

1 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

2

3 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
4 FY26 BUDGET

5

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7 City Hall, Room 400
8 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

9 Tuesday, May 13, 2025
10 10:00 a.m.

11

12 PRESENT:

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
14 COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
15 COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
16 COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
17 COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
18 COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE-RICHARDSON
19 COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
20 COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
21 COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
22 COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
23 COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
24 COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

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HELEN LOUGHEAD, CLERK

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Good morning, everyone.

4 Good morning, everyone. Good
5 morning, everyone. So good morning,
6 everyone.

7 I'm going to do it this
8 way. I'm usually generous, right?
9 I'm being fair and we're going to
10 have plenty opportunity to talk
11 about the people's budget and have
12 ample opportunity to talk about all
13 the things that you want to hear.
14 But we will have some order, we will
15 have some decorum. We will give you
16 an opportunity to talk about your
17 perspective and your recommendations
18 for our budget.

19 Let's have a good time
20 today. I do not feel like ejecting
21 people out of the people's house, so
22 let's have some good time and do
23 democracy in action.

24 Welcome everyone to City

1 Council this morning. This is the
2 public hearing and a public
3 Committee of the Whole regarding
4 Bills No. 250195, 250196, 250197,
5 250198, 250199, 250200, 250201,
6 250202, 250210, 250211, 250212, and
7 Resolution No. 250214.

8 Ms. Loughead, will you
9 please call the role to take
10 attendance?

11 THE CLERK: Councilmember
12 Squilla.

13 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
14 Present.

15 THE CLERK: Councilmember
16 Gauthier.

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
18 Present.

19 THE CLERK: Councilmember
20 Jones, Councilmember Young,
21 Councilmember Driscoll,
22 Councilmember Lozada.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
24 Present.

1 THE CLERK: Councilmember
2 Bass.
3 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
4 Present.
5 THE CLERK: Councilmember
6 Phillips.
7 Councilmember PHILLIPS:
8 Present.
9 THE CLERK: Councilmember
10 O'Neill, Councilmember Gilmore-
11 Richardson.
12 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
13 RICHARDSON: Present.
14 THE CLERK: Councilmember
15 Thomas.
16 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
17 Present.
18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 Harrity.
20 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
21 Present.
22 THE CLERK: Councilmember
23 Ahmad, Councilmember Landau,
24 Councilmember Brooks, Councilmember

1 O'Rourke.

2 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

3 Present.

4 THE CLERK: Council

5 President Johnson.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Present. A quorum of the

8 committee is present and this

9 hearing is now called to order.

10 Ms. Loughead, will you

11 please read the title of the

12 resolutions.

13 THE CLERK: Bill No.

14 250195, an ordinance amending

15 Chapter 19-1500 of the Philadelphia

16 Code entitled Wage and Net Profits

17 Tax by revising certain tax rates,

18 under certain terms and conditions.

19 Bill No. 250196, an

20 ordinance adopting the operating

21 budget for fiscal year 2026.

22 Bill No. 250197, an

23 ordinance to adopt a fiscal 2026

24 capital budget.

1 Bill No. 250198, an
2 ordinance to adopt a capital program
3 for the six fiscal years 2026
4 through 2031 inclusive.

5 Bill No. 250199, an
6 ordinance amending Chapter 19-2600
7 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
8 Business Income and Receipts taxes
9 to revise tax rates and end certain
10 exclusions from the tax on receipts,
11 all under certain terms and
12 conditions.

13 Bill No. 250200, an
14 ordinance amending Chapter 19-1000
15 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
16 Traffic Code to revise the fee for
17 the use of parking meters all under
18 certain terms and conditions.

19 Bill No. 250201, an
20 ordinance amending chapter 19-1800
21 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
22 School Tax Authorization to provide
23 for an increase in the tax of the
24 Board of Education of the School

1 District of Philadelphia is
2 authorized to impose on real estate,
3 and amending Chapter 19-1300
4 entitled Real Estate Taxes to
5 establish an equivalent reduction in
6 the tax rate for the City Real
7 Estate Tax, all under certain terms
8 and conditions.

9 Bill No. 250202, an
10 ordinance amending Section 19-1806
11 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
12 Authorization of Realty Use and
13 Occupancy Tax to eliminate certain
14 exemptions, all under certain terms
15 and conditions.

16 Bill No. 250210, an
17 ordinance amending Section 10-1001
18 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
19 Fees of Commissioner Records to
20 increase the portion of fees for the
21 recording of deeds and mortgages and
22 related documents be used for
23 housing trust fund purposes under
24 certain terms and conditions.

1 Bill No. 250211, an
2 ordinance amending Chapter 19-1400
3 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
4 Realty Transfer Tax by revising the
5 rate of a tax under certain terms
6 and conditions.

7 Bill No. 250212, an
8 ordinance to amend Chapter 19-4400
9 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
10 Development Impact Tax to end in
11 position of the tax, under certain
12 terms and conditions.

13 Resolution No. 250214,
14 resolution providing for the
15 approval by the council of the City
16 of Philadelphia of a revised five-
17 year financial plan for the city of
18 Philadelphia covering fiscal years
19 2026 through 2030 and incorporating
20 revisions with respect to fiscal
21 year 2025, which is to be submitted
22 by the Mayor to the Pennsylvania
23 Intergovernmental Cooperation
24 Authority pursuant to an

1 Intergovernmental Cooperation

2 Agreement by and between the city
3 and the authority.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Today we will -- today
6 we'll continue a public hearing of
7 the Committee of the Whole to
8 consider the bills read by the clerk
9 that constitute proposed operating
10 and capital spending measures for
11 year 2026, a capital program and a
12 forward-looking capital plan for
13 fiscal year 2026 through fiscal year
14 2031.

15 We will now begin taking
16 testimony from the public on the
17 city's proposed FY26 budget and
18 six-year capital program for FY26 to
19 FY31.

20 Before proceeding, how
21 about I will lay a few ground rules
22 on how we'll proceed with the public
23 testimony this afternoon. We are
24 here today to hear from you about

1 the city's proposed FY26 budget for
2 the city of Philadelphia. To ensure
3 that there is an opportunity for all
4 of you to be heard, certain ground
5 rules have been established as
6 follows. Your testimony should be
7 about the bills listed on the
8 calendar.

9 Once your name is called,
10 you will then have up to two minutes
11 to speak. In order to be fair, all
12 those wishing to speak, I intend to
13 hold faithfully to that two-minute
14 limit.

15 Once you are asked to begin
16 your testimony, a timer will be
17 started. When there are 30 seconds
18 remaining to your time, you will be
19 reminded of this. Once your
20 allotted time has passed, you'll be
21 asked to conclude your remarks. We
22 will be with you all day today. So,
23 we have a morning session and
24 afternoon session. We look forward

1 to having a very, very robust
2 discussion as we consider the
3 proposed budget before us.

4 And so, I'm going to ask
5 Ms. Loughhead to please call the
6 first panel.

7 THE CLERK: Benjamin Wong.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

9 The Chair recognizes Councilmember
10 Curtis Jones.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JONES:

12 Reported present for the record.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 Thank you very much, Council --
15 Councilmember Curtis Jones is
16 present. Thank you, sir.

17 THE CLERK: We'll have
18 Benjamin Wong, Minh Nguyen, Nu
19 Duong, and then Judy Keegan can all
20 come up to the podium.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

22 The Chair also recognizes the
23 presence of Councilmember Jeffrey J.
24 Young.

1 MR. WONG: My name is
2 Benjamin Wong. Good morning,
3 Councilmembers. My name is Benjamin
4 Wong, and I serve as the president
5 of Greater Philadelphia chapter of
6 AREAA, which is Asian Real Estate
7 Association of America. I'm a
8 realtor and a proud advocate for
9 small businesses throughout our
10 city.

11 But beyond my role --
12 current role, I come from a small
13 business family, and I know
14 firsthand what it means to struggle
15 just to stay afloat. My parents
16 owned a food distribution business
17 in Northeast Philadelphia.

18 The business ran almost 22
19 hours a day, and both of my parents
20 worked over 12 hours daily. It was
21 hard, physical, and nonstop work.
22 There were times we had to rush to
23 the bank just to make sure checks we
24 wrote wouldn't bounce.

1 Between paying employees,
2 covering the rising cost of goods
3 and keeping the trucks on the road,
4 we barely got by some weeks. That
5 experience shaped my understanding
6 of what it really means to operate a
7 small business, and how every single
8 dollar matters.

9 Today small businesses in
10 Philadelphia are under even more
11 pressure, inflation, staffing
12 shortages and rising operating costs
13 are already stretching them thin.
14 And on top of that, they face one of
15 the highest local tax burdens in the
16 region. The wage tax and the
17 business income and receipts tax
18 make it harder for these businesses
19 to reinvest, grow, and simply
20 survive.

21 Now, with the proposed
22 removal of the 100,000 BIRT
23 exemption, things are about to even
24 get harder. That exemption meant

1 that businesses could keep some
2 breathing room while keeping --
3 while getting off the ground or
4 staying stable. Without it, they'll
5 be taxed before they've even paid
6 themselves or their employees.

7 These are -- these aren't
8 large corporations, these are family
9 run shops, community anchors, our
10 neighbors -- and our neighbors.
11 They're the backbone of America and
12 certainly the backbone of
13 Philadelphia. We want to stay here.
14 We want to hire, reinvest and grow,
15 but we need a tax environment that
16 supports that, not one that makes it
17 harder.

18 So today, I respectfully
19 urge you to support modest
20 meaningful reductions to the tax and
21 BIRT taxes. These changes won't
22 just support businesses, they
23 support neighborhoods, families, and
24 job creation across the city. Thank

1 you for your time and I -- and your
2 continued service. I'm proud to be
3 part of the city and look forward to
4 being a resource as you work towards
5 more of a supportive economic
6 environment for all of us. Thank
7 you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

9 Thank you very much for your
10 testimony.

11 MS. DUONG: Hi, City
12 Council. My name is Nu Duong, and I
13 am Vice-Chair Policy from AREAA
14 also. I have been a realtor for
15 four year and I am also a real
16 estate investor.

17 I run a small company which
18 I do fix and flip. I bought the old
19 house, fix it, and sell it all I
20 refinanced and ran out. I'm honored
21 to be here today to testify and
22 support for further review of the
23 wage tax and Business Income and
24 Receives Tax. For the -- because my

1 equity is limited, I must seeking
2 for the financial leverage from the
3 bank lender. I must try my best to
4 balance the cash flow to ensure that
5 I can repay the loan I have in doing
6 the business.

7 The tax right now for my
8 business is quite high. I must pay
9 4.2 percent for transfer tax in
10 Philadelphia for each transaction,
11 buy and sell. And after that, if I
12 sell the house under a year, I will
13 be charged 30 percent of the capital
14 gain. After all kind of the
15 transaction tax from the debt
16 project, I must pay the federal tax,
17 Pennsylvania tax, and after that I
18 must pay the city tax, too.

19 When I filed the tax in
20 early of this year, the tax I pay
21 for city is almost at the same with
22 the Pennsylvania tax. And after all
23 of the tax, my profit is not much.

24 I want to -- right now the

1 cost for the supply and the labor is
2 really high. I want -- if I compare
3 to another area, the transfer tax is
4 only two percent for each
5 transaction. And in the house in
6 the other areas, the insurance and
7 the cost for other thing is cheaper.
8 But to be honest, I want to be here.
9 I work in real estate for a long
10 time and I'm sick to hear all the
11 people say that our city is
12 outdated, the houses look old. I
13 want to do something that for the --
14 for us to grow because of the
15 Philadelphia.

16 But with the tax increase
17 in the future, I -- this is really
18 hard for us to maintain this type of
19 the business. I want to be here and
20 I need the support from the city to
21 grow up and make this city better.
22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

24 Thank you.

1 MR. NGUYEN: Hello
2 everyone. My name is Minh Nguyen, a
3 resident of the 2nd District in
4 Philadelphia under City Councilman
5 Kenyatta Johnson. And I'm here
6 today representing the Asian Real
7 Estate Association of America and
8 Philadelphia in partnership with the
9 Asian Chamber of Commerce to offer
10 public testimony on the city budget.
11 On the quick side note, today is a
12 glorious day because my baby sister
13 Tren is in labor as we speak and
14 she's ready to give birth to my
15 first niece.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Congratulations.

18 MR. WEN: I'm going to be
19 an uncle, you all.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Another resident of the 2nd
22 Councilmatic District.

23 MR. NGUYEN: Pregnancy and
24 the birthing process is an absolute

1 miracle in the circle of life and
2 happy belated Mother's Day. If it
3 were not for women and mothers, the
4 world would not be in existence.
5 So, to all of the moms wives and
6 sisters --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Yeah.

9 MR. NGUYEN: -- we thank
10 you and we love you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Yeah.

13 MR. NGUYEN: And to my baby
14 sister, Trinh Chupmongi Mgai, happy
15 Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and
16 Pacific Islander Heritage month to
17 everyone. I hope you celebrate this
18 month and eat some really good
19 Vietnamese or Asian American food.
20 I'm the Secretary and Policy Chair
21 of the local chapter of the Asian
22 Real Estate Association of America.
23 We represent 45 chapters,
24 19,000 members, 51 ethnicities, 26

1 languages in North America, and I'm
2 here with my colleagues Nu and our
3 President, Benjamin Wong, who spoke
4 on the BIRT's exemption and
5 equitable tax reform to positivity
6 impact Asian American small
7 businesses throughout Philadelphia.

8 We are in partnership with
9 Dr. Khine Arthur, CEO and President
10 of the Asian American Chamber of
11 Commerce, which represents 13,000
12 Asian American businesses in the
13 city of Philadelphia. The highest
14 number of businesses by any minority
15 community in Philadelphia. Thank
16 you to Asian American small
17 businesses for all of your hard work
18 and resilience over these last
19 decades in building our community.

20 At AREAA, we believe that
21 housing is a human right and we
22 envision the world free of housing
23 discrimination and free of
24 homelessness. Thank you to the

1 Mayor Administration for your work
2 in constructing the budget proposals
3 and home \$2 billion housing action
4 plan synopsis.

5 We are testifying to
6 support, maintaining and reducing
7 the -- and increasing that \$100,000
8 exemption in the wage tax and
9 business income receipts tax, which
10 will allow businesses to invest in
11 their business, expand operational
12 capacity, and capital expenditures,
13 hire more staff and pay effective
14 wages, increase productivity and
15 grow the economic output, empower
16 their communities and make
17 Philadelphia a more competitive
18 business hub, attracting businesses
19 from all around the region, country
20 and world.

21 Relating to the Mayor's \$2
22 billion housing action plan to build
23 and preserve 30,000 housing units
24 and issuance of \$800 million to

1 municipal bonds, we have some
2 questions and concerns.

3 Real quick and we'll submit
4 this testimony to the Mayor and to
5 City Council, but we have concerns
6 and questions regarding economic and
7 environmental impacts, quality of
8 life, affordable housing strategies,
9 gentrification, displacement due to
10 artificial inflation of the
11 assessment of property taxes,
12 underwriting of the midst of a
13 bonds, the repayment schedule, the
14 increase of transfer tax by 0.5 to
15 one percent, projected to procure
16 just enough to cover the debt
17 service over five years.

18 And also, the financial
19 analysis of the plan. The OPA gave
20 us volatile reassessments and
21 unpredictable algorithm and all of
22 the other inefficiencies that we
23 must correct before we take on such
24 a huge development project in the

1 city of Philadelphia.

2 We thank you for your
3 support of housing. Housing is a
4 human right. Let's do this
5 carefully and surgically and
6 strategically. Thank you so much
7 and happy Asian American, Native
8 Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander
9 Heritage Month, everyone.

10 THE CLERK: Next, we have
11 Judy Keegan, Mark Edwards, Alexander
12 Roederer, and Emily Hasham.

13 MS. KEEGAN: Good morning,
14 Council President Johnson and City
15 Councilmembers. My name is Judy
16 Keegan, and for the past 12 years
17 I've lived in the Tacony section of
18 Philadelphia. Thank you very much
19 for this opportunity to speak in
20 support of an increased FY 2026
21 budget for Mural Arts Philadelphia.
22 And special thanks to Christina
23 Kohlmeyer for her assistance in
24 scheduling me this early this

1 morning.

2 In 1985, I went to work for
3 the City of Philadelphia's office of
4 Special Projects where I served as
5 the producer of Philadelphia's, the
6 Book and the Cook Restaurant
7 Festival. The groundbreaking work
8 of Jane Golden and her staff was
9 already well underway with the anti-
10 graffiti network and Mural Arts
11 Philadelphia.

12 I can still remember
13 walking down the 1200 block of
14 Locust Street and seeing the mural
15 Philadelphia muses for the first
16 time. It was breathtaking and I was
17 moved to tears.

18 The swell of pride that I
19 felt has been experienced many
20 thousands of times over and over by
21 Philadelphians Citywide, who see
22 their own neighborhoods history and
23 cultures celebrated by local
24 artists.

1 My own family has been the
2 beneficiary of Mural Arts, art
3 education program for the past three
4 years. I have had custody of my
5 grandson Von for nearly eight years
6 following the death of his mother
7 and the removal from his home to
8 enter foster care. And one of the
9 first things that we did was buy him
10 art supplies to ease his transition
11 and we gave him a variety of those
12 art supplies. Although he's
13 challenged by autism in areas of
14 communication and social skills, he
15 found a way to illustrate his view
16 of the world through art.

17 We learned about the Mural
18 Arts Entrepreneurs program and
19 enrolled him in his first experience
20 of Hands-on Arts instruction with
21 the goal of developing marketable
22 arts project. That's not a
23 contradiction in terms. He learned
24 techniques and invaluable skills of

1 collaborations through social
2 interaction with his peer and fellow
3 artists.

4 He advanced in programs
5 where his autism was just an aspect
6 of who he was as an individual
7 artist. In the summer of 2024, Von
8 had his first chance to take a paid
9 internship at the Tacony Art Center
10 Lab. This experience has further
11 transformed him into a confident
12 young man with a clear point of view
13 with his art. He knows that he has
14 a place in the world and a valuable
15 contribution to make. And for proof
16 of that, if you go to the Friends of
17 Mural Arts Instagram page, you'll
18 see Von speak for himself.

19 This experience has further
20 transformed him. He has seen his
21 work up on city billboards and the
22 designs on the Mama Tee Community
23 Fridge Project to combat food
24 insecurity. And in the creation of

1 directional signage for
2 Philadelphia's own Highland Park.

3 This fall, armed with a
4 Mural Arts letter of recommendation,
5 he's applied to Temple University's
6 leadership and career studies
7 programs where he will attend
8 classes with the aid of peer mentors
9 who provide a variety of autism
10 supports.

11 I'm here today to ask that
12 City Council increase the Mural Arts
13 FY 2026 budget of 3.7 million with
14 the addition of 1.5 million for a
15 total of 5.2 million or more, as
16 might be considered as
17 Councilmembers work continuously on
18 behalf of their constituents.

