
19 diversion. And so, we wholly support
20 the new zero waste and litter
21 department in the City and
22 professional and experienced
23 leadership around material diversion,
24 because Philadelphia could be one of
25 the greenest most amazing cities in

1 the country. And incineration points
2 to our failure to live up to our
3 potential and the resistance of our
4 perhaps maybe the lack of expertise
5 in our Streets Department to take on
6 material diversion because it is a
7 different expertise than
8 transportation and managing streets,
9 et cetera.

10 So we strongly, strongly
11 support getting rid of incineration
12 and we need to reduce landfilling and
13 we need to reduce the dumping and
14 waste on our streets by diverting
15 material and repurposing, recycling,
16 all that stuff.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: All right. Well, thank
19 you kindly for your testimony and for
20 joining us this afternoon. We do
21 appreciate the feedback that you have
22 noted, and thank you for that
23 information you shared relative to
24 Philadelphia in comparison to
25 California.

1 Eliza, please call the next
2 public commenter.

3 THE CLERK: Vanessa Levy.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Vanessa, are you
6 connected and ready to proceed with
7 your public comment?

8 MR. LEVY: Hello?

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please state your
11 name for the record and proceed with
12 your summarized public comment.

13 MR. LEVY: Okay. Hi. I'm
14 Vanessa Levy. I'm a resident of
15 Philadelphia. I'd like to share some
16 points against renewing Philly's
17 contract with Covanta. First, ending
18 Philly's needs of incineration is
19 doable since the start of last year.
20 Just under 38 percent of Philly trash
21 went to incinerators. That 38
22 percent could be reduced in just a
23 few years if the City was serious
24 about zero waste strategies. And
25 even if we didn't, there's adequate

1 landfill space to accept that waste
2 immediately.

3 Pa has a bunch of landfill
4 space, 43 landfills providing more
5 than twice the disposal capacity that
6 our state needs. We're not stuck
7 without alternatives to incineration.
8 Landfills are the lesser evil
9 compared to burning trash first, then
10 landfilling toxic ash. Second,
11 incineration is expensive and will
12 only get more costly over time. EPA
13 is required to update their
14 regulations for incinerators for
15 every five years and hasn't updated
16 them for 16 years. A federal court
17 has forced EPA to finally update
18 these regulations by the end of this
19 year, which will likely be finalized
20 late next year.

21 In March, EPA presented that
22 their new regulations could cost the
23 industry between \$52 million and \$1.6
24 billion. This could mean over \$60
25 million in upgrades just at Covanta's

1 incinerator in Chester. Would Philly
2 as a customer providing a third of
3 their trash be on the hook for \$20
4 million in passthrough costs? After
5 all, that incinerator is missing two
6 of the four major pollution control
7 systems used at incinerators.

8 While other new regulations
9 are already forcing them to finally
10 install the missing controls for
11 nitrogen oxides that trigger asthma
12 attacks, they will not be coming up
13 to modern standards which are much
14 more protected and incredibly costly.
15 Even after installing these controls
16 they've been missing for over three
17 decades of operation, they will still
18 have no controls to reduce emissions
19 of the most toxic chemicals released,
20 dioxins and mercury.

21 I expect that EPA's updated
22 regulations won't allow them to keep
23 operating without such controls and
24 any cost increase will push their
25 prices higher than what we currently

1 pay for landfill. I'd like to
2 conclude by requesting that the
3 Council pass the Waste Contracting
4 for Clean Air Act. Thank you for
5 holding space for these points to be
6 heard.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: No, thank you and thank
9 you for being with us, and thank you
10 for the information that you shared
11 and for the recommendation for not
12 only this Committee but for Council.

13 Eliza, do we have anyone else
14 here to provide for public comment?

15 THE CLERK: One more, Leslie
16 Wilson.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: Okay. And I'll ask the
19 Tech Team also if you can just please
20 try to see if we could connect
21 Ogbonna Hagins.

22 MS. WILSON: Hello?

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Yes. Please state your
25 name for the record and proceed with

1 your summarized public comment.

2 MS. WILSON: My name is Leslie

3 Wilson and -- I'm sorry. Hold on.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Ms. Leslie. Leslie?

6 MS. WILSON: Yes, I'm here.

7 I'm sorry.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Okay. Please proceed
10 with your summarized public comment.