19 Mural Arts impact in public
20 safety, anti-poverty efforts, mental
21 and behavioral health, and so much
22 more offers a streamlined way to
23 deliver critical constituent support
24 in a creative environment. Mural

1 Arts more than murals, please fully
2 fund Mural Arts for FY 2026 and
3 beyond. Thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

5 Thank you, ma'am. Please begin.

6 MR. EDWARDS: Good morning.

7 My name is Mark Edwards; I'm the
8 president and CEO of The Food Trust.
9 I want to thank the Committee of the
10 Whole and Council President for
11 allowing this testimony. I want to
12 also thank Council President Johnson
13 for launching the Food and Nutrition
14 Security task force where I'm
15 honored to serve. It's encouraging
16 to see our city focus on building a
17 healthier community for all
18 Philadelphians.

19 Today, I want to highlight
20 one clear action the city can take
21 in the 2025/2026 budget investing in
22 Food Bucks nutrition incentives. At
23 The Food Trust, we believe that what
24 lies between hunger and health is

1 nutrition security. Yet in
2 Philadelphia, the poorest big city
3 in America, too many residents are
4 forced to choose between eating
5 healthy and eating enough. Food
6 Bucks helped change that. Launched
7 in 2010, this -- with city support,
8 the program provides extra dollars
9 for fruits and vegetables and
10 low-income -- for low-income
11 families.

12 It started at farmer's
13 markets, and now operates in places
14 like reading terminal market, corner
15 stores, supermarkets like ShopRite,
16 and even health centers. It's a
17 triple win. Better diets, stronger
18 local economies, and increased
19 income for farmers. But despite its
20 success, the program relies heavily
21 on federal and philanthropic
22 funding. Without local investment,
23 it will not continue. That's why
24 we're asking the city's leaders to

1 include a minimum of \$500,000 in the
2 upcoming budget to sustain Food
3 Bucks. Other cities have made this
4 investment and we urge Philadelphia
5 to do the same.

6 We're also grateful for
7 Councilmember Nina Ahmad for
8 elevating Food Bucks as a priority
9 and to all of you for your continued
10 support for programs that help
11 Philadelphians eat well, stay
12 healthy, and thrive. Thank you very
13 much.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 Thank you. And, Mark,
16 thank you for not just being on the
17 task force, but being a co-chair of
18 the task force. And I know there
19 was a recent announcement about some
20 devastating cuts to snap, which is
21 going to impact people particularly
22 from impoverished neighborhoods.
23 And so just thank you for your
24 leadership.

1 MR. EDWARDS: Great, thank
2 you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
4 Thank you.

5 MR. EDWARDS: And if I may
6 -- if I may just take a bit of
7 privilege, I followed the prior
8 testimony about the Anti-Graffiti
9 Network in the Mural Arts program
10 where I had the honor of serving as
11 its deputy executive director for 10
12 years under the late Tim Spencer.
13 So I just wanted to acknowledge that
14 and give Tim his just due. Thank
15 you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Yes, thank you, sir.

18 THE CLERK: State your name
19 for the record.

20 MS. HASHEM: Hello. Thank
21 you for your attention. My name is
22 Emily Hashem, and I'm a medical
23 student at Jefferson. Just a couple
24 blocks away from here. When I read

1 about the fiscal budget proposed for
2 2026 for the study of Philadelphia,
3 I saw that a certain program that I
4 care about was conspicuously
5 missing. Specifically, there has
6 been some back and forth by Mayor
7 Parker about whether SEPTA Zero Fare
8 will remain funded. As you can
9 probably tell from the name, this is
10 a program that provides free
11 transportation via SEPTA for
12 low-income Philadelphians. Millions
13 of trips have been made possible
14 because of this program in the past
15 year-and-a-half. These trips allow
16 people to live, work, study,
17 worship, and move freely within the
18 city regardless of income.

19 As a medical student, I
20 work in multiple low-cost clinics in
21 Philadelphia, and have come to know
22 and love the people we serve. We
23 can offer many things to them for
24 free or at low cost, from doctor's

1 visits to medications, to food,
2 housing, you name it.

3 The options are far more
4 limited for transportation. And in
5 some of the clinics that I work at,
6 SEPTA Zero Fare is the only resource
7 we can offer patients to be able to
8 travel to appointments. I can tell
9 you personally that I've seen about
10 a thousand people like be enrolled
11 in this program. I'm probably not
12 the first person to tell you that
13 this is important.

14 In fact, due to backlash
15 faced for slashing the program,
16 Mayor Parker walked back her
17 decision to defund it. Now,
18 Councilman O'Rourke has proposed
19 legislation called the Philadelphia
20 Transit Access Fund that will
21 solidify SEPTA Zero Fare as a
22 permanent way in which the City of
23 Philadelphia can help its
24 constituents.

1 We've all complained about
2 a late bus, or a detour, but we all
3 know that SEPTA is the safety net of
4 our city. The needs of the poorest
5 Philadelphians reflect our own needs
6 to move to access our city free from
7 the burden of cost. I'm here to
8 express my strong support for the
9 continuation of SEPTA Zero Fare
10 funding in the proposed city budget,
11 and for your support in advocating
12 for the Philadelphia Track Transit
13 Access Fund.

14 SEPTA is a necessary and
15 shared resource, and I can't think
16 of many things that the city budget
17 could be better spent on than
18 meeting the basic needs of
19 constituents. Fund SEPTA now, fund
20 SEPTA forever, and fund it for those
21 who need it most. Thank you for
22 your time.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

24 Thank you.

1 THE CLERK: Next, we have
2 Khine Zaw, Marjorie Goldberg,
3 Alexander Roederer and Stan Horwitz.

4 MS. ZAW: Good morning,
5 everyone.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 Good morning.

8 MS. ZAW: Good morning,
9 Council President, honorable members
10 of the City Council. Many of you
11 know me as the president and CEO of
12 Asian American Chamber of Commerce
13 of Greater Philadelphia representing
14 over 13,000 Asian-owned businesses.
15 But I am here today as a taxpayer,
16 and as a mother of a young child who
17 will be a taxpayer.

18 I take Lincoln Drive and
19 Kelly Drive to get to my work.
20 Every day I look at that greenery on
21 my side and feel that pride in my
22 heart, as an immigrant who moved to
23 this country over 10 years ago, why
24 Philadelphia is my home. And I

1 worry if my children will call

2 Philadelphia as their home.

3 Today, I spoke with several
4 very concerned small business owners
5 who are making less than \$100,000
6 per year. The BIRT Exemption sunset
7 will hit them hard, will question
8 the fathers and the mothers who are
9 already burdened by heavy taxes.

10 My job as the president of
11 the Asian American Chamber requires
12 me to educate myself, because
13 ignorance is not bliss when it comes
14 to taxation and city budget. I know
15 how you all care about the city and
16 you are all very brave, that's why
17 you ran for a public office. And I
18 can tell you that all my members are
19 in your districts.

20 Every time there is an
21 election, we do our civic duty. We
22 go out, we vote, we elect you all as
23 our representatives to represent our
24 best interests.

1 Right now, I have a small
2 business owner in Chinatown who
3 can't afford to pay astronomical
4 tariffs on spices. If you want to
5 eat authentic Indian food, Sichuan
6 food, you can't grow those spices
7 here.

8 So if you are considering
9 anything important in this budget
10 cycle, and you will have many
11 numbers presented to you today,
12 tomorrow, every day, please put the
13 reduction of BIRT and wage as your
14 priority because I cannot represent
15 any constituents if they decide to
16 leave Philadelphia. And if they
17 think that they're being punished
18 for choosing Philadelphia as their
19 home, there is nothing I can do to
20 convince them to stay.

21 So I plead you today,
22 honorable members of the City
23 Council that we love Philadelphia.
24 Please allow us to continue to

1 choose Philadelphia as our home.

2 The budget decision is in your

3 hands, please consider reducing the

4 BIRT and wage tax as your priority.

5 Thank you very much.

6 THE CLERK: Thank you.

7 State your name for the record, sir.

8 MR. FINK: Jonathan Fink.

9 THE CLERK: Oh, he's
10 already on.

11 MR. FINK: Oh, sorry.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

13 The Chair recognizes --

14 MR. HORWITZ: Hi, my name
15 is Stan Horwitz.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

17 One second, sir. Hold on, Stan.

18 MR. HORWITZ: Excuse me.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

20 I just want to recognize the

21 presence of Councilmember Rue

22 Landau. Go ahead, Mr. Horwitz.

23 MR. HORWITZ: Hi, my name

24 is Stan Horwitz. I'm with the

1 Bicycle Coalition of Greater
2 Philadelphia, Philly Bike Action,
3 and I also represent the Hawthorne
4 Empowerment Coalition, where we want
5 safe streets in our neighborhood.
6 I'm here testifying in support of
7 additional Vision Zero funding for
8 the city's upcoming fiscal year.

9 The Mayor's proposed Vision
10 Zero budget is a key way to show the
11 city's commitment to reach zero
12 traffic fatalities, fight climate
13 change, and support traffic equity
14 for the most economically challenged
15 Philadelphians.

16 Public safety is the
17 highest responsibility for City
18 Council and the mayor. The main
19 budget line for Vision Zero was
20 increased from 1 million in the
21 current fiscal year to 3.5 million
22 next year. An additional 1.5
23 million in Vision Zero funding shows
24 up in another set of budget lines.

1 The new -- the new budget zero --
2 sorry. The new Vision Zero budget
3 also includes 5 million from another
4 source of funding to pay for
5 concrete protected bike lanes along
6 Spruce and Pine Streets.

7 This additional proposed
8 Vision Zero funding is wonderful,
9 and I urge City Council to support
10 Mayor Parker's expanded Vision Zero
11 funding proposals. Vision Zero is
12 important to me, because I'm a
13 bicycle commuter who believes that
14 on that an important way to fight
15 climate change, reduce urban traffic
16 congestion and smog and improve
17 overall safety for pedestrians and
18 bicyclists is to reduce our use of
19 individual motor vehicles as much as
20 possible by actively encouraging the
21 use of both bicycles and safe UL
22 certified e-bikes. Thanks to Mayor
23 Parker for her expanded commitment
24 to funding Vision Zero.

1 I urge you to support
2 Vision Zero to the same or greater
3 degree that as Mayor Parker has
4 proposed. And thank you for your
5 time.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 Thank you.

8 MR. FINK: I'll go. My
9 name is Jonathan Fink, and this is
10 my incredibly beautiful wife,
11 Marjorie Goldberg. Go ahead.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Smart move.

14 MS. GOLDBERG: We are here
15 to talk about the rebirth of the
16 Philly Pops working as the "No Name
17 Pops" until July 1st. Under new
18 leadership led by its own musicians,
19 all members of Philadelphia
20 Musicians Union Local 77.

21 MR. FINK: We are excited
22 and grateful for the funding we have
23 received so far from the city and
24 the help that we've had from City

1 Council, and we're here to encourage
2 your support for us in the future.
3 We'd like to thank all the
4 Councilmembers who have been so
5 supportive while we worked to
6 resurrect this Philadelphia
7 institution.

8 MS. GOLDBERG: We started
9 The No Name Pops in May of 2023,
10 performing over 50 free concerts
11 since then. These were all free and
12 open to the public.

13 MR. FINK: We now have a
14 new -- newly formed board of
15 directors, including Philadelphia
16 icon and Action News Anchorman Jim
17 Gardner. We have an executive
18 director, Matt Coeval, who many of
19 you know, and our newly named music
20 director, Christopher Dragon.

21 MS. GOLDBERG: We've been
22 working hard to revive our concert
23 series at the Kimmel Center, in
24 addition to performing all over

1 Philadelphia for as many people as
2 we can.

3 MR. FINK: During this last
4 year, we reached an agreement with
5 the Peter Nero's family for the
6 rights to the Philly Pops name and
7 branding. We worked with a local
8 branding company to come up with a
9 new logo and feel for our new
10 organization.

11 MS. GOLDBERG: We're
12 excited to share that Wawa Welcome
13 America has invited us to return to
14 Play pops on Independence Mall this
15 July 3rd with guest artist Ben
16 Folds. This is also free and open
17 to the public.

18 MR. FINK: We have done
19 this all while staying financially
20 responsible.

21 MS. GOLDBERG: As a proud
22 Union member and vice president of
23 Local 77, I want to share with
24 Council how their survival of the

1 pops is important to our working
2 union musicians and future
3 musicians. We have an orchestra of
4 approximately 60 musicians and
5 another 40 to 50 who play with us on
6 a regular basis.

7 For every concert we do at
8 the Kimmel Center, there are more
9 employment opportunities for all the
10 performing arts union workers, such
11 as the IATSE stagehands, the ushers,
12 the box office workers, et cetera.
13 With the closing of U Arts, a giant
14 hole was left on Broad Street. Many
15 of the jazz majors and instructors
16 from U Arts are in our orchestra and
17 many play with us on a regular
18 basis. We pride ourselves on
19 creating pathways for young
20 musicians to perform.

21 MR. FINK: As parents of an
22 artistic young man, accessibility is
23 very important to us. We are proud
24 to share that the pops is now an

1 art-reach access partner so people
2 with disabilities can purchase \$2
3 tickets for our programs.

4 MS. GOLDBERG: We're also
5 committed to maintaining our mission
6 of free programming all over
7 Philadelphia. We've been asked to
8 perform eight concerts next year for
9 Artsonia and their music in your
10 neighborhood initiative. We're also
11 producing our own free programming
12 with other community partners. We
13 have worked diligently to create an
14 organization that works for our
15 patrons, our great city, and our
16 musicians, and we ask that you
17 continue to help us by funding the
18 Philly Pops. Thank you.

19 MR. FINK: Thank you for
20 your time.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Thank you.

23 THE CLERK: COUNCILMEMBER

24 GILMORE-RICHARDSON: Next, we have

1 -- next we have Matthew Wallach,
2 Susanne Stone, Sharon Allen, and
3 Angie Allison Ellison.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
5 Okay. You can state your name and
6 begin your testimony.

7 MR. WALLACH: Hello. My
8 name is Matthew Wallach, and I'm
9 here testifying in support of the
10 proposed Vision Zero budget found in
11 Mayor Parker's proposal FY26, budget
12 line 70.1 and 71.2 of the street
13 budget in the six-year plan. The
14 main budget line for the Zero is to
15 increase from \$1 million to \$3.5
16 million. The additional 1.5 million
17 in Zero fund budgeting shows up in
18 another set of budget lines. The
19 Zero budget line is also -- includes
20 a \$5 million for another source of
21 funding to pay for concrete
22 protection in bike lanes on Spruce
23 and Pine, which you all may be
24 familiar with. That is where we

1 most recently lost a doctor -- a
2 doctor of our community.

3 This is an important issue
4 to me because every day hundreds of
5 people move through the city.
6 Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters,
7 all use Philadelphia bike
8 infrastructure and there is no
9 concrete protection. This is not
10 paranoia, this is a fact. Last
11 week, we lost somebody in West
12 Philadelphia, someone just trying to
13 move about our city.

14 Far too many times, I've
15 seen cars use the bike lane as a
16 shortcut, which may save them time,
17 but puts others at risk, other lives
18 at risk. Concrete will save lives,
19 it'll increase the flow of traffic,
20 it will also protect people just
21 trying to live their lives.

22 I was surprised to see the
23 new budget line of 70.1 for
24 multimodal paths and trails to help

1 maintain in the city. However, it
2 does not currently include for
3 Fiscal Year 2026.

4 I request that the budget
5 line include 500,000 for Fiscal Year
6 2026. Having this money could
7 provide funds to help any additional
8 cost of state, or federal funding
9 for the project, safeguarding
10 against potential delays causing
11 unexpected costs and federal -- and
12 uncertainty.

13 When I moved to the city, I
14 didn't have 200 -- \$2.50 to take
15 SEPTA. I had a bike and that helped
16 me get to doctors. It helped me get
17 to work, where eventually I could
18 take SEPTA. And that I could keep
19 biking. I just ask you guys, please
20 put other people's lives in your
21 minds. Awesome. Thank you.

22 MS. ELLISON: Hello. My
23 name is Angelita Ellison. I am a
24 volunteer with WCRP, which is a

1 member of the Philadelphia Coalition
2 for Affordable Communities. I
3 currently live in Council District
4 5, but I have lived throughout the
5 city.

6 For about 16 years, I lived
7 in South Philly in a house that
8 belonged to my grandparents and then
9 to my mother. It was an old house,
10 and we didn't have the money to fix
11 it up. My mother eventually applied
12 for the Basic Systems Repair
13 Program, but was denied because the
14 cost of repair would be too high.
15 My mother then attempted to get a
16 loan from her bank and was also
17 denied, so she decided to sell the
18 house.

19 I live in a house -- I
20 lived in the house with my sister,
21 my son, and my mother. My mother
22 moved down south after selling the
23 house. The rest of us looked for a
24 place in Philadelphia. Our choices

1 were limited because of how
2 expensive rent is in the city. We
3 moved to the northeast, and then to
4 Frankford, and now I live near
5 Girard College.

6 With all these moves, I got
7 to see and experience what
8 gentrification is doing to the city.
9 I've seen my former neighbors leave
10 South Philly, I've seen artificially
11 inflated rent prices, I've seen a
12 rec center tennis court unused for
13 years be fixed up for new residents
14 and not for the benefit of long-term
15 residents. I've seen entire blocks
16 under construction.

17 So many people have been
18 and still are, where I was,
19 struggling to find a place that they
20 can afford. Thirty percent of the
21 households in Philly earned \$30,000
22 or less, and half of all renters are
23 housing costs burdened, meaning once
24 we pay rent, we don't have enough

1 left over to pay for food, medicine,
2 transportation, and other
3 necessities. That number is going
4 to go up as rents increase. The
5 only reason I can afford my rent is
6 because I live with my sister and we
7 split the cost.

8 The groups in the
9 Philadelphia Coalition for
10 Affordable Communities are asking
11 City Councilmembers to put our
12 housing resources where they are
13 most needed. Pass a budget that
14 increases rental housing,
15 production, and preservation from
16 the 78 million it was in last year's
17 budget to 100 million for the next
18 year. And shallow rent programs
19 from 2,659,000 to 4 million.

20 Eviction diversion --

21 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

22 Please conclude your testimony.

23 MS. ELLISON: -- rent

24 payments also need to increase.

1 These programs have done a lot to
2 help the people of Philadelphia and
3 they can do even more --

4 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
5 Ma'am.

6 MS. ELLISON: -- if they're
7 fully funded.

8 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
9 Apologies for the interruption.
10 Please conclude your testimony. We
11 have several pages of witnesses, so
12 we must stay on time.

13 MS. ELLISON: Yes, we are
14 just finishing up. Most of the
15 changes in this city that I've seen
16 do not benefit the people who have
17 always lived here. Now, Mayor
18 Parker is proposing more changes.

19 I am here today to ask the
20 City Council to pass a budget that
21 benefits those of us who need
22 housing resources the most.

23 MR. ALLEN: Okay. Good
24 morning, everybody. Good morning,

1 Councilmembers. My name is Shearon
2 Allen. I'm an independent living
3 specialist at Liberty Resources.
4 The Center for Independent Living
5 serving people with disabilities in
6 Philadelphia. I'm a proud member of
7 the Philadelphia Coalition of
8 Affordable Housing. Affordable
9 Housing, yeah. Okay. Okay.

10 Everyday I work with people
11 with disabilities who are trying to
12 independently live to whom relies
13 solely on Social Security and SSDI
14 to survive. Finding any affordable
15 housing in Philadelphia is
16 difficult, but for someone who's
17 also needs accessibility, a ramp
18 rolling shower elevator, it becomes
19 almost impossible.

20 Our city is the poorest of
21 the 10 largest cities in the
22 country. We cannot continue to
23 ignore this reality. We need to
24 make sure our housing policy funding

1 priorities reflect the needs of our
2 residents, especially those who are
3 most at risk of institutionalization
4 or homelessness, simply because they
5 can't find an affordable, accessible
6 place to live.

7 Right now, we're seeing
8 people forced to choose between
9 housing they can't -- they can't
10 physically assets, or stand in
11 nursing homes and shelters. That's
12 not a choice. It's a systematic
13 failure.

14 To address this critical
15 need, the Philadelphia Coalition of
16 Affordable Communities urges Council
17 to take concrete action to -- by
18 funding adapted modification
19 programs to ensure that housing is
20 accessible for everyone with
21 disabilities. An \$8 million
22 commitment per year budget will
23 start to meet existing demands for
24 aging and disabled homeowners. This

1 include funding for crucial features
2 like ramps, rolling showers, and
3 elevators. We must focus our
4 efforts and ensure that funds reach
5 the most in need, especially to the
6 program I've underlined.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
8 RICHARDSON: Sir, please conclude
9 your testimony.

10 MR. ALLEN: I will. Okay.
11 Furthermore, we must ensure a
12 significant allocation is direct --
13 is directed towards the creation and
14 adoption of accessible housing.
15 People with disabilities deserve to
16 live with dignity and the community
17 of their choice.

18 Thank you for listening,
19 and please prioritize the critical
20 investment in programs that -- okay.
21 Directly support those who need
22 housing the most. Thank you, guys,
23 for listening.

24 MS. MOBLEY: Good morning.

1 My name is Lorraine Mobley, and I'm
2 a member of Philadelphia Coalition
3 for Affordable Communities and One
4 Pennsylvania, West Southwest Rising
5 and most important, a proud, active
6 voter.

7 Our organizations have
8 attended most of Philadelphia City
9 Council meetings on affordable
10 housing, renters' assistance in home
11 repair programs, and the need for
12 adequate housing funding in the city
13 of Philadelphia. At some of these
14 meetings, we have spoken about and
15 heard other concerned Philadelphians
16 give heart wrenching testimony on
17 housing problems and how it was
18 negatively impact their lives.

19 They talked about income,
20 not keeping pace with risings and
21 housing costs, and expenses that are
22 out of reach for far too many
23 Philadelphians, city housing
24 programs that are underfunded and

1 not reaching those who need their
2 most, communities that are being
3 broken apart and people who are
4 being displaced. And in summation,
5 felt that housing insecurity is
6 rampant in Philadelphia and it
7 affects every single council
8 district.

9 You have heard the concerns
10 and cries of the people. Home
11 repair programs work, they keep
12 communities together, they support
13 generational of wealth, they slow
14 down gentrification, and they
15 provide a basis of -- tax basis for
16 the City of Philadelphia. This
17 would enable families to make
18 repairs and support the production
19 of new, truly affordable housing.

20 As you gather together to
21 tweak and vote on the budget, please
22 remember that one of everything
23 Philadelphia household earn is less
24 than \$30,000 a year. This is about

1 200,000 households. Half of these
2 households earn less than \$15,000.
3 Remember that basic system and Built
4 to Last programs are currently
5 underfunded, basic systems has
6 approximately 7,000 individuals on
7 the waiting list and Built to Last
8 have over \$2,000 -- 2000, excuse me,
9 on this waiting list.

10 If it is your plan to
11 increase the income requirements for
12 eligibility, thereby increasing the
13 number of individuals who will apply
14 and qualify for these programs, the
15 budgets needs to be significantly
16 increased to provide sufficient
17 funding.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
19 RICHARDSON: Ma'am, please conclude
20 your testimony.

21 MS. MOBLEY: Any budget --
22 any budget that keeps funding for
23 basic systems in the Built to Last
24 program, the same as 2025, should

1 not be passed by City Council. We
2 need action from Philadelphia City
3 Council to adjust the budget to
4 correct the housing funding
5 deficiency.

6 We need a council to defend
7 our right to stay in our
8 neighborhood in safe, secure,
9 healthy, and affordable housing. We
10 need the City of Philadelphia to
11 recognize that affordable,
12 accessible, and safe housing is not
13 a privilege, but a fundamental human
14 right.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
16 RICHARDSON: Thank you. We want to
17 sincerely thank you all again for
18 coming in this morning. I'm going
19 to reiterate that we need everyone
20 to stick to the time allotted. We
21 have three pages of witnesses to
22 provide testimony; we want and need
23 to get to everyone today. We will
24 only do that if everyone sticks to

1 the time that has been allotted.

2 Thank you for your understanding.

3 Please proceed. State your name for
4 the record, and proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MS. STONE: Good morning,
7 members of City Council. My name is
8 Susanne Stone. I'm Principal at
9 Stone Sherick Consulting Group, and
10 with me today is Maria Gonzalez.
11 She's president and CEO of HAVE's
12 CDC.

13 Thank you so much for the
14 time to speak today. I'll be very
15 brief. I'm honored to testify in
16 support of the Parker
17 Administration's Home Initiative.
18 My firm works with nonprofit and
19 for-profit developers all across the
20 city of Philadelphia to finance and
21 construct affordable housing and
22 community development projects
23 across the city.

24 In my 35-year career, it's

1 hard for me to say that, 35 years,
2 the low-income housing tax credit
3 program has proven to be by far the
4 most effective tool for building
5 hundreds of affordable housing units
6 each year and leveraging hundreds of
7 millions of private capital annually
8 for new housing developments and
9 preservation deals across the city
10 of Philadelphia in every single
11 Council District.

12 Many of these units are
13 deeply affordable serving the exact
14 population that the testifiers that
15 were focusing on that testified
16 before me. Deeply affordable -- I'm
17 sorry, I lost my place. All of
18 these units are held to rigorous
19 standards, housing quality
20 standards, accessible standards,
21 visitability standards. They're
22 extremely high-quality housing.

23 I urge City Council and the
24 Parker administration to meet this

1 momentous opportunity and have two
2 small recommendations. One is to
3 increase the two-line items,
4 affordable housing production, and
5 the preservation line item. If
6 those line items are increased,
7 we'll be able to produce more units,
8 we'll be able to leverage more
9 private capital into the city of
10 Philadelphia.

11 And my second small
12 recommendation is to increase the
13 funding per project from 3 million
14 to 5 million. If we do that, we'll
15 find deals will happen quicker,
16 close quicker, and we'll be able to
17 build units of a larger scale.
18 Thank you for the opportunity. I'm
19 going to pass it to Maria now.
20 Thank you.

21 MS. GONZALEZ: Good
22 morning, City Councilmembers.
23 Again, my name is Maria Gonzalez and
24 I'm president of HAVE CDC serving

1 the Fairhill and St. Hugh Community.

2 First, I want to thank
3 Mayor Parker for developing the HOME
4 Initiative, that incorporates
5 feedback from a diverse group of
6 stakeholders, including developers
7 for-profit, non-profit and community
8 groups.

9 And also, its
10 comprehensiveness in tackling the
11 many facets of housing -- of the
12 housing crisis that is impacting
13 this great city. It includes
14 preservation of multifamily housing,
15 home repairs, shallow rent, housing
16 counseling, and also most
17 importantly the production of new
18 housing units.

19 One of the most important
20 aspects of the HOME Initiative, it's
21 in its ability to leverage other
22 resources like low-income housing
23 tax credits. For every low-income
24 housing tax credit that is funded in

1 the city, we are able to leverage \$5
2 at a minimum, \$5 for every dollar
3 that the city is able to contribute
4 to a development. And that is very
5 much needed.

6 I remember a couple of
7 years ago that I developed a 4
8 percent tax credit project with 13
9 different funding sources. So you
10 can imagine the nightmare that we
11 have to go through in order to be
12 able to serve the lowest of the low.
13 Right now, you know, we are at an
14 inflection point in this country and
15 this city where there's rising costs
16 for labor, rising costs for
17 supplies, and also rising land
18 values, which makes penciling these
19 projects so much more complicated to
20 serve low-income communities.

21 I would say that we need to
22 rise the -- to meet the moment right
23 now, all of us, to use the HOME
24 Initiative as a tool to leverage

1 other sources to meet the needs of
2 all Philadelphians. Thank you very
3 much for the opportunity to speak
4 with you today.

5 THE CLERK: Next, we have
6 Sara Goldrick-Rab, Stanley Shapiro,
7 Lance Haver and Suzanne Hagner.

8 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
9 Please state your name for the
10 record and proceed with your
11 testimony.

12 MS. GOLDRICK-RAB: My name
13 is Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab. For 20
14 years, I've been a professor at the
15 University of Wisconsin-Madison, at
16 Temple University, and now at the
17 People's College, the Community
18 College of Philadelphia. I'm also
19 an award-winning researcher.

20 I have a doctorate from
21 Penn in sociology. I'm a Philly
22 public school parent with one who's
23 18 going off to school now. And I'm
24 the board chair of an anti-gun

1 violence non-profit called the Azzim
2 Dukes Initiative at Maleek Jackson's
3 boxing gym in Northern Liberties.

4 I wrote a national best
5 selling book called Paying the Price
6 College Costs, Financial Aid and the
7 Betrayal of the American Dream and
8 directly advised President Barack
9 Obama and President Joe Biden's
10 higher education policy. And it is
11 an honor to be with you all today in
12 the city that I love the most.

13 Councilmembers, you need to
14 know this. My students at the
15 Community College of Philadelphia
16 are literally going hungry in order
17 to get an education beyond high
18 school. They did the right thing,
19 they invested in their futures, but
20 many are dropping out because they
21 lack the essential support we know
22 matter for kids and students at all
23 levels. They don't have subsidized
24 lunch or breakfast and they don't

1 have a free SEPTA pass. The average
2 out-of-pocket cost after financial
3 aid for our students is over \$12,000
4 a year. That's after financial aid,
5 but the average family income is
6 often below \$30,000 a year. That's
7 a totally unrealistic burden.

8 I'm currently personally
9 supporting one of our students who
10 has a 10-year-old child, but who
11 regularly can't afford her bus pass
12 just to get to my class. Losing
13 motivated and talented students to
14 shortfalls of a couple hundred bucks
15 is foolish. It undermines our
16 community's economy, health and
17 safety. There is a massive ROI in
18 investing in community college
19 education and especially now when
20 the federal government, including
21 Donald Trump, is threatening cuts to
22 these Pell grants and student loans.

23 It is never, ever in the
24 history of this institution been so

1 important to boost funding to the
2 community college. I call for an
3 increase of at least \$15 million and
4 \$2 million in free SEPTA passes as
5 part of the people's budget. It's
6 an investment in our collective
7 future. Thank you.

8 MR. SHAPIRO: Good morning,
9 members of Council. Thanks for this
10 opportunity to testify. My name is
11 Stan Shapiro and I'm here testifying
12 on behalf of Philly Neighborhood
13 Networks. Today, our city stands at
14 a crossroads and the path we choose
15 will define Philadelphia's future.

16 Across the country,
17 Democrats are united in opposing tax
18 giveaways to the wealthy and big
19 corporations. Senate Majority
20 Leader Chuck Schumer recently warned
21 that Republicans are pushing tax
22 cuts for billionaires at the expense
23 of working families. These are his
24 exact words, calling out his MAGA

1 colleagues.

2 Yesterday, every single
3 Senate Republican signed their name
4 onto Donald Trump's plan to cut
5 taxes for their billionaire buddies.
6 Donald Trump and House and Senate
7 Republicans are united where it
8 matters most. They want to give
9 their billionaire buddies a tax
10 break and have the American people
11 pay the cost.

12 House Democratic leader,
13 Hakeem Jeffries, echoed this calling
14 out on national television
15 Republican efforts to pass, quote,
16 massive tax breaks for billionaires
17 and wealthy corporations, staking
18 the bill with working and middle-
19 class Americans.

20 Yet, here in Philadelphia,
21 our own democratic leadership is
22 considering a plan that mirrors
23 these same failed priorities, a near
24 total repeal of the city's business

1 tax justified by vague promises of
2 economic growth. The only certain
3 outcome is a sharp reduction of city
4 revenue, revenues we desperately
5 need as federal and state cuts
6 threaten vital services.

7 If these tax cuts pass, who
8 will fill the gap? What will fill
9 the gap? Housing, public health,
10 environmental protection and energy
11 assistance programs are already
12 facing deep cuts from Washington.
13 Slashing business taxes now will
14 only worsen the pain for those who
15 rely on city services the most.

16 This approach is not just
17 economically reckless; it is
18 politically self-defeating. Why
19 should struggling Philadelphians
20 turn out for Democrats if City Hall
21 adopts the same trickle-down logic
22 as MAGA Republicans? At least
23 MAGA's message is consistent however
24 misguided.

1 Here, we admit these cuts
2 will reduce revenue but press
3 forward anyway. We cannot afford to
4 abandon working families for the
5 sake of handouts to the wealthy. I
6 urge council to reject these tax
7 cuts and stand with the people who
8 need you most. Let's send a clear
9 united message. Philadelphia's
10 future will not be built on
11 giveaways to the rich, but on
12 investment in our communities.
13 Thank you.

14 MR. HAVER: Good morning.
15 My name is Lance Haver and I'm here
16 to talk about something City Council
17 has complete control over. And
18 that's the Water Department. As
19 you're sitting here today, the
20 Philadelphia Water Department is
21 seeking a 20 percent rate increase.
22 When they're successful, and unless
23 you act, they will be successful,
24 the bills will go up to over a

1 hundred dollars a month.

2 In 2023, the bills were \$69
3 a month. That represents almost a
4 40 percent increase in water bills
5 during that time. And that's
6 because the system we're using is
7 corrupt. The water department
8 always asks for more than what it
9 needs. They then go through a show
10 hearing where they negotiate it down
11 and they get what they want. They
12 hire -- the water department hires
13 consultant after consultant.

14 In this current rate case,
15 they've hired seven consultants.
16 Every one of them is consulting them
17 with how they can raise the rates.
18 They have never hired a single
19 consultant to find a way to reduce
20 rates. They have never undergone a
21 management audit. Yes, the
22 controller does a fiscal audit, but
23 there is no management audit that
24 would find ways to save money.

1 In addition, the water
2 department doesn't know whether they
3 hire local companies or not. This
4 came up during discovery at the
5 water hearings. I asked directly,
6 how many of the companies you
7 contract with are located in
8 Philadelphia? And they told me they
9 didn't have the time and they didn't
10 have the resources and they didn't
11 know.

12 One of the economic engines
13 for the city is our institutions are
14 publicly owned institutions like the
15 Water Department doing business with
16 local businesses.

17 I'll make three more points
18 and then I'll let you get onto some
19 of the broader issues. But again,
20 water is a fundamental issue that
21 you have direct control over. This
22 is not something you can say I can't
23 do anything about. This is
24 something you should do something

1 about. One, the Water Department
2 should use its economic power to
3 create jobs in Philadelphia. One of
4 the advantages the city of
5 Philadelphia has over the southern
6 regions of the country in the
7 southwest is plentiful water.

8 They should actually have
9 some recruiting businesses that use
10 water so we can have living wage
11 jobs. Two, they should combine
12 services with PGW. Most of us live
13 in row homes. The gas meter and the
14 water meter are no more than 15 foot
15 apart. Why do we have two separate
16 meter readings and why do we allow
17 the water department to contract
18 with a company in Tennessee to do
19 that? Three --

20 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
21 Please conclude your testimony.

22 MR. HAVER: I'm sorry.
23 Okay. Keep going. Three, we have
24 to put an end to the constant Water

1 Department asking for more rates and
2 going through a farce. Separately,
3 they will go behind closed doors and
4 negotiate a rate increase and that
5 will not solve the problem. The
6 only way that the problem will get
7 solved is if you take the interest.
8 Water is the most fundamental
9 utility in the city, which is
10 controlled by us. Don't turn the
11 other way. Thank you.

12 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
13 Thank you. Thank you very much.

14 THE CLERK: Next, we have
15 Suzanne Hagner followed by Nico
16 Meyering, Kim Kinnison and Quincy
17 Blake.

18 MR. HAVER: I will, but no,
19 I did not. You want me to? Okay.

20 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
21 Chair recognizes Councilmember
22 Jones.

23 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: I'm
24 asking Madam Chair if they submitted

1 written testimony and they promised
2 me they would provide it to you.

3 MR. HAVER: I apologize. I
4 thought I would have long --

5 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
6 One moment. Okay.

7 MR. HAVER: I apologize. I
8 will have a concise --

9 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
10 Hold on. Speak into the mic.

11 MR. HAVER: I'll have a
12 concise information to give as
13 testimony. Thank you.

14 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
15 That'll be excellent. Thank you
16 very much. Please state your name
17 for the record and proceed with your
18 testimony.

19 MS HAGNER: Okay. Good
20 morning. My name is Suzanne Hagner
21 and I'm here to testify for the 2026
22 budget on line 71.1 and 71.2 of the
23 street's budget in the six-year
24 plan. I am testifying, I moved back

1 to Philadelphia and settled in the
2 northwest neighborhood of
3 Wissahickon 14 years ago.

4 And in the first couple of
5 years, four people were killed on
6 the Henry Avenue stretch that goes
7 through Wissahickon. That's only a
8 mile and a half of corridor. And
9 there would be balloons and stuffed
10 animals placed on Henry Avenue and
11 that was like the end of it. There
12 wasn't much outrage about it.

13 Fortunately, I was also
14 working with the streets engineers
15 within the neighborhood to make our
16 streets safer. And I was introduced
17 to -- connected to the Penn engineer
18 for Henry Avenue. And the result is
19 the Henry -- that section of Henry
20 Avenue and all of Henry Avenue, the
21 structure and the design is so much
22 better. We have had no fatalities.
23 We are not having crashes there.

24 We have two new traffic

1 lights. There's a red-light camera
2 at the most -- at the busiest
3 intersection and there's a new off,
4 raised, multi-use trail from
5 Schoolhouse Lane to Walnut Lane.