11 MS. WILSON: I'm a proud
12 resident or former resident of
13 Chester, Pa and a breast cancer
14 survivor. Today I'm here to discuss
15 the Covanta care initiative.
16 (inaudible) Alyssa Wilds and Brittany
17 Addison. As the CEO of CPMradio,
18 I've had numerous discussions this
19 March about how Covanta can possibly
20 impact Chester. While many discussed
21 the environmental aspects, I'm here
22 to highlight the commendable actions
23 they taken.

24 They've helped my organization
25 CMPradio Foundation. They have done

1 autism walks. They have donated to
2 City Teams, the Wesley House which is
3 some of our homeless shelters.
4 They've helped with Chester High's
5 senior trips and career fair and
6 multiple other organizations. That's
7 all I have to say.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Well, thank you very
10 much for your public comment.

11 MS. WILSON: Thank you.
12 You're welcome.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

15 Eliza, do we have any further
16 witnesses here to provide public
17 comment?

18 THE CLERK: My understanding
19 is no one else is available.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Okay. And we weren't
22 able to connect with Ogbonna Hagans?

23 THE CLERK: The Tech Team said
24 that they did try to contact him
25 again, but it doesn't like anyone

1 else was able to be reached at this
2 time.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Okay. Thank you for the
5 clarification. I just want to notate
6 for the record, that multiple
7 attempts were made to ensure that
8 everyone could participate in the
9 hearing this afternoon.

10 Again, are there any further
11 witnesses to provide testimony for
12 this hearing?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Is there anyone else
16 here to testify on the resolution
17 whose name has not yet been called?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Hearing none, are there
21 any other questions or comments from
22 members of this Committee?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: Hearing none, I want to

1 thank you all, all the panelists and
2 the witnesses for your participation
3 today. We do value your opinion. I
4 do see the hand raised of my
5 colleague Councilmember Jim Harrity.

6 Councilmember Harrity, you are
7 recognized for comment.

8 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I just
9 wanted to say thank you to you,
10 Chair, for doing this. And also,
11 thank you to everybody who has
12 submitted testimony and gave
13 testimony. It's very enlightening
14 and we are glad that so many people
15 decided to attend and that shows that
16 this is a very important issue, so
17 thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
19 RICHARDSON: Thank you, and thank you
20 for being here, Councilmember
21 Harrity, and just for your commitment
22 and all of your hard work in
23 Philadelphia City Council.

24 And I want to say before we
25 conclude for the record that I too

1 very much appreciate the work of all
2 of the panelists who are here today
3 no matter on what side of
4 organization you're representing, I
5 appreciate you coming. We know that
6 this is a huge environmental
7 injustice issue that we must solve
8 and look at.

9 And as we know, this is not
10 something that this particular
11 Council in this term had the
12 opportunity to decide upon, but we
13 know that in the next term we will be
14 faced with this issue and we want to
15 ensure that we have adequate
16 information going into the next term
17 to adequately address this issue,
18 fully understand where we are as a
19 city, how our operations are
20 impacting our neighbors, not only in
21 the city of Chester but regionally,
22 and really figure out how we reduce
23 waste in our stream and downstream as
24 well.

25 This is an exceedingly

1 important issue to the health, the
2 wellness, cleanliness of another
3 regional partner in the city of
4 Chester. This is something that we
5 must continue to look for alternative
6 ways around waste management and we
7 intend to do just that as we move
8 forward.

9 So again, I want to thank you
10 all for your willingness to be a part
11 of this conversation. This is just
12 the beginning. We will await the
13 additional information in writing to
14 this Committee and it will be
15 disseminated to the members of the
16 Committee so that we have full
17 information as we move forward.

18 So again, I thank you all for
19 your participation today. We value
20 each of your opinions. This will
21 conclude the business before this
22 Committee today, the Committee on the
23 Environment. Thank you all so very
24 much for your attention. Have a
25 great day.

1 (Hearing concluded at
2 3:19 p.m.)

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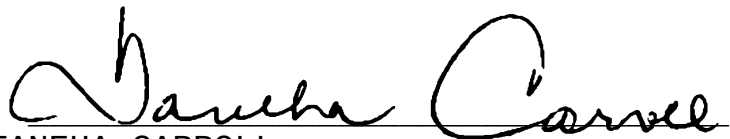
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Taneha Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Taneha" and the last name "Carroll" clearly distinguishable.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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