6 However, on the other side
7 of our neighborhood is Ridge Avenue.
8 And so, when Henry Avenue was taken
9 off the High Injury corridor, Ridge
10 Avenue has been added to it. And
11 the worst part of Ridge Avenue is
12 the quarter mile that comes up from
13 the Wissahickon transit center.
14 It's a quarter mile, two lane
15 traffic, a bicycle lane on both
16 sides. Two sidewalks. There have
17 been two bicyclists hit. One had 23
18 broken bones. She has never ridden
19 again. Last summer, there was a
20 bicyclist hit. He went to the
21 hospital for four days. It was a
22 hit and run. The driver was never
23 found. The sidewalks are cracked;
24 the street is broken. Two separate

1 drivers have crashed through the
2 concrete wall on the south side and
3 landed on the street down below.
4 Now, all we have are bollards there.
5 That has not been repaired.

6 Well, I did ask for a
7 meeting with the streets engineer
8 and of course they came out. There
9 was a group of us. The bottom line
10 is there is not money to fix that.
11 It needs to be completely redesigned
12 and reconstructed. So I'll just
13 leave it at that. The four bus
14 stops are there. The entrance to
15 the Wissahickon transit train
16 station is there. As I said, the
17 sidewalks are very broken.

18 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
19 Thank you. And we thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 MS HAGNER: Okay.

22 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
23 What I'd ask you to do prior to you
24 departing is if you could stop, if

1 you go right out the door here --

2 MS HAGNER: Yeah.

3 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

4 -- make a left and stop by to see

5 Councilmember Jones's office.

6 MS. HAGNER: Okay.

7 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

8 As a follow-up, okay?

9 MS. HAGNER: Yes. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

12 Thank you very much.

13 MS. HAGNER: Yes.

14 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

15 Please state your name for the

16 record and proceed with your

17 testimony.

18 MS. BLAKE: My name is

19 Quincy Blake. I'm a parent of one

20 with no mental health or drug issues

21 between myself and my son. That

22 alone makes it difficult for my son

23 and I to receive genuine assistance

24 from the Office of Homeless

1 Services. Despite OHS staff being
2 paid over 11 million in wages alone
3 this past calendar year, I've
4 witnessed the following within OHS
5 as a whole.

6 A plethora of inconsiderate
7 and incompetent staff who also
8 sincerely lack integrity, a serious
9 lack of properly balanced meals and
10 fresh fruits and vegetables,
11 shelters not being cleaned properly,
12 if at all, and a lack of pest
13 control. I've seen mice and roaches
14 in all four shelters that I've been
15 in since August of 2024. Nothing is
16 being done about that.

17 These are things that I've
18 witnessed while in Acts Newkirk,
19 specifically. Staff serving under
20 cooked food, staff refusing to
21 accommodate dietary needs and
22 nonchalantly watching children and
23 their parents go hungry. Shelter
24 staff maliciously lying on incident

1 reports to have families and their
2 children displaced, staff treating
3 OHS clients like criminals or
4 animals, staff selling marijuana to
5 residents, and staff misplacing
6 medications and such without any
7 kind of investigation or resolution.

8 My son and I have also had
9 the displeasure of experiencing
10 overflow in OHS. This is where you
11 go to the Red Cross at 5:00 p.m.
12 Monday through Friday to get
13 placement for one night. From
14 there, you're expected to find
15 transportation to your shelter for
16 the night with your family and your
17 belongings. You're then put out
18 between 5:00 and 7:00 a.m.
19 depending on the overnight shelter.
20 Unless there is a code blue or code
21 red, you have to find somewhere else
22 to go with your children and your
23 things all day.

24 My son and I were put

1 through this experience by the hand
2 of a supervisor at Acts Newkirk by
3 the name of Nikia intentionally.
4 This is what we've been going
5 through for over 30 days now. And
6 this is what homeless families go
7 through everyday in the city of
8 Philadelphia.

9 All of this money is
10 flowing through OHS and it's not
11 going to the most important places.
12 There are more than enough
13 rehabilitation programs. OHS staff
14 treats clients as if they don't get
15 paid enough to treat them with
16 empathy and respect, and families
17 are not getting their general needs
18 met.

19 The shelters are not using
20 their funds appropriately. There
21 needs to be a crackdown on where OHS
22 funding is going and who OHS is
23 hiring.

24 There should be

1 significantly more housing programs
2 for families, whether that be
3 transitional housing programs or
4 otherwise. The income requirements
5 to assess time limits and shelters
6 needs to be reevaluated and adjusted
7 to be more situational. That
8 children should be priority, and it
9 starts with stability and that means
10 adequately and -- adequately funding
11 and managing the office of Homeless
12 Services. Thank you.

13 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
14 Ma'am, I want to thank you. Ma'am,
15 thank you very much for your
16 testimony.

17 I've asked my team to get
18 your full contact information.
19 We're going to be in touch with the
20 Office of Homeless Services. They
21 were just in for budget hearings
22 last week. We're going to ask Bruce
23 Johnson at OHS to work with you and
24 your family and your child directly.

1 Okay. We appreciate you coming in.

2 The Chair recognizes

3 Councilmember Young.

4 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
5 you. So the very same shelter she
6 was speaking about is the same
7 shelter I mentioned to OHS that's
8 feeding, you know, the participants
9 lettuce and tuna, right? And so,
10 you know, we definitely need to stay
11 on top of this issue with our
12 services that we're providing to our
13 most vulnerable population. So
14 thank you, Madam Leader.

15 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
16 Thank you very much, Councilmember
17 Young. And we will be following up
18 with OHS. Thank you very much for
19 your testimony. I will now ask the
20 clerk to please call the next set of
21 witnesses.

22 THE CLERK: Nico Meyering
23 and Kim Kinnison, Mark Clancy and
24 Sonya Sanders, Regina Sanders and

1 Rasheeda Turner.

2 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

3 Okay. Please, state your name for
4 the record and proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MR. CLANCY: Okay. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

9 Hold the mic up, sir.

10 MR. CLANCY: Thank you. My
11 name for those that don't know is
12 Mark Clancy. I am a member of
13 Philly Thrive and a resident of
14 District 2.

15 There are many low-income
16 people in the urban community that
17 cannot afford to have their homes
18 repaired. It is important to keep
19 people in their homes. People have
20 lived in these homes. They have
21 lived there for 30, 40, 50 plus
22 years. People want to keep their
23 homes in the family and pass it on
24 to the next generation. Without

1 assistance, how are they going to
2 repair their homes?

3 Some residents are being
4 forced out, forced to leave their
5 homes, because developers want the
6 property to build condominiums or
7 whatever, which will raise the real
8 estate tax in other -- where people
9 are living, forcing them out,
10 forcing them to relocate. And it's
11 coming at a cost to the community
12 and forcing people out of their
13 homes because the real estate tax is
14 increasing.

15 We need 10 million for
16 Philadelphia Energy Authorities
17 Built to Last Home Repair Program
18 and other clean energy initiatives.
19 This program is unique because it
20 provides repairs, clean energy, and
21 we all know what clean energy is,
22 and weatherization. Built to Last
23 is both a green option that supports
24 the lowest income homeowners to make

1 repairs and stay in their homes. It
2 is a win-win program.

3 Although many of my
4 neighbors are homeowners, I am a
5 renter on a fixed income. We are
6 not just asking for repairs for
7 homeowners, but we need all
8 Philadelphians, not part, not a few,
9 all Philadelphians to have a safe,
10 healthy home. We -- thank you. We
11 need 10 million for L&I to have
12 proactive rental inspections.

13 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

14 Sir, please --

15 MR. CLANCY: Please --

16 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

17 -- conclude your testimony.

18 MR. CLANCY: Pardon?

19 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

20 Please conclude your testimony.

21 MR. CLANCY: Yeah. Please
22 put your low-income, senior and
23 disabled, like myself, constituents
24 over the profit of corporate

1 landlords, slumlords as we call
2 them, and developers. We are
3 sharing our voices and we need you
4 to listen. To quote the Bible,
5 Those that have ears to hear, let
6 them hear. Those that have eyes to
7 see, let them see. And I am
8 complete. Thank you.

9 MS. SANDERS: Hi. My name
10 is Sonya Sanders. I'm a resident of
11 District 3 and a member of Philly
12 Thrive. I lived in Grays Ferry all
13 my life. I lived on 32nd Street for
14 27 years with my late husband, Ray,
15 but we couldn't afford to fix the
16 home we were living in. There were
17 holes in the floor boards and the
18 sheet rock. You could literally see
19 through our floorboards when you
20 were standing in the basement. This
21 also led to utility and electrical
22 challenges, including an incredibly
23 high bills on top of everything
24 else. We had bugs flying into our

1 house. We put tape on the walls and
2 the ceilings. Of course, that
3 didn't work, but we couldn't get any
4 help.

5 The city's home repair
6 programs were really hard to access,
7 and there were many different
8 criteria to qualify. We were told
9 Ray worked too much, that we were
10 \$300 over or under the limit
11 depending on the month. These
12 living conditions were detrimental
13 to my physical and mental health as
14 well as my family's health.

15 Then my husband Ray passed
16 away from cancer and I had no choice
17 but to move out of that house and
18 out the neighborhood I lived in all
19 my life. When I moved, I was forced
20 into an unsafe rental because I
21 couldn't afford anything else. In
22 this rental, I didn't have
23 electricity for weeks during summer
24 heat waves, including no

1 refrigerator, no air conditioner or
2 no stove. I went months without
3 water.

4 This is my story, but I
5 know it's also the story of people
6 across the city. That's why we need
7 programs that support both
8 low-income homeowners and renters.
9 It can't be one or the other. We
10 need \$10 million for Philadelphia
11 Energy Authorities, Built to Last,
12 and other programs, and \$10 million
13 for a pilot proactive rental
14 inspection program. That's what
15 we're asking for this budget season.
16 We're asking City Council to stand
17 with us and so everyone has a safe,
18 healthy home. Thank you.

19 MS. TURNER: Good morning.
20 My name is Rasheeda Turner. I'm a
21 low-income renter, resident of
22 District 2, and a member of Fully
23 Thrive. I'm here sharing my story
24 in public for the first time. I had

1 three young children under the age
2 of 10, including a baby less than
3 one years old.

4 My kids cannot even take a
5 bath. Instead of putting a new tub
6 like we need, my landlord just keeps
7 repainting it causing the drain to
8 be clogged. We have holes in the
9 walls. The carpet's always wet from
10 water leaks, and the floor is
11 ripped. Even the electrical wiring
12 is bad in the house. The lights
13 keep going on and off. I'm worried
14 about having an electrical fire. It
15 is going to take a take -- it is
16 going to take me to losing one of my
17 kids or myself until you decide to
18 do something.

19 Living in low-income
20 housing and the landlords don't do
21 anything, they take advantage of us.
22 I feel like we're being treated like
23 animals, like dogs. I called L&I
24 numerous times in the past two

1 years. When L&I finally came, my
2 landlord had over 26 violations.
3 How is it that they still passed
4 inspections? And not only that, but
5 I got retaliated against for
6 standing up for me and my kids.

7 Every other month, I find
8 myself in the eviction divergent
9 program every time. I don't owe
10 anything. I don't even like to walk
11 in the door of my house. The living
12 situation has sent me in a deep
13 depression. This past weekend on
14 Mother's Day, my neighbor helped me
15 comb my hair. I had chunks of my
16 hair falling out. That had --
17 that's how stressful and hurtful
18 this has been.

19 I feel like I felt my kids.
20 My kids see me crying. I tell them,
21 I'm sorry, I'm putting them through
22 this. It's not my fault. It's the
23 landlord's fault and the city's
24 fault for not holding them

1 accountable. Even through the
2 tenants getting blamed, you want us
3 to vote for you-all, but you-all not
4 helping us. We need 10 million for
5 our proactive rental inspections to
6 hold these slumlords accountable for
7 -- accountable so no one has to go
8 through what I'm going through.

9 I explained to my kids that
10 I'm going to make it good for them
11 one day. The moment I can afford it
12 and I'm out of here, that's a
13 promise. And the first day that we
14 move, my kids are going to be able
15 to take a bubble bath. My kids
16 cannot even sit down in the tub;
17 they have to take showers. And my
18 kids can't sleep safe at all.

19 The house is under hazard,
20 but somehow L&I keep passing PHS,
21 keeps passing, and I'm tired and I'm
22 out on disability right now after I
23 had my last baby, but it's time for
24 me to get back up and go to work

1 with my pain and all and to get my
2 kids somewhere to go. Thank
3 you-all. Have a nice day.

4 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

5 Thank you. Thank you very -- thank
6 you very much. Thank you for your
7 testimony. We're going to have
8 someone from the Council President's
9 office follow up with you. I heard
10 you stating your testimony, you're
11 in District 2. So the clerk is
12 going to call the next four
13 witnesses.

14 THE CLERK: Debbie
15 Robinson, Carol Foy, Maria
16 Yalverton, and Janet White.

17 MS. FOY: I said I'm going
18 to walk today. She want -- they're
19 going first, not me.

20 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

21 Okay. Thank you all so much for
22 being here. We're going to ask that
23 you state your name for the record
24 and proceed with your testimony.

1 Ma'am, you can get started at the
2 table.

3 THE CLERK: You could
4 begin, ma'am.

5 MS. ROBINSON: Turn around
6 and start.

7 MS. FOY: Okay. Good
8 morning, everyone. My name --
9 Okay. Good morning,
10 everyone. My name is Carol Foy.
11 I'm a resident District 2, and a
12 member of Philly Thrive. Everyone
13 needs a healthy home, especially
14 senior. I know multiple seniors who
15 sometimes don't even have heat or
16 hot water.

17 Many seniors are on a fixed
18 income, so they cannot afford to
19 repair things, for example, my
20 friend, Ms. Jeanette mentioned they
21 had a hard time fixing her house
22 because she could not afford it.
23 She lived in the house for 60 plus
24 years. She grew up there and raised

1 her children, raised -- grew up
2 there and raised her own family
3 there. She deserved to live with
4 dignity, but she had to fix her own,
5 like, patchwork. She has -- she
6 couldn't have used some help, but
7 she died two years ago before her
8 house was fixed.

9 My own, my other friend,
10 Connie Bennett, had to sell her
11 house and she lived in for 60 years.
12 She lived there with -- she raised
13 her children and grandchildren.
14 Because she could not afford the
15 repair, she sold her house, and she
16 had to leave -- had to leave the
17 neighborhood and go live with her
18 daughter in Delaware County. People
19 like Ms. Jeanette and Ms. Connie,
20 and other people in my neighborhood
21 often need their home foundation
22 fixed, especially since their house
23 is old, weathered -- and
24 weatherization is important for

1 homeowners, too. It is important to
2 fix people's windows and doors to
3 keep things cool in the summer and
4 warm in the winter. That's why we
5 need 10 million for Built to Last
6 home, and other clean energy
7 program. Built to Last can help a
8 lot of family. I am a renter, and
9 renter also needs support to make
10 sure their homes are fixed.

11 This is not a new problem.
12 My son was born in the 6th in 1968.
13 He and all my family had asked
14 because of mold, my mother was also
15 when we had mold and rats, and holes
16 in the wall. She was scared to
17 report this to the L&I, but she did
18 the best she could. This is not
19 right. We need 10 million for L&I,
20 for program -- rental inspecting
21 programs so that renters move into
22 homes in a good condition. Everyone
23 and fellas deserve a safe, healthy
24 home. Thank you for letting me

1 speak today and letting me share.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. FOY: Thank you.

4 THE CLERK: Next, state
5 your name for the record, please.

6 MS. ROBINSON: Okay.

7 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
8 Ma'am. Yes, please speak into the
9 mic. Thank you.

10 MS. ROBINSON: Okay. Can
11 you hear me? Is that good? My name
12 is Debbie Robinson. Good morning.
13 Thank you for allowing us to come
14 here today. My name is Debbie
15 Robinson. I'm a resident of
16 District 2. I'm a renter, and a
17 member of Philly Thrive.

18 I remember growing up in a
19 house that wasn't livable. It had
20 so much mold that it caused me and
21 my siblings to have asthma. No one
22 would help my single mom make the
23 repairs we needed, even though she
24 just -- she was just trying to get

1 support and live in a decent place.

2 Now, 50 years later, my
3 friend Mary, a mom is still facing
4 the same challenges. She can
5 literally see the roof through her
6 -- the roof through her house. Both
7 low-income homeowners and renters
8 need repairs, and everyone deserves
9 to live in a safe and healthy home.
10 There is too much money in this city
11 for people to be living like this.

12 We, the people, help the
13 city grow. We put you in office
14 because you told us that you would
15 help us. We're asking for \$10
16 million for Philadelphia Energy
17 Authority, Built to Last, and \$10
18 million for a proactive rental's
19 inspections. We also need enough
20 money for the Basic Systems Repair
21 program, because that is meant for
22 energy emergencies, and there are
23 still 10,000 of -- on the wait list.
24 Please support safe, healthy homes

1 for all of Philadelphia.

2 This budget needs to be
3 about us, not the big landlords, and
4 the developers. And imagine that
5 your family is going through this
6 right now, how would you feel?
7 Would you want -- would you want
8 someone to help them? And my last
9 thing I wanted to say was, my
10 husband and me, we live in a place
11 in Holme. Before the pandemic was
12 even over, we was already paying 900
13 and something -- I think it was
14 \$930. They went up \$100, and I told
15 -- and then they just went up \$50
16 like two weeks ago.

17 My husband had cancer; he
18 had his leg removed first. He was a
19 chef. He had to stop working
20 because he -- the blood wasn't
21 rushing down, you know, going down
22 his leg, so he had his leg removed.
23 Then he had two hip replacements,
24 then he turned around, and he just

1 had cancer on his pancreas. I think
2 it was -- anyway, they took that
3 out. He went back like three weeks
4 ago, because you know how you got to
5 go back for doctor? So now he has
6 cancer in his blood. He is the only
7 support for me and him, and I don't
8 think it's fair that them putting up
9 rent high, and they building these
10 houses that we can't afford.

11 People live on a fixed
12 income, it's not right. We are
13 human beings and we deserve to live
14 right. And thanks for allowing me
15 to share today.

16 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you,
17 ma'am. Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 THE CLERK: State your name
20 for the record, please.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: State your
22 name for the record and you may
23 begin with your testimony.

24 MS. YALVERTON: Okay. My

1 name is Maria Yalverton. I'm a
2 member of Philly Thrive, and a
3 District 7 resident. I need to move
4 out of my current apartment as soon
5 as possible because the conditions
6 there are unlivable.

7 I have not had hot water
8 for a year-and-a-half. Throughout
9 the winter, in order for me to take
10 a warm shower, my daughter has to
11 carry boiling water up a flight of
12 stairs into my bathtub. This is
13 dangerous. And this is on top of
14 the fact that I continue to pay my
15 rent every month. Why is it that my
16 landlord can get away with these
17 dangerous, unlivable, inhumane
18 conditions and still continue to
19 make a profit? It is not right. We
20 need on the whole accountability,
21 landlord's accountability -- I'm
22 sorry -- to make needed repairs.

23 This is not the first time
24 that I experienced unlivable renting

1 conditions due to some slumlords. I
2 remember raising young kids in an
3 apartment with no electric. I had
4 to bathe my kids next door because
5 we didn't have lights.

6 We also lived in a house
7 that was falling apart full with
8 mold. My son suffered significant
9 health challenges because of this
10 environment, including throat
11 cancer. That house was abandoned
12 and no one was coming to fix it even
13 though it was Section 8 housing.

14 It's clear we need more
15 rental inspections, but not only
16 that, the process for calling L&I
17 should not only be reactive, we need
18 L&I to expect rentals units before
19 people move in so that these issues
20 can be prevented.

21 That's why we're asking for
22 10 million in this year budget for
23 L&I to start a pilot proactive
24 rental inspection program. We're

1 all also asking for 10 million for
2 Built to Last, because low-income
3 homeowners need support to fix their
4 homes and make them safe too. I
5 hope that the City Council will act
6 and support so that everyone,
7 including low-income renters like
8 myself can live in a safe, healthy
9 home. Thank you.

10 MS. WHITE: Hello. My name
11 is Janet. Ms. Janet White, and I'm
12 a member of Philly Thrive, and a
13 resident of District 8. District 8.
14 Okay. I am a former nurse and a
15 home health aide. I lived in
16 Magnolia Mews in Germantown. I
17 moved in an apartment 2018.

18 Over the past seven years,
19 I experienced multiple instance of
20 poor maintenance and unsafe
21 conditions. When I moved in, there
22 were cracks in the walls, windows,
23 sills everywhere, ants and
24 cockroaches. I had rodents running

1 around apartment, I also had water
2 damages both in the ceiling and in
3 the floor. Finally, after that I'm
4 having heat -- I had no heat. A
5 matter of fact, no heat for a whole
6 entire winter. And after pulling in
7 multiple maintenance requests, I was
8 fed up.

9 After four years of living
10 like this, in 2021, I called L&I,
11 next thing you know, an eviction
12 process was started against me as
13 retaliation. Man, I was mad. All
14 because I stood up for myself. I
15 mean, I really did. I was -- I was
16 going through it. And I called L&I
17 to hold my landlords accountable, my
18 family suffered significant mental
19 and emotional effects from not
20 having a safe home, and a resilient
21 retaliation.

22 In 2023, my eviction
23 proceeding went to court, and with
24 the help of Philly Thrive and CLS,

1 we won. We won. But that's what I
2 mean, but we won. And I was -- I
3 was able to go back in my apartment,
4 and L&I came, made an inspection,
5 and it took two years for them to
6 come out an eviction to -- L&I to
7 come to my apartment to hold my
8 corporate landlord accountable.
9 When L&I finally came, they cited my
10 landlord with 10 violations. I was
11 like, wow, all this. This is not
12 right. This is here, we be a better
13 system. They -- we do. We need a
14 better system.

15 That's why we're seeking
16 for the 10 million to L&I to start a
17 pilot proactive rental inspection
18 program to hold corporate landlords
19 accountable. But it's not just
20 renters who need repairs, it's
21 low-income homeowners also need
22 support. So also demanding 10
23 million to Philadelphia Energy
24 Authority, Built to Last, and other

1 programs. Thank you for allowing me
2 to share my story, and I hope that
3 we do the right thing and support
4 the low-income residents, and
5 corporate landlords, and developers.

6 THE CLERK: Thank you. Stu
7 Bykofsky, Lloyd Brotman, Debbie, Zak
8 Cohen, Ken Luongo, and Paul Bonnie.

9 MR. BYKOFSKY: That's a
10 tough act to follow. Good morning.
11 My name is Stu Bykofsky, and I'm
12 going to talk about four things:
13 Logic, perception, money, and
14 loading zones. Loading zones were
15 suggested by OTIS to help relieve
16 problems caused by the city's
17 illogical law prohibiting stopping
18 in bike lanes for safety reasons.

19 Illogical because a stopped
20 vehicle is not a hazard to
21 bicyclists, and removing 30 percent
22 of the metered spots on Pine and
23 spruce is a loss of revenue to the
24 city. The Philadelphia Police

1 Department went back five years and
2 told me no accidents were caused by
3 stopped cars in bike lanes on Pine
4 and Spruce, none, zero.

5 Perception that the law
6 increases safety is demonstrably
7 false. Adding concrete pill
8 infrastructure is wasted money. The
9 law outlawing stopping for
10 deliveries, pickups, and drop-offs
11 impacts residents' safety. Loading
12 zones are good on commercial
13 streets, but not on Pine and Spruce.
14 Why? They are rarely placed where
15 most needed, and often inadequate,
16 such as my 1300 block of spruce with
17 three restaurants, a convenience
18 store, and a dry cleaner.

19 One loading zone of four
20 car lengths is inadequate, and more
21 loading zones reduce the number of
22 already scarce parking spots in
23 center city and reduced parking
24 meter revenue.

1 Our highrises have many
2 elderly and infirm citizens, is it
3 fair that they should bear the
4 burden of getting to a loading zone
5 that might be a hundred feet away or
6 across the street to save cyclists
7 see unbearable trauma of having to
8 wait for a moment behind the stopped
9 car? PPA Executive Director Rich
10 Lazer has told the friends of Pine
11 and Spruce that if an occupied car
12 is in a non-stopping zone, the
13 driver would be instructed to move
14 the vehicle.

15 Quote, "If the vehicle is
16 still in that location when the PEO
17 returns during his or her rotation,
18 then a ticket will be issued." Only
19 then after. Lazer's stated policy
20 is an attempt at a fair compromise,
21 such as the longstanding custom of
22 not ticketing cars in the middle of
23 Broad Street south of Washington
24 because parking is so scarce in

1 South Philly.

2 Under the same logic,
3 because of limited curb space in
4 center city, why not allow the
5 courtesy of momentary stopping and
6 bike lanes for deliveries, pickups,
7 and drop offs, and pocket the income
8 from parking meters. Its simple
9 logic. Thank you.

10 MR. BROTMAN: My name is
11 Lloyd Brotman. I've lived in the
12 Pine-Spruce neighborhood for 50
13 years. Thank you for listening.
14 Today is a real master class on
15 priorities. Without any engagement
16 with residents, the mayor has
17 endorsed an OTIS proposal and
18 requested \$5 million to install
19 concrete barriers on Pine and Spruce
20 despite Vision Zero statistics
21 showing Pine and Spruce are safer
22 than other streets.

23 None of Pine, and only a
24 portion of Spruce are even part of

1 the high injury network. In 2024,
2 throughout the entire city, there
3 were three cyclist deaths and 54
4 pedestrian deaths. This is not a
5 Pine-Spruce problem. The OTIS plan
6 will not make these 26-foot-wide
7 historic streets any safer to
8 cyclists, but will make Pine and
9 Spruce more dangerous to pedestrians
10 and residents.

11 Elderly and disabled will
12 need to navigate dangerous
13 obstacles, lives will be lost when
14 gridlock delays emergency vehicles,
15 parents will leave children
16 unattended to unload vehicles, and
17 routine maintenance will require
18 street closure permits.

19 Let's get real. The push
20 to install concrete on Pine and
21 Spruce is not about safety. For
22 obvious reasons, it became a cause
23 celebre, but it is not about safety.
24 It's a keystone project with the

1 intent to push Philadelphia toward
2 the minority held two-percent belief
3 that vehicles should simply be
4 banned. A debate the concrete
5 supporters don't really want to
6 have. It's not about safety for
7 all. The \$5 million should not be
8 used to fund this high-visibility,
9 politically-charged boutique
10 project, but instead should be
11 earmarked for speed bumps and
12 cameras on streets throughout all
13 districts to protect everyone,
14 especially the largest at-risk
15 group, pedestrians. We support
16 Mayor Nutter's 2009 bike lane
17 compromise because while not perfect
18 for anyone, the lanes are shared by
19 everyone. Thank you.

20 And just one more thing, if
21 you commit \$5 million, you'd be wise
22 to commit \$10 million because you'll
23 need to another 5 million to remove
24 the concrete just like Boston.

1 Thank you.

2 THE CLERK: Sir, state your
3 name for the record.

4 MR. LUONGO: Thank you,
5 Mr. Chairman and members of the
6 Council. My name is Ken Luongo. I
7 testify in opposition to the \$5
8 million Mayor Parker has proposed
9 for her Vision Zero budget for the
10 concrete barriers on Pine and Spruce
11 Street bike lanes.

12 I, like many, support the
13 goals of Vision Zero, but Vision
14 Zero is driven by high-injury
15 network streets, and Pine is not a
16 high injury network street, and
17 neither is most of Spruce. Most of
18 those streets actually are in North
19 Philadelphia and in West
20 Philadelphia. There are 300 miles
21 of high-injury streets in
22 Philadelphia, and only 1/6 of them
23 are eligible for treatment.

24 But the same few miles of

1 Pine and Spruce are a boutique
2 project obsession of a small group
3 of bike activists, and
4 unfortunately, the mayor, the City
5 Council, and city agencies have been
6 supporting them.

7 I question the
8 prioritization of a request for \$5
9 million for Vision Zero for the
10 entirety of Philadelphia, and then a
11 specific \$5 million just for Pine
12 and Spruce. Two bike riders have
13 already been killed, one in Cobbs
14 Creek, and one in North
15 Philadelphia.

16 The outrage and the outcry
17 about these tragedies has been muted
18 among the organization and the
19 institutions that purport to be
20 obsessed with safety. Just because
21 it didn't happen in Rittenhouse
22 Square, and it's not a doctor
23 doesn't diminish the importance of
24 those lives. If the mayor wants \$10

1 million for Vision Zero, she should
2 use it across the city, not just for
3 Pine and Spruce.

4 But better yet, she should
5 give it to Ms. Gloria and her group
6 that need it for their pool in
7 Nicetown, or you should give it to
8 Ms. Symbol for her work on
9 education, or you should give it to
10 all of these people that are telling
11 horrific stories about what's
12 happening in the city. That's where
13 the priority ought to be.

14 THE CLERK: Thank you.
15 Hold your applause, please.

16 MR. BONNIER: My name is
17 Paul Bonnie from Society Hill.
18 Slating \$5 million for concrete
19 barriers on Pine and spruce will
20 divert money from where it's needed
21 most. All over Philadelphia, your
22 constituents are paying the price.
23 In the past four weeks alone, in the
24 6th District, in Mayfair, a

1 pedestrian killed by hit and run.
2 In the 7th District, in Fairhill, a
3 person in a wheelchair killed by a
4 school bus. In the 4th District, in
5 Carroll Park, a pedestrian killed by
6 hit and run. In the 3rd District,
7 in Angora, a bicyclist killed by a
8 truck. Four deaths in the past four
9 weeks all on streets much more
10 dangerous than Spruce and Pine.
11 That's what the data says.

12 It's great to increase the
13 budget for Vision Zero, but don't
14 waste the money. Spend it where
15 it's needed most: \$5 million can
16 fund 1000 speed humps. That means
17 100 speed humps in each Councilmanic
18 district. Don't waste the money on
19 a pet project. Thank you,
20 Mr. President.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Thank you, Paul.

23 THE CLERK: Please state
24 your name for the record.

1 MS. COHEN: Hello. My name
2 is Debbie Zak Cohen, and I support
3 the existing bike lanes on Pine and
4 Spruce Streets. But I'm against the
5 \$5 million slated for concrete
6 barriers.

7 For 16 years before the
8 get-out-of-the-bike-lane law, the
9 nine-foot bike lane and buffer was
10 used for temporary pullovers when
11 needed, and cyclists and bike lane
12 users had complete autonomy to stop
13 and wait and maneuver around
14 obstacles safely at their own
15 discretion. Bike lane users had
16 easy access to the travel lane when
17 needed and preferred. The bike
18 lane, and bike lane buffer is
19 actually the only lane wide enough
20 for pullovers without causing
21 gridlock on these two very busy
22 corridors. This is why Pine and
23 Spruce streets have been safely and
24 fully functional for 16 years

1 because of using the bike lane.

2 Pine and Spruce streets

3 were actually hybrid-shallowed

4 streets, which is shared by bike

5 lane users in traffic, and they

6 should actually be dedicated as

7 such. Without any requested and

8 needed low-cost, common-sense

9 traffic calming measures, there has

10 never been injuries from merging in

11 and out of traffic.

12 Every speaker I've heard

13 here today is more deserving of the

14 \$5 million in Pine and Spruce Street

15 concrete barriers. I am asking you

16 all to listen to your conscience and

17 not a few loud, well-funded

18 activists to redirect the money to

19 areas with the highest need for

20 safety improvements and particularly

21 the underserved neighborhoods and

22 communities.

23 Redirecting these funds to

24 areas with greater risk will save

1 more lives and align better with the
2 Vision Zero's equity goals. You
3 literally have the power to change
4 lives here for the good. Please do
5 so. And thank you for listening.

6 THE CLERK: Thank you.
7 State your name, for the record.

8 MS. NUNEZ: My name is
9 Erika Guadalupe Nunez, and I am
10 testifying on behalf of Juntos to
11 demand 3.8 million for immigrant
12 communities in the upcoming budget
13 cycle. This city has been my home
14 for 12 years.

15 I crossed the border as a
16 child and grew up undocumented. I
17 know and love many undocumented
18 immigrant people who live in this
19 city. With 1.9 million, we can
20 provide three additional newcomer
21 programs, reinstate the
22 Multicultural Assessment Center, and
23 ensure enough bilingual counselors
24 for students and educators in our

1 schools. With 1.8 million, we will
2 fully fund PAIFUP, a pro bono
3 deportation defense program for
4 Philly residents facing removal at
5 Moshannon Valley Detention Center,
6 our local detention center run by
7 private prison company, GEO Group.

8 Our school district has
9 fewer supports for immigrant
10 communities now than it did 10 years
11 ago. Gaps in language access,
12 inadequate supports for newcomers
13 and immigrant families, and
14 unwelcoming environments are the
15 norm. When we look at the world
16 around us, and what schools mean as
17 community pillars, this should bring
18 us shame. Our local public schools
19 are sanctuaries from ICE enforcement
20 because of Juntos, but there is
21 still much work to do.

22 Two years ago, a newcomer
23 youth was threatened with
24 deportation by their principal.

1 Juntos helped the family secure a
2 settlement, where the mother named
3 her wish for more district newcomer
4 supports. But without the funding
5 requested, our district schools will
6 continue to be unsafe for immigrant
7 communities. We hear a lot about
8 forced disappearances of loved ones
9 by ICE, but this violence pales in
10 comparison to the conditions our
11 community space and immigrant
12 detention. Physical and
13 psychological abuse, lack of medical
14 detention, and other human rights
15 violations.

16 Last week, I visited
17 Moshannon as part of our visitation
18 work. We met someone who hadn't had
19 contact with the outside world for
20 six months. I saw a four-year-old
21 child press his palm to the
22 Plexiglass divider because that was
23 the closest he'd get to his father.

24 When you're an immigrant

1 detention in this country, you do
2 not have the right to a free legal
3 defense. And if you don't have a
4 lawyer, your chances of removal
5 increase. PAIFUP has brought our
6 people home time and time again.
7 One of our members who was
8 represented by PAIFUP spent two
9 months in solitary confinement while
10 detained. Without PAIFUP, he might
11 still be there. I have been an
12 organizer from immigrant rights for
13 15 years. I do not say this
14 lightly. The threats we're
15 currently faced are unprecedented.

16 Six months ago, I was
17 dragged out of these chambers for
18 protesting the proposed 76ERs arena,
19 a project that history will note was
20 on the wrong side of immigrant
21 communities. Will this city take
22 true action to stand with immigrant
23 communities in this budget cycle, or
24 meet these attacks against us with

1 more empty promises? This is your
2 opportunity to make it clear.
3 Philadelphia is a truly welcoming
4 city, where we defend and fight for
5 all of our people, because none of
6 us are disposable.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Thank you.

9 MS. NUNEZ: Thank you.

10 THE CLERK: Sorry. Before
11 proceeding through testimony, I just
12 want to make sure the additional
13 witnesses who are coming next are
14 prepared to testify.

15 And that's Mitch Chanin,
16 Nancy Lanham and Alexander Roederer.
17 So with that, please proceed with
18 your -- state your name, and proceed
19 with your testimony.

20 CHILD RAWLERSON: Good
21 morning, City Council. My name is
22 Ashira Rawlerson, and I'm a 15-year-
23 old student here in Philadelphia
24 turning 16 next month on June 9th.

1 I stand before you today to talk
2 about something incredibly important
3 to me, and advocate for so many
4 other young people in our city. I
5 learned to swim at Pickett Pool on
6 Wayne Avenue. That local pool
7 wasn't just a place to splash
8 surround; it was the starting point
9 for so many opportunities in my
10 life.

11 Being a part of the Indo-
12 Pacific Sailfish Aquatics Club,
13 there strengthened my skills and
14 opened doors I never imagined.
15 Because I learned to swim, I was
16 able to participate in rowing at
17 Lloyd Hall, and just this past
18 April, thanks to the strong
19 foundation I built in the water, I
20 passed the American Red Cross
21 Lifeguard course. This summer I'll
22 be working as a lifeguard at our
23 local outdoor pool. These
24 experiences wouldn't have been

1 possible without access to a local
2 pool and the chance to learn to
3 swim. That's why I'm asking you
4 today to prioritize the rebuilding
5 of Marcus Foster Pool and the
6 renovation of Pickett Pool.

7 There are so many teen
8 girls in Philadelphia just like me
9 who deserve the same opportunities.
10 They deserve the chance to learn a
11 vital life skill to participate in
12 sports and to gain valuable
13 employment such as lifeguards paying
14 16 an hour. We need Pickett Pool
15 renovated and reopened, and Marcus
16 Foster Pool rebuild for our
17 community and for the future of
18 young people in Philadelphia. Thank
19 you.

20 MR. RAWLERSON: Good
21 morning, city -- good morning, City
22 Council. My name is Yusef
23 Rawlerson, and I'm a 14-year-old
24 student in Philadelphia. I'll be 15

1 in July actually. I'm here today to
2 talk about something vital for our
3 community: A year-round access to
4 swimming. I learned to swim at
5 Pickett Pool on Wayne Avenue. Being
6 a part of the indoor -- of the
7 Indoor Pacific Sailfish Aquatics
8 Club. They wasn't just fun. It
9 strengthened my skills and opened up
10 opportunities. Because of that
11 access, I've been able to
12 participate in Philly rowing at
13 Lloyd Hall. And I plan to become a
14 lifeguard next year. That plan is
15 only possible because Pickett Pool
16 was there for me.

17 I remember being five years
18 old playing in the water, and almost
19 drowning. It was a scary moment,
20 but my mother made me realize how
21 crucial it was for me to learn how
22 to swim. She made sure I had access
23 to our local year-round pool for
24 swimming lessons, and it truly saved

1 my life. Today, I'm speaking on
2 behalf of all the black and brown
3 youth like me in Philadelphia.

4 We're asking City Council to
5 revenue, and reopen Pickett Pool,
6 and rebuild Marcus Foster Pool.

7 This isn't about
8 recreation, it's about providing a
9 vital life skill, keeping kids safe
10 and offering opportunities for
11 employment. Why should I have to
12 travel all the way to Lincoln Pool
13 or Friends Select just to take a
14 lifeguard course when Pickett Pool
15 is right there in my community and
16 Marcus Foster can be transformed?
17 Instead of our streets being heated
18 by violence, let's cool them down by
19 giving all youth access to swimming,
20 and much needed jobs. I've been
21 testifying about this for years.
22 Now we need action, not just words.
23 We need the funding to get this
24 done, and a quote from my favorite

1 show, "You better believe it." Thank
2 you.

3 MR. DOUGHERTY: Hello. My
4 name is Phineas Dougherty, and last
5 summer my C2L employer shared
6 Philadelphia rowing camp with us,
7 and said that if we wanted to
8 attend, she would work with us in
9 regards to our hours. I was excited
10 because playing with little kids all
11 day at the daycare was a lot of
12 work. They don't stop moving. So I
13 signed up, and then they told me
14 that I would be required to complete
15 a hundred meters, and tread water
16 for five minutes.

17 My mom told me to cancel my
18 registration because she said I
19 would not be able to pass the
20 entrance exam. But I told her, I
21 will go to the pool the minute they
22 open for the summer, and I will pass
23 the swim test. She told me that it
24 was not swimming, but me fighting

1 the water, and that the standards
2 have been lowered. I told her that
3 I had already committed to it, plus
4 I did not want to be the one who did
5 not attend.

6 So my mom called my uncle
7 and said, "I need you to give him a
8 crash course in swimming so that he
9 would be able to pass the entrance
10 test." There was nowhere for my
11 uncle to train me, so he paid for a
12 lifetime fitness membership, and
13 every night for three hours for the
14 next two weeks, he taught me how to
15 swim. I complained after two nights
16 and told my mom that it was hard
17 going to work with those little
18 kids, coming home only to leave
19 again and go to swim lessons for
20 three hours. I said, "Summer is
21 supposed to be fun." And she said,
22 "Welcome to adulting 101."

23 I told her, I just want to
24 be a kid, but she said, "Too late."

1 And every night she drove me 45
2 minutes to Life Time fitness, and
3 sat in the car while I had lessons.
4 Then on the day that rowing camp
5 started, we walked to Kelly Pool and
6 I jumped in and started swimming.
7 It was hard and somebody should have
8 told me it was a 50-meter pool,
9 because that makes a difference when
10 you are learning in a 25-meter pool.

11 But 22 of us showed up, and
12 only four of us were able to pass a
13 swim test. To be honest, I barely
14 passed and so did the other two.
15 Only one out of the group of 22 knew
16 how to swim. It was at that moment
17 that I realized the purpose for us
18 being here and testifying at the
19 school district each month. We do
20 it because swimming is simply not a
21 sport, but it is a life skill.

22 Living in the city is
23 already dangerous enough between
24 guns, drugs, and boredom. Why add

1 water? Did you know that children
2 of ages 5 to 14, drowning is the
3 second leading cause of
4 unintentional injury and death after
5 motor vehicle crashes? Did you know
6 black children ages 10 to 14 years
7 old drown at rates 6.7 times higher
8 than white children, and that black
9 children and youth are more likely
10 to drown in public pools? Bru, I
11 just turned 14, and I don't want to
12 be a statistic, nor do I want any of
13 my friends.

14 I am here today because
15 someone I haven't met is depending
16 on me to bring these resources,
17 particularly Marcus Foster and
18 Pickett Pool back on line. I'm here
19 so that swimming and swimming
20 opportunities become a norm. But we
21 need your help. Let's decrease
22 these statistics for kids and adults
23 like me. Thank you.

24 CHILD WHITMAN: My name is

1 Whitman, and I'm in sixth grade. I
2 want to tell you about all the ways
3 my mom sometimes doesn't make sense.
4 She says that I worry too much.
5 Yes, it's true that I'm always
6 asking those "what if" questions,
7 but she's to blame because she says
8 that I should read. And reading
9 means I learn new things and new
10 risks all the time. Then to get me
11 to stop saying, what if, she says is
12 better to say, oh, well, than what
13 if. Now this does not make any
14 sense.

15 She claims that by saying,
16 oh, well, it means that you tried,
17 but what if means that you didn't?
18 Maybe this statement works in most
19 situations, but it does not work
20 when it comes to swimming, because
21 oh, well could mean the difference
22 between living and dying, especially
23 in water. When I bring up this fact
24 to her, she brushes it off and says,

1 keep reading and stop worrying, but
2 how can I keep reading without
3 asking questions? I learned that
4 the best readers are the ones that
5 ask questions and I consider myself
6 the goat.

7 If I'm honest, I enjoy
8 reading so much, maybe because she
9 encourages it too much. I wonder if
10 she knows that reading is the cause
11 of some of my worries.

12 After reading the "I
13 Survived" series, especially the one
14 about Hurricane Katrina, and the
15 fact that many black and brown
16 people drowned, I started to worry
17 even more about the fact that I do
18 not know how to swim. Then to make
19 matters worse, in science, we were
20 reading about climate change and
21 rising sea levels nearly doubling
22 every year.

23 Did she know that 71
24 percent of the earth is water? Do

1 you know that and what that means?

2 It means we all need to learn to
3 swim, and not just during the few
4 months in the summer.

5 Do you know that hurricane
6 season starts June 1st and goes to
7 November 30th? That outdoor pools
8 don't even open until late June, and
9 that's if you live in a good
10 neighborhood, and they can find
11 lifeguards who want to come to work.

12 If you don't live in one of
13 these neighborhoods, you're lucky if
14 your pool opens in July, but it'll
15 close by September 1st, no matter
16 where you live. What kind of
17 preparedness swim lessons program is
18 that? You guys can do better than
19 this?

20 Three years ago, the Vine
21 Street Expressway was under water,
22 and earlier this year, parts of
23 the Schuylkill were flooded. Are
24 you guys reading? Are you guys

1 worried because we are here again
2 this year asking you guys to make
3 renovation -- of renovating or
4 rebuilding these public indoor pools
5 a priority because climate change is
6 here?

7 How can all of you adults
8 tell us kids to read and yet not
9 realize that you not be being able
10 to swim poses a risk? Who actually
11 needs to do their reading? Me or
12 you? Maybe my mom isn't the only
13 one who's not making sense.

14 CHILD PHOEBE: Hi. My name
15 is Phoebe, and last week I asked my
16 friend Chloe at school, why won't
17 her parents allow her to go to
18 overnight camp with me? She said,
19 "Listen, Phoebe, after I told my --
20 after my mom saw that there was a
21 pool, she said, nope, because black
22 people don't swim." I told her that
23 this was not true, because all my
24 aunts and uncles know how to swim.

1 Practically, everyone in my family
2 knows how to swim.

3 Then Chloe asked me, "Do
4 you know how to swim?" I was
5 winning the argument until Chloe
6 asked me this one question, and I
7 said, "Somewhat." She said, "See, I
8 know you didn't know how to swim.
9 Your aunts and uncles and even your
10 mom are just unicorns." I didn't
11 talk to Chloe for the rest of the
12 day.

13 When I came home, I told my
14 mom about the conversation and asked
15 her what happened to the progress
16 around swimming that was being made.
17 When she was growing up, she asked
18 me if I knew the opposite of
19 progress, and I said, "Yes, a
20 setback." Then she told me to define
21 setback, and when I didn't -- and
22 when I couldn't see, she said,
23 "Google it."

24 So I looked up what setback

1 meant, and in the dictionary, it
2 said that a setback was change in
3 status for the worst, usually
4 temporarily. So I was pleased with
5 my answer until my mom told me to
6 define temporarily. But before I
7 did, I asked her when she and the
8 community started advocating for
9 Marcus Foster and Pickett from
10 repairs to closure. She told me
11 2007. Wait, what? I was born in
12 2015, and now it's 2025. You mean
13 to tell me that they have been
14 advocating for 18 years now? So
15 that's not a setback, that's a
16 decline, which means going back to
17 an earlier or lower level.

18 This is injustice,
19 especially to every generation after
20 the '80s. I think my mom was born
21 sometime during that time.

22 It's why Chloe's narrative
23 that black people can't swim is a
24 fact and not a myth, and why I am

1 here today. Today is the time to
2 restore justice. Today is the time
3 in the day to put your money where
4 your mouth is and rehab Pickett Pool
5 and renovate Marcus Foster. Today
6 is the day for me to tell Chloe that
7 we are making progress, and that all
8 black and brown people will be able
9 to swim and she can come in my
10 neighborhood and learn.

11 MS. CHARISMA: Good
12 morning. My name is Charisma, and
13 unfortunately, I'm the unicorn that
14 my children speak of. Now, don't
15 get me wrong, I'm unique and
16 different, but I prefer to be
17 uniquely different in my own right.
18 And not because of a right that I
19 was afforded that is no longer right
20 for everyone else, but a privilege
21 to those who can't afford it. Who
22 work either next in line on the
23 YMCA's wait list, or to those who
24 have limited opportunity to access

1 pools for a maximum of eight weeks

2 if they're lucky in the summer.

3 When Phoebe shared what her

4 friend called me, being a unicorn, I

5 have to admit I was bothered and

6 rather saddened. James Baldwin once

7 said, "We can disagree and still

8 love each other unless your

9 disagreement is rooted in my

10 oppression and denial of my humanity

11 and right to exist." I inserted

12 uniqueness where disagreement is,

13 and here's what this quote now

14 sounds like. "We can disagree and

15 still love each other unless your

16 uniqueness is rooted in my

17 oppression and my denial of humanity

18 and a basic life skill." In that

19 case, I prefer not to be unique. I

20 prefer to be the rule and not the

21 exception.

22 Growing up in Nicetown

23 meant I had three free indoor pools

24 options. Marcus Foster, which was

1 0.23 miles away, Pickett Pool, which
2 was two miles away, Rhodes, 1.96
3 miles away. This was progress.
4 There were so many lifeguards
5 available that finding a position at
6 your neighborhood outdoor pool
7 required putting your name on the
8 waiting list or knowing someone who
9 knew someone. I eventually landed a
10 lifeguard position at Feltonville
11 Recreation Center.

12 This again was progress,
13 but since 2007, each of the school
14 district city owned public pools
15 along with the majority of others in
16 black and brown communities have
17 been systematically and quietly
18 closed or been torn down due to
19 willful neglect.

20 You know, there are 41 zip
21 codes in Philadelphia, yet the only
22 indoor pools currently open and
23 operating are in two zip codes, only
24 3.9 miles away from each other in

1 the northeast. While we are
2 thankful that Sora will be opening
3 soon, it is still not progress.
4 It's an injustice. Robert Kennedy
5 once said, "Justice delayed is
6 democracy denied." Republican
7 Washington are trying to kill
8 democracy by eliminating ideas such
9 as diversity, equity, and inclusion.

10 I trust our City Council
11 will welcome the opportunity to
12 defend what it means to be a
13 Democrat and ensure that diversity,
14 equity, and inclusion and aquatics
15 can thrive in our city. We are
16 asking that you include funding for
17 these pools in this year's budget.
18 Thank you.

19 THE CLERK: In addition to
20 the two witnesses who will be
21 testifying shortly, I want to call
22 up Chantelle Todman and Greg
23 Waldman.

24 MR. CHANIN: All right. My

1 name is Mitch Chanin. I'm a member
2 of Philly Thrive. It's really hard
3 to follow that team. Thank you so
4 much. So everyone has a right to a
5 safe, healthy home, including both
6 renters and low-income homeowners.
7 And that's why I'm here joining so
8 many others, calling for \$10 million
9 for proactive rental inspections,
10 and \$10 million for PEA's Built to
11 Last Repair program and their other
12 initiatives.

13 And that's why I'm also
14 joining a Coalition for Affordable
15 Communities and calling for 40
16 million for the Basic Systems Repair
17 program next year as part of the
18 HOME Initiative targeting people
19 below 60 percent of AMI.

20 So last year, I helped a
21 South Philly row homeowner who
22 needed emergency repairs to advocate
23 for herself. A few years before --
24 a few years before, she had been

1 incorrectly told that she was not
2 eligible for BSRP because she was
3 out of work.

4 Since then, her home had
5 suffered so much water damage that
6 she feared her house would collapse
7 on her. Community legal services
8 helped her reapply and we then
9 learned that PHDC was just then
10 reviewing applications they had
11 received 10 months before. We asked
12 three City Council offices to urge
13 PHDC to look at her application
14 right away since the situation was
15 so critical and she had been
16 rejected incorrectly before.

17 Thanks to those
18 interventions and special thanks to
19 Alyssa Adams and the Council
20 President's office, she was able to
21 get her roof fixed. But it was
22 pretty stunning to learn that the
23 lag time just to be considered for
24 an emergency repair was 10 months.

1 Now, while thousands of
2 Philadelphians are stuck waiting,
3 republicans are aiming to slash
4 federal programs that fund home
5 repairs. The Mayor's proposals
6 absolutely fail to meet the moment
7 with zero dollars for Built to Last
8 and no meaningful increase for BSRP.

9 The mayor, however, does
10 want to expand BSRP eligibility to
11 people with higher incomes saying
12 that we shouldn't have to choose
13 between the have-nots and people who
14 have a little. And I agree with the
15 principle, but not the position.
16 Residents whose incomes are above
17 the threshold, absolutely need and
18 deserve support. But we do have to
19 choose right now because the total
20 budget for home repairs is way too
21 small. In order to truly meet this
22 need and all of our city's needs, we
23 have to tax the rich much more,
24 slashing the business income

1 receipts tax across the board while
2 eliminating the \$100,000 exemption
3 is a huge step backward, especially
4 while Trump and congressional
5 Republicans are gutting essential
6 programs to cut taxes for
7 billionaires.

8 So please provide the funds
9 that are desperately needed for
10 low-income residents to have safe,
11 healthy homes, and say no to across-
12 the-board business tax cuts. Thank
13 you.

14 MR. ROEDERER: Hi. My name
15 is Alex Roederer. I live just a few
16 hundred feet from Pine Street in
17 District 2. I'm testifying in
18 support of Mayor Parker's proposed
19 \$5 million in Vision Zero funding
20 and for 5 million concrete
21 protection in -- for Spruce and
22 Pine.

23 Center City is lucky to
24 have walkable and bikeable

1 neighborhoods, modes of transit that
2 are humans scale and let people
3 engage with their communities. But
4 anyone who walks or bikes in the
5 city has seen a close call, a stoop,
6 or a sign, or a telephone pole, or
7 planter smashed to pieces, or the
8 worst, someone getting hit by a
9 speeding car.

10 Just a few days ago, a man
11 was killed by a dump truck driving
12 into him from behind in an
13 unprotected bike lane at 58th in
14 Baltimore. Every bicyclist and
15 pedestrian knows this fear. Traffic
16 violence is preventable, installing
17 protected bike lanes, speed bumps
18 and coronal bump-outs make drivers
19 slow down and protects pedestrians
20 and bicyclists. Every neighborhood
21 deserves these safety measures.

22 Spruce and Pine is one of
23 the major east west corridors for
24 bikes in the city used by over

1 40,000 people a month. Fifty

2 percent of households in our

3 neighborhood don't own a car.

4 There's a good place to start;

5 protected and separated bike lanes

6 increased safety.

7 Part of Spruce is currently

8 on the high injury network and the

9 high injury network data only spans

10 a few years. Pine and Spruce show

11 up in the high injury network based

12 on who has recently been hit on

13 those blocks. These streets should

14 be safe enough for parents to bike

15 with their kids to school, letting

16 more people use bikes, makes their

17 city cleaner, and greener, and helps

18 reduce traffic for those who truly

19 need to drive.

20 Opponents claim that they

21 care about safety but have outright

22 stated they don't want this

23 protection because they want the

24 convenience of loading at any time

1 directly in front of their doorstep
2 in a nice, clear bike lane. A
3 luxury most of us in the city don't
4 have, and they reject using loading
5 zones nearby instead because they
6 don't want to lose parking spots
7 directly in front of their homes,
8 another luxury many of us in Center
9 City don't have.

10 Frankly, I don't think
11 these luxuries are worth a
12 bicyclist, or pedestrian getting
13 killed every once in a while. I
14 believe we can reach Vision Zero
15 deaths -- near zero traffic deaths
16 in Philadelphia, and I applaud and
17 thank the mayor and City Council for
18 providing this funding as a start to
19 move us towards this goal.

20 THE CLERK: Thank you.

21 MR. ROEDERER: Thank you.

22 Good morning.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

24 Excuse me, real quick, because we

1 have a hard stop at 12:30, so
2 somebody had to go to work. Who is
3 that? Who said they had to go to
4 work?

5 MS. CHANTELLE: I got a
6 doctor --

7 THE CLERK: Chantelle,
8 that's you? Okay. Go ahead.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
10 Okay.

11 THE CLERK: And then
12 Greg -- and then Greg was next,
13 yeah.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Wait, who the two that had to go to
16 work?

17 MS. TODMAN: I have a --

18 THE CLERK: Chantelle and
19 Greg.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 We're doing Chantelle and Greg, and
22 then we have to break.

23 THE CLERK: Yeah.

24 MS. TODMAN: Thank you.

1 Good afternoon. My name is
2 Chantelle Todman, and I'm a resident
3 and small business owner in
4 Germantown in the 8th district.

5 My business, Blackbird
6 Rising is a healing and wellness
7 space in the process of becoming a
8 cooperative. Daring to open a
9 community-centered and owned
10 business in these times that
11 prioritize those who are black,
12 queer and cheer ants in the
13 community who love them is daunting
14 and not possible without much
15 support.

16 PACA has provided us with
17 training and support to guide us
18 through that process. PACA has also
19 funded a study group where we
20 learned about cooperative structures
21 and governance, they also partially
22 funded a retreat in which we were
23 able to go do co-op visioning,
24 dreaming, and planning. PACA

1 continues to provide critical
2 technical support in our cooperative
3 formation. PACA needs more funding
4 to be able to continue to do its
5 great work. Co-ops provide more
6 equitable structures for businesses
7 that are trying to grow consciously
8 and invest in underserved
9 communities, much like Blackbird
10 Rising.

11 With \$1.3 million as a
12 grant, PACA will be able to keep
13 supporting co-ops with technical
14 assistance and grants can go
15 directly to co-ops like mine. I
16 also urge City Council to continue
17 the bar exemption, which is vitally
18 important to small businesses.
19 Instead of raising our taxes, big
20 businesses and rich people need to
21 pay their dues. Thank you.

22 THE CLERK: Thank you.

23 MR. WALDMAN: Good
24 afternoon, members of City Council,

1 and I really appreciate the
2 flexibility. My name is Greg
3 Waldman, I've worked for the City of
4 Philadelphia for 12 years, and have
5 been a proud member of AFSCME DC 47,
6 local 2187 for over nine of those
7 years.

8 I speak to you as a union
9 member and not as a representative
10 of the city. As you know, this
11 great city struggles with high rates
12 of extreme poverty, and a quarter of
13 Philadelphians rely on federal
14 assistance, which have seen cuts
15 from the Trump administration, which
16 deep -- with deeper cuts on the near
17 horizon.

18 You might be surprised to
19 learn that many of the
20 Philadelphians living in poverty or
21 near poverty are city workers.
22 Clerks represented by DC 33 earn a
23 starting salary of just \$31,000 a
24 year. Non rep clip workers, which

1 is part of the Mayor's Clean and
2 Green initiative, earn just \$37,000
3 a year. Library assistance and
4 sanitation laborers who have just
5 seen a wage increase in the last
6 contract extension; a small wage
7 increase earn \$40,000 a year.

8 Over 40 percent of
9 municipal workers own less than
10 \$50,000 a year. Many DC 47 members
11 are also lowly paid well below
12 industry standards.

13 In contrast, in last year's
14 budget, Mayor Parker raised her own
15 salary by nine percent to \$269,708
16 or nine times that of a clerk.
17 According to MIT's living wage
18 calculator, a single parent raising
19 one child or working couple, raising
20 two children need over \$80,000 per
21 year to afford to live in
22 Philadelphia. That's almost double
23 the wage of -- that the city -- that
24 the city pays almost half of its

1 workforce.

2 How can a Philadelphia's --
3 how can Philadelphia's Mayor and
4 City Council reduce poverty when it
5 fails to pay its own workers working
6 families sustaining wages? I hear
7 the beeps, so I'm going to just go
8 to the bottom.

9 It doesn't have to be this
10 way. Instead of institutionalizing
11 15 years of reverse Robinhood tax
12 cuts, Philadelphia could fight for
13 the BIRT Exemption Court and double
14 it after winning its case. Council
15 could pass the wealth tax introduced
16 by Councilmembers Brooks and
17 O'Rourke, we could create a robust
18 work -- a city workforce by paying
19 city workers a living wage, making
20 public services stronger, and having
21 a broader reach, lifting thousands
22 of Philadelphians out of poverty.

23 THE CLERK: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

1 Thank you. Thank you very
2 much. Well, first and foremost, we
3 thank for everyone who've came and
4 provided public testimony during the
5 morning session.

6 The afternoon session will
7 begin at 1:30, and we look forward
8 to seeing all of you back here.
9 Thank you.

10 (Council at recess.)

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 We will now continue our committee
13 of the whole for the proposed FY
14 2026 budget. I'm going to ask
15 Ms. Kate Perez to please come on up.

16 MS. PEREZ: Kate Perez.

17 And I'll never forget Parker's
18 budget meeting when she said she
19 knows that the Clean Needle Exchange
20 saves lives. She's not arguing with
21 science, but she doesn't want to pay
22 for it anymore. Philly is
23 constantly pushing responsibilities
24 onto nonprofits and then defunding

1 and criminalizing care until the
2 only option left is forced treatment
3 or jail.

4 Jails that already have
5 lawsuits for not being up to
6 standard, and facilities that are
7 not equipped to handle influx of
8 patients going through withdrawals.
9 We saw Amanda Cahill suffer through
10 a painful preventable death with
11 inmates screaming for medical
12 attention for more than seven hours
13 straight with no answer. Building a
14 specialized treatment jail is not
15 the answer.

16 The police review board
17 doesn't have enough funding to
18 conduct their own investigations.
19 And if a cop kills an unarmed
20 civilian while off duty, the
21 Department will put Officer Sweeney
22 on administrative leave instead of
23 immediately arresting him, sending
24 the message that if you kill

1 someone, we'll protect you.

2 Settlements won't come out of your
3 paycheck and the city will still
4 give us millions more to buy drones.

5 The council voted to look
6 into investments in El Salvador as
7 we fear they no longer respect the
8 law. Let's also make sure none of
9 our money is involved with the
10 illegal occupation of Palestine.

11 Today marks day 72 of
12 Israel's complete blockade of all
13 humanitarian aid. While blocking
14 all food and medicine, they shot six
15 missiles at the European hospital in
16 Khan Yunis, making it the second
17 hospital they bombed in 24 hours.
18 We can't increase the police budget
19 even by a dollar until they agree to
20 stop cross training with the IOF.

21 A PPD officer walked a man
22 with no charges out of court and
23 straight into ICE custody, possibly
24 assisting with another person being

1 deported to El Salvador without
2 trial. We should investigate and
3 denounce this act as we must stay a
4 sanctuary city.

5 Our high-schoolers don't
6 have after school programs. SEPTA is
7 cutting even more roots. Our
8 libraries have mold. North Philly
9 these more trees. And Philabundance
10 is on the edge of bankruptcy as our
11 federal government continues to
12 defund the USDA.

13 The city budget is going to
14 have to find ways to feed its
15 citizens, and it should come out of
16 our overinflated police budget. If
17 we want to stop crime, we should
18 take preventative measures instead
19 of writing cops blank checks and
20 stop letting them partner with
21 armies that uphold apartheid. Free
22 Palestine.

23 THE CLERK: Next, we have
24 Brian Oglesby, Edith -- I can't read

1 the last name. Janet Dennis, Symbol
2 Lai and Marina Edens.

3 MR. OGLESBY: It's Oglesby
4 but close enough. It's quiz on
5 Tuesday.

6 THE CLERK: Apologies.

7 MR. OGLESBY: I'd like to
8 speak today on behalf of the
9 businesses that I represent in the
10 -- in Philadelphia and businesses
11 that do business in the surrounding
12 areas in reference to the business
13 income receipts tax, proposed
14 reduction and the reduction wage
15 tax.

16 There are five advantages
17 that I'd like to go over briefly.
18 One, it gives an opportunity for our
19 businesses, particularly our smaller
20 businesses to level the playing
21 field with our suburban
22 counterparts. And it makes --
23 because the current taxes as they
24 are make it more expensive to

1 operate businesses within city
2 limits compared to the suburbs like
3 King of Prussia, Conshohocken or
4 Cherry Hill, where some of those
5 taxes may not be existent. The
6 reduction in the tax gap between the
7 city and surrounding counties makes
8 it more attractive to stay in
9 Philadelphia or move to Philadelphia
10 and attract strong workforce and
11 more innovative people.

12 Again, particularly with
13 smaller businesses. It lowers
14 operating costs. It allows to pay
15 less for your gross receipts and net
16 income and that's a direct savings
17 that can be reinvested in workforce
18 and economic development locally.
19 The wage tax reduction would also
20 reduce the cost of employing people,
21 especially if your employees live in
22 Philadelphia and it makes hiring
23 (CHECK) and retaining talent --
24 local talent more affordable and

1 gives the opportunity for business
2 to expand, creating more business
3 receipts in the -- in the long run.

4 It attracts and retains
5 talent. We've long worked hard to
6 maintain our talent that we develop
7 in the City through our institutions
8 and our system of education, and the
9 Philadelphia's wage tax is
10 comparatively one of the largest in
11 the country, and reducing it allows
12 employees to take home more of their
13 pay which is a big selling point for
14 job seekers both here in the city
15 and people who may be attracted to
16 coming to the city.

17 Competitive take-home pay
18 helps small businesses compete with
19 larger firms and for suburban
20 employers, employees who aren't
21 subject to the same taxes. We boost
22 business growth and resilience,
23 lesser tax burdens mean more cash on
24 hand for expanding operations,

1 hiring more staff, build reserves
2 for slow periods. And small
3 businesses often operate on thin
4 margins. Tax relief can help the
5 difference between surviving and
6 thriving. We encourage -- and it
7 also finally encourages economic
8 development.

9 Reducing the city-specific
10 taxes like BIRT and wage tax makes
11 Philadelphia more attractive for
12 entrepreneurs, startups, and small
13 business expansion stakeholders that
14 we spend a lot of time working with
15 and trying to develop. This
16 contributes to job creation and
17 revitalization of city neighborhoods
18 that need economic development --
19 and development the most.

20 This type of tax reduction
21 helps our inner-city businesses grow
22 at a more rapid rate than they
23 currently are, and creates
24 opportunities in a time where the

1 marketplace has shrunken in terms of
2 external opportunities.

3 In short, small business
4 owner would benefit from these tax
5 reductions and they cut costs,
6 improve competitiveness, and
7 increase flexibility, especially
8 when compared to lower tax
9 environments in the surrounding
10 suburbs. For Philadelphia to retain
11 and grow its small business base and
12 its place as the economic engine for
13 this entire region, aligning its tax
14 policies more closely with the metro
15 area is key. Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Thank you. Symbol, how you doing?

18 MS. LAI: Hello.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 How's Ms. Cooper?

21 MS. LAI: She's not here
22 today. You have me.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Good. Good.

1 MS. LAI: My name is Symbol
2 Lai. I am with Children First.
3 First of all, I want to thank all
4 the Councilmembers who asked for a
5 one percent increase in the millage
6 transfer to the School District of
7 Philadelphia in this year's budget.
8 This bump generates 25 million in
9 new recurring funds to Philly
10 schools.

11 So last week during the
12 district's budget hearing, I heard
13 many of you ask about the lack of
14 anti-bullying programs, counselors
15 and steady teachers. It's clear
16 that everyone here cares deeply
17 about education, and I want to
18 encourage Councilmembers to think
19 about underfunding as a root cause
20 to the instability you'd like to
21 fix.

22 The school district is \$1.2
23 billion underfunded. People are
24 finding to fix this at the state,

1 but the state isn't the only player.
2 As you know, the city funds comprise
3 44 percent of the district's budget
4 as well, which means you,
5 Councilmembers, have a role in -- a
6 hand in getting our schools to
7 equity faster.

8 I also want to point out
9 that asking the district to dip into
10 its fund balance is not a sound
11 plan. Children First testified to
12 this last week but it's worth
13 repeating. The district's fund
14 balance is there for emergencies,
15 not regular operations. As it
16 stands, the fund balance is enough
17 to get the district through four and
18 a half weeks of operations. A year
19 is 52 weeks.

20 Last, I want to share the
21 stories of parents who can't come to
22 City Hall with me today. Last night
23 when I was preparing for this, I
24 sent out an urgent call asking for

1 their stories to help me testify and
2 I want to tell you a little bit
3 about what I heard back.

4 So first, we have Melissa
5 Rothermel who has three kids in the
6 Northeast with special needs. She
7 knows that more funding means a
8 better chance her kids will get
9 better services. Imani Badie, she
10 cares deeply about literacy. She
11 knows that kids are more likely to
12 end up in prison if they don't know
13 how to read. So, more funding
14 prevents this.

15 Donna Fields testified last
16 week, but she's not done. She wants
17 you to know about the fights,
18 lockdowns and even the suicide rates
19 that she's seen in her schools.
20 She's emphatic that schools need
21 more money to do more. Jazmin Banks
22 says that if we want to dismantle
23 the school and foster care to prison
24 pipeline, we need to invest in

1 schools. She quotes Frederick
2 Douglass, who said it's easier to
3 build children -- it's easier to
4 build strong children than to repair
5 broken men.

6 Rhonda Montgomery says that
7 she shouldn't have to dip into her
8 rent money to buy cleaning supplies
9 so her kids don't get sick. And
10 Samia Evans-Bolling wants to remind
11 you that if you -- if we invest in
12 our children, we invest in ourselves
13 and our communities and our city.
14 City Council, we want 25 million in
15 local funding for our schools.
16 Increase the millage rate transfer
17 by one percent. Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
19 Thank you.

20 THE CLERK: We have Edith.
21 Last name starts with a Z, Janet
22 Dennis, Marina Edens followed by
23 Joshua Atlas, Elena Darcy, Corey
24 Reidy, Nicholas Manta, Lena

1 Hernandez.

2 MS. REIDY: Hello, City

3 Council President and City

4 Councilmembers. My name is Corey

5 Reidy. I live in the 3rd District,

6 and I'm here today on behalf of

7 Philadelphia Area Cooperative

8 Alliance, aka PACA, where I have the

9 immense privilege to work every

10 single day with Philly co-ops.

11 Cooperatives are businesses owned

12 either by their workers and/or by

13 the community who utilizes them.

14 I personally became

15 involved with co-ops over 17 years

16 ago when I became a worker owner of

17 one. I had been hooked ever since

18 with good reason. We see in the

19 data, co-ops build happier, more

20 sustainable, more creative, and more

21 resilient workplaces, which in turn

22 build stronger, more equitable

23 communities and cities.

24 In the FY26 budget, we are

1 asking City Council to include a
2 \$1.3 million grant fund to stimulate
3 the Philadelphia cooperative economy
4 with a spend down over the course of
5 the next two to three years. One
6 million will be to fund co-ops
7 direct needs, \$300k will to provide
8 pro bono technical assistance. It
9 is modeled after multiple other
10 cities co-op grant funds.

11 In Madison, they invested
12 1.5 million over five years and they
13 doubled their amount of co-ops. To
14 be candid, losing the BIRT tax
15 exemption is going to hurt our
16 co-ops, particularly in the startup
17 years when every dollar matters,
18 making this grant fund to ask even
19 more imperative to ensure their
20 success.

21 I'll end this with, I get
22 the privilege to support co-ops on
23 figuring out their business plans,
24 their budgets, their legal

1 documents, their governance
2 structures, et cetera. But in the
3 midst of all that, we talk about why
4 they want to do this, why they are
5 doing this. Many of our co-ops come
6 from highly exploited industries,
7 service work like restaurants and
8 retail, domestic work like
9 childcare, home care, and
10 professional cleaners.

11 The first landscaping co-op
12 in Philly just launched, and these
13 co-ops tell me time and time again
14 that while they were working these
15 very exploited jobs, they would talk
16 with each other about how they knew
17 it didn't have to be this way. And
18 it doesn't. They're proving it.
19 Together they are building that
20 better way. But in order to really
21 expand and stabilize this better
22 way, this cooperative way, we need
23 City investment.

24 And it is the year of the

1 cooperative. Thank you, City
2 Council for declaring it so, Philly
3 was the first City to back the UN's
4 resolution and others have now
5 followed. The resolution says the
6 City of Philadelphia will do
7 everything it can to grow the
8 cooperative economy. We look
9 forward to this being true. Thank
10 you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 Thank you.

13 MS. MARTINEZ: Good
14 afternoon. Yeah, good afternoon.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

16 Please begin.

17 MS. MARTINEZ: Thank you,
18 City Council, for hearing us today.
19 My name is Lina Martinez and I am
20 here on behalf of COMPA Philly
21 Language Justice Co-op. We are a
22 cooperative of interpreters and
23 translators that work with community
24 groups across the city to facilitate

1 communication, collaboration, and
2 understanding between speakers of
3 different languages.

4 Our work raises the often
5 unheard voices of immigrant
6 communities and connects monolingual
7 English speakers to the wealth of
8 knowledge and experience of their
9 neighbors with whom they might
10 otherwise not be able to
11 communicate.

12 For a city as diverse and
13 multicultural as Philadelphia,
14 quality community focused language
15 services are essential to ensure the
16 meaningful participation of all
17 residents in culture, politics, and
18 the economy. Working as a
19 cooperative where the interpreters
20 and translators are also the owners
21 and decision makers of the business
22 helps keep COMPA integrated in the
23 communities that we serve. It
24 allows us to grow and develop

1 alongside the language needs of the
2 city. Having the opportunity to
3 receive training grants and pro bono
4 TA sessions through the Philadelphia
5 Area Cooperative Alliance or PACA
6 has allowed us to build the
7 foundations of our co-op.

8 But being a small business
9 that works directly with
10 marginalized communities means that
11 we operate with little overhead, and
12 changes in our financial landscape
13 can have huge consequences for our
14 co-op like COMPA.

15 By funding Co-ops with a
16 \$1.3 million grant and pro bono
17 technical assistance fund for
18 Philadelphia cooperatives, and by
19 maintaining the BIRT tax exemption,
20 City Council can help ensure that
21 small businesses like COMPA are able
22 to continue our work serving the
23 linguistically diverse, but deeply
24 integral communities that make up

1 the city of Philadelphia. Thank
2 you.

3 THE CLERK: Nicholas Monta,
4 Erin Young, Katie Seedle, Christina
5 Gosnell.

6 MS. SEEDLE: Hi, my name is
7 Katie and I'm a student of Community
8 College of Philadelphia and commute
9 from outside of the city from
10 Abington. I rely heavily on the
11 regional rail to get to and from
12 school every day. I am also an
13 activist with Fridays for Future and
14 Sunrise Movement here in
15 Philadelphia and rely on SEPTA to
16 get me to events and meetings.

17 With these cuts, it will
18 make getting to school impossible.
19 As my dad works, my mom is disabled
20 and I cannot drive, and I am
21 chronically ill. I am also working
22 class and cannot afford fare
23 increases. Many people may be in
24 situations like mine. Students all

1 over the city and outside the city
2 rely on SEPTA to get to school
3 whether it be elementary school,
4 middle school, high school, or
5 college.

6 The city needs to step up
7 funding for SEPTA and not rely just
8 on federal funding. These cuts and
9 fair increases will detrimentally
10 impact the working class such as
11 myself. SEPTA is what makes getting
12 around the city possible. This is
13 why we need each and every line and
14 bus route to remain open to its
15 fullest and affordable fare prices.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. YOUNG: Hi, I'm Erin
18 Young. I'm a climate activist with
19 Fridays for Future and Sunrise
20 Movement. I'm also an essential
21 worker assisting an elderly person
22 with stage 4 cancer at his home.
23 I'm disabled myself and can only
24 work part-time, so I'm low income.

1 I can't afford a car or ride share
2 and depend on SEPTA to carry out the
3 functions of my job.

4 Many of us in care work
5 depend on public transit. Those who
6 work swing shifts or overnights will
7 not be able to work if funding cuts
8 result in transit stopping at
9 9:00 p.m. Many other sectors will
10 be adversely affected. This
11 threatens our region's entire
12 economy.

13 While we fight for state
14 funding, we have to realize that the
15 city could fund more. Compared to
16 similar cities, Philadelphia under
17 spends on public transit. With
18 funding cuts on the federal level,
19 it's critical that we step up to
20 fill the gap for essential public
21 services.

22 Councilmember O'Rourke
23 introduced new legislation to expand
24 the Zero-Fare pilot program, which

1 would be life-changing for 20
2 percent of Philadelphians living
3 under the poverty line. I ask you
4 to vote yes on the Philadelphia
5 Transit Access Fund when it comes up
6 for a vote. But before that, I urge
7 you to dedicate more funding from
8 the city budget to SEPTA to ensure
9 that transit services don't get cut
10 and costs don't go up for riders.

11 Continuing the conversation
12 of public services funding, myself
13 and other Philadelphians benefit
14 from events, services, and resources
15 that the Free Library offers.
16 Libraries are highly utilized as
17 cooling centers in times of
18 dangerous heat, times which are
19 becoming more frequent because of
20 the climate crisis.

21 Libraries are also an
22 educational resource that we need
23 even more now because of the Trump
24 administration attacks on education.

1 I urge you to increase funding for
2 the Free Library by at least 30
3 million this budget cycle and
4 account for unspent funds in the
5 last budget cycle. Thank you.

6 THE CLERK: Janet Dennis,
7 Christina Gosnell. You can state
8 your name, for the record, and
9 proceed.

10 MS. DENNIS: Good
11 afternoon, City Council. My name is
12 Janet Dennis, and I'm a retired
13 social worker and a US and
14 international athlete. I'm here
15 today representing Philly Aquatics
16 and their quest to reopen the Picket
17 pool and to rebuild the Marcus
18 Foster Pool. I live in District 8.

19 I learned to swim 50 years
20 ago while an undergraduate student
21 at Temple University. I'm a
22 backstroker. Who knew that at 50, I
23 would become a competitor swimmer?
24 Who knew at 70, I would still be

1 swimming. Nineteen years ago, I
2 received a lifesaving transplant.
3 Heart transplant. After completing
4 cardio rehab, I was told that the
5 heart is a muscle and I will have to
6 join the gym. I joined LA Fitness
7 but I am a pool-only member.
8 Swimming is a sport that can clearly
9 take you into your senior years. I
10 represent Team Philadelphia in
11 competitions in the United States.
12 I represent team USA in competitions
13 all over the world. I noticed right
14 away that I am the only African
15 American swimmer at all these
16 competitions. This August, at the
17 age of 70, I'll be representing team
18 USA in Dresden, Germany.

19 In addition to swimming, I
20 do shot put, distance javelin and a
21 long jump, okay? July the 25th is
22 World Drowning Prevention Day. It's
23 a global event that serves as an
24 opportunity to highlight the tragic

1 and profound impact of drowning on
2 families and communities.

3 An estimated 236,000 people
4 drown every single year. November
5 the 3rd, 1966, there was a program
6 that's still up to today, which is
7 called RIF, R-I-F, Reading Is
8 Fundamental. It provides books with
9 children in underserved communities.
10 I'm just saying, let's update the
11 Philadelphia curriculums in support.
12 Swimming is a fundamental.

13 MS. WOMACK: Good
14 afternoon. My name is Eleanor
15 Womack. I live in Nicetown for over
16 60 years. So, Marcus Foster is very
17 important to me. I'm with the
18 PHILAquatics and also the Stanton
19 Park Advisory Board.

20 I would like attention to
21 be paid to Nicetown in reference to
22 Marcus Foster Pool. I've taken and
23 raised most children, most boys, and
24 they became lifeguards learning

1 life-saving skills that they could
2 pass on to their families. I
3 couldn't bring them today. They're
4 all grown and living in other
5 cities. But if you could please pay
6 attention as well to Stanton Park.

7 We have no Wi-Fi, we have
8 no facilities for children. We need
9 attention. I've gone to our
10 representatives and made
11 appointments and in the appointments
12 they did not show. So I just need
13 someone to address the issue and see
14 what's happening and get back to us
15 right away. Thank you.

16 MR. SCOTT: Good afternoon.
17 My name is Sterling Scott. I'm a
18 member of the Citizen Congress of
19 Nicetown. Also, Vice President of
20 our own RCO, Nicetown, RCO. The
21 Marcus Foster Pool is a lifeline for
22 the Nicetown residents.
23 PHILAquatics is vital for our
24 community.

1 There are many benefits in
2 our pools -- for pools in our
3 neighborhood. One, pulls community
4 -- it pulls community together.
5 Parents will want their children to
6 learn how to swim and they will
7 assist in the curriculum. Also, the
8 guidance that comes from the
9 instructors will be a lifelong
10 benefit and add structure to the
11 child's development in our
12 community.

13 Marcus Foster Pool is --we
14 have been asked many a times, why
15 has Marcus Foster Pool not been
16 rebuilt? These are young and old
17 adults. The older seniors, they
18 need this for their treatments and
19 the pools can eliminate a lot of
20 weight or stress on their bodies
21 where they cannot do regular
22 exercise. Okay? Our neighbors want
23 to be -- don't want to be an
24 afterthought or neglected. Thank

1 you.

2 One other thing, the pools
3 are -- the pools are -- Marcus
4 Foster Pool is in the historic area.

5 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:

6 Okay. Thank you.

7 Sir, we need you to -- if
8 you're speaking, speak in to the mic
9 so we can get it on the transcript.
10 But thank you very, very much. The
11 clerk will please call the next set
12 of witnesses.

13 THE CLERK: Christina
14 Gosnell, Shihong Lin, Yvonne Lung,
15 Vivian Chang and Alex Wiles.

16 MR. LIN: So, hello. Thank
17 you for this opportunity for me to
18 be here to speak. So, hello, my
19 name is Shihong Lin. So I work in
20 Asian America United. So we are a
21 community-based organization that's
22 raising youth and family for
23 success.

24 So personally, I came to

1 America when I was 12 years old. My
2 family chose Philadelphia because it
3 was a work owned immigrant city like
4 ours. I'm a proud graduate from my
5 Marco Elementary School and Furness
6 High School from our public school
7 from Philadelphia. So I was able to
8 attend and graduate from Temple
9 University because of support I
10 received in the public system.

11 So, yeah, so personally as
12 an immigrant student who used to
13 graduate from Philadelphia, I really
14 hope there will be like more
15 resource going to our popular
16 education system to support all the
17 students who have better learning
18 environment and a safety school.
19 But, like, those support are under
20 attack right now.

21 The Newcomer program to
22 help children learn English and be
23 protected at school are almost gone.
24 Even though students are getting

1 left behind every day, our city is
2 not doing enough to help them.

3 Many students come to
4 Philly because they are escaping
5 from the war, violent and traumas.
6 So City Council should provide 2
7 million for newcomer programs so
8 there is no children left behind in
9 our public schools.

10 City Council should provide
11 1.8 million from the Philadelphia
12 Immigrants Family Unity Projects.
13 If the city abandoned its
14 responsibilities, then more of our
15 children will be more suffering in
16 our popular Philadelphia high
17 school.

18 So that's not what we want
19 to see in our cities. So, we're all
20 here to look forward to a better
21 future of our public systems. Better
22 budget -- like, better budget and
23 better future of our Philadelphia on
24 next years. And also, of course,

1 include another champions to win for
2 our Super Bowls. So yeah, Go
3 Eagles, Go Philadelphia. Thank you.

4 MS. LUNG: City

5 Councilmembers, thank you for this
6 opportunity to testify. My name is
7 Yvonne Lung. I'm an artist who has
8 called Philadelphia home since 2007.
9 And I have been active in art and --
10 in the art and cultural community
11 for just as long.

12 I'm also a second-
13 generation immigrant with close ties
14 to my API community. So I'm here
15 today to oppose Bill No. 250199. I
16 want to talk about how getting rid
17 of BIRT would affect small business
18 owners, which includes artists. As
19 an artist, I'm a small business.
20 Artists, musicians, dancers, writers
21 and actors are all small business
22 owners in the city. While Philly
23 has a very, very vibrant arts and
24 community -- arts and culture

1 community, as makers, as
2 contractors, entrepreneurs, our
3 income fluctuates and every penny we
4 earn counts.

5 Since the conception of the
6 BIRT exemption in 2014, small
7 businesses like me have experienced
8 its benefits. It is because of the
9 exemption that my partner and I who
10 he is also an artist, were able to
11 save up for a down payment to buy a
12 house that is not only our home, but
13 also, we have our artist studio in
14 there as well, instead of renting a
15 studio from a slum landlord.

16 Just recently, the arts and
17 cultural organizations in the
18 Philadelphia region have received
19 notification from the National
20 Endowment of the Arts, rescinding
21 grants, left and right, that have
22 been promised to them wreaking havoc
23 in our community, which also means
24 this is going to be less money that

1 will trickle down to individual
2 artists, musicians, dancers, writers
3 and performers, people like me.

4 Should the BIRT extension
5 be cut or canceled, this will add
6 another financial burden to people
7 like me, which will cause talent to
8 leave Philadelphia and search for a
9 city that supports makers and
10 creatives.

11 I ask the city not to
12 remove the BIRT exemption. Why are
13 we providing tax cuts to those that
14 don't need it? The big
15 corporations, the multimillionaires,
16 the billionaires. In order to
17 create a city that is livable,
18 diverse, and beautiful, the city
19 needs to support the local and small
20 businesses.

21 Imagine the Mural Arts
22 program not having any artists to be
23 able to create the beautiful murals
24 that you see around the city.

1 Imagine FDR Park not holding a
2 Southeast Asian market. And I want
3 to say yes, those aunties and uncles
4 that are cooking there are artists
5 as well. Imagine the Bok Building
6 empty with no artist studios and
7 there are no art communities. I
8 sincerely ask the City Council to
9 support the continuation of the BIRT
10 exemption. Thank you.

11 MS. CHANG: Yes, that's
12 right. Should I go? My name is
13 Vivian Chang. I am a member of the
14 Alliance for a Just Philadelphia.
15 Also work at -- yes. We're a
16 coalition of so many organizations,
17 so many people in this room, and
18 sadly, so many Councilmembers not
19 listening to us, I just want to name
20 that.

21 I think there's so many
22 people who took time out of their
23 day. And look, I'm looking at all
24 these empty seats. So I hope that,

1 like, you know, even if folks aren't
2 able to hear us live, maybe they can
3 come back and listen to us here.
4 But, you know, in short, everything
5 we've testified today relies on city
6 services. It relies on funding for
7 our city government, right? Where
8 there's no way we're going to have
9 safe, healthy homes for all if we
10 cut taxes on big corporations.

11 There's no way that this
12 city can really live up to its
13 promise to protect all people,
14 including our immigrants if we cut
15 those taxes on big corporations.
16 And the BIRT tax is part of that,
17 right?

18 There is a plan right now
19 that the mayor has put forth to tax
20 80,000 small businesses, two thirds
21 of all businesses in Philly. So
22 squeezing blood from those little
23 stones, so that there can be cuts
24 made on the biggest corporations; on

1 union busters like Aramark; is that
2 fair? Does that make sense? Yeah.

3 So the city right now, this
4 proposal before us is choosing to
5 steal from the poor to give to the
6 rich. Take food from the mouths of
7 babes so that billionaires like
8 David Edelman can destroy more
9 neighborhoods and buy more cyber
10 trucks and that doesn't make sense.

11 So 80,000 businesses, I
12 just want to repeat that number,
13 these are the smallest businesses in
14 Philadelphia, and these are sole
15 proprietors, family businesses,
16 longtime shops, many of whom were
17 redlined out of federal loans and
18 grants, and they're only surviving
19 today by the skin of their teeth.

20 These are businesses that
21 are going to be forced to suddenly
22 pay, you know, upwards of a thousand
23 dollars in taxes even more. And the
24 proposal is a \$30 million fund for

1 transition. Well, if we do the
2 math, 80,000 businesses, \$30
3 million, that's not even enough
4 money for the first year of this new
5 tax.

6 So, you know, these small
7 businesses are not looking for a
8 handout, but they don't want to
9 high-five when they're drowning.
10 How many small businesses will be
11 allowed to be destroyed? How many
12 services are we going to be allowed
13 to cut because of this? I urge City
14 Council, do not remove the BIRT
15 Exemption. Fund our people's
16 budget. Thank you.

17 MR. WILES: Good afternoon,
18 everyone. I'm Alex Wiles from
19 Bonfire Media Collective. We are a
20 media co-op that is actually a very
21 short walk away from here. I'm here
22 also in support of the Philadelphia
23 Area Cooperative Alliance and the
24 Alliance for a Just Philadelphia.

1 If you recognize our
2 business name as a member of local
3 government, it may be because we are
4 the ones who ran the campaign, the
5 media campaign for Kendra Brooks,
6 who I'm very happy was able to win
7 her run and still occupies office in
8 this building, and was able to do
9 lots of amazing things as a member
10 of local government.

11 Years ago, I also worked
12 alongside Helen Gym and Media
13 Mobilizing project on the Cap
14 Comcast campaign to help ensure
15 through our ongoing franchise
16 agreement with this company that
17 they will pay their fair share in
18 this country. This also led to lots
19 of other cities across the country
20 stopping their franchise agreements
21 with their large corporations to get
22 some of the more equitable things
23 that Philadelphia was able to
24 accomplish.

1 This is the exact kind of
2 leadership that we need right now.
3 We were able to help lead our
4 country by example as a city and we
5 can continue doing so. This is the
6 kind of leadership and advocacy we
7 need, especially now as our country
8 and communities are threatened with
9 so much violence, injustice and
10 inequity.

11 As a member of a
12 cooperative, I have seen the work
13 that can be accomplished in a
14 worker-owned company.

15 We need city funding for
16 co-ops and we cannot lose our BIRT
17 taxes exemption. Co-ops are run
18 democratically, where all workers
19 have a voice in a time when so many
20 companies take advantage of their
21 workers, we need more co-ops and we
22 need them to flourish, not just
23 survive. We need leaders to help
24 restore the rapidly fading trust

1 that voters have in our government.

2 I'm asking for a \$1.3
3 million investment in our fully
4 co-ops, which embody democracy and
5 community. We are exhausted as a
6 city and as voters with just-the-
7 survive mindset. Support us with
8 vital funding so that we can thrive,
9 not just survive. Thank you.

10 THE CLERK: Next, we have
11 Terrell Cannon, Jacob Russell,
12 Linnea Bond, Marissa Johnson Vale,
13 Paul Hannick, and Nicole Brunette.

14 MS. JOHNSON-VALENZUELA:
15 Hello, everyone. Do I start now?

16 THE CLERK: Hold on one
17 second.

18 MS. JOHNSON-VALENZUELA:
19 Oh, I'm sorry.

20 THE CLERK: Good. Okay.

21 MS. JOHNSON-VALENZUELA:
22 Okay. Hello, I know a number of
23 you. My name is Marissa Johnson-
24 Valenzuela. I am a union leader and

1 I think 13 years full-time faculty
2 member at Community College of
3 Philadelphia. And maybe it's 14,
4 maybe it's 12, I don't know, it's
5 somewhere, a long time. I'm also a
6 former CCP student.

7 And I am here because I
8 love Philadelphia deeply, that's why
9 I teach at Community College of
10 Philadelphia. I'm also really proud
11 that our union is part of a
12 coalition of more than 40
13 organizations with these t-shirts
14 here calling for increased
15 investment in our communities.

16 My joke here is that I am
17 an English professor, but the math
18 is not mathing. Our city needs more
19 investment in our people, and as
20 part of that, I am here today to
21 advocate for increased investment in
22 Community College of Philadelphia,
23 15 million more in general operating
24 funds, and two million more for

1 SEPTA passes for students, which we
2 were able to win an agreement on,
3 but yet the funding is still in
4 question, as you heard from Harold
5 Epps when he was here testifying to
6 you.

7 So, but I do also want to
8 take a moment to thank folks in this
9 room for their support; for the
10 faculty, and staff, and students at
11 Community College of Philadelphia.
12 I was there all night long to reach
13 the deal that our members
14 overwhelmingly agreed to, and that
15 97 percent were willing to strike
16 for, right? And I know you got a
17 late night phone call yourself to
18 try to make that happen, you know,
19 but after four and -- so the city's
20 headed in the right direction, but
21 after four decades of defunding at
22 the city and state level, after four
23 decades of breaking the promise that
24 CCP and all community colleges

1 across the state were founded with,
2 the city still needs to do more to
3 do right by its college.

4 And so, you know, again, 15
5 million increase in general funding,
6 two million for SEPTA passes, and
7 you know, you know, I trust that
8 everyone in this room is aware of
9 the cuts coming from the federal
10 government and is upset by them.

11 And this is a real
12 opportunity to push back against
13 them and to make sure that CCP is
14 okay, because those cuts will gut
15 us, right? The financial aid cuts
16 that the Republicans are pushing
17 will have a devastating effect and
18 now is not the time to go cheap on
19 the community -- on our college.
20 Thank you.

21 MS. BOND: Hi. My name is
22 Linnea Bond. I am a resident of the
23 5th District and the director of
24 Education for Physicians for Social

1 Responsibility Pennsylvania.

2 Based on what they treat in
3 clinic and the latest research, the
4 medical professionals I work with
5 are advocating for investments in
6 public health with serious concerns
7 about climate change, air quality,
8 and environmental pollutants.

9 We support the Safe and
10 Healthy Homes initiative, including
11 PEA's \$10 million ask for the Built
12 to Last program and administrative
13 costs that enable coordination and
14 communication with residents who
15 receive assistance.

16 Speaking as a renter
17 myself, who lives next to a home
18 that had multiple gas leaks and
19 where the landlord had an illegal
20 furnace and renters found mold, and
21 two years of respiratory issues
22 ended when they moved out, I
23 personally want to underscore the
24 need for inspections with funding

1 for L&I.

2 Both inspections and repair
3 funding help prevent long-term
4 health harm. Physicians again and
5 again also impress on me the need
6 for investment in green and public
7 spaces that improve air quality, and
8 for the public transit that many
9 residents depend on, and that
10 reduces pollution from car
11 congestion.

12 Again, speaking for myself
13 as an educator who has worked in
14 many Philadelphia public schools and
15 currently as a reading coach for a
16 brilliant but distractible
17 kindergartner at Alexander McClure,
18 an excellent elementary school in
19 Councilmember Lozada's district, I
20 urge council to prioritize school
21 funding. Perhaps it was a failing
22 of my own education, but I have
23 trouble with the math of how we can
24 fund our priorities if we cut taxes

1 for the wealthiest people and
2 corporations who can most afford to
3 pay for them. Thank you.

4 MR. RUSSELL: Hello, City
5 Council. My name is Jacob Russell.
6 I live on Spruce Street between 5th
7 and 6th, and I want to share today
8 my support for the \$10 million
9 investment in Vision Zero and
10 concrete protection on the Spruce
11 and Pine bike lanes.

12 I'm far from the only
13 resident of my street looking
14 forward to these improvements.
15 Nearly 400 Philadelphians attended
16 the open-house on the protection
17 plan, 80 percent of which expressed
18 support for concrete protection on
19 the exit survey.

20 Those 400 residents
21 included 150 residents of Spruce and
22 Pine, and among those 150, 62
23 percent raised voice support for the
24 plan. Protected bike lanes are not

1 a niche issue for a small vocal
2 minority; they're a broadly popular
3 policy that will save lives
4 throughout the city.

5 I know some of my neighbors
6 have complained about the cost of
7 the bike lanes. I'd like to remind
8 them that \$5 million is 0.07 percent
9 of the city budget. If the city was
10 a person making the Philadelphia
11 average of \$60,000 a year, the bike
12 thing would cost \$42. Protecting
13 thousands of lives for the relative
14 cost of a restaurant dinner is quite
15 a bargain. A \$5 million investment
16 in safety also pales in comparison
17 to the massive parking subsidy
18 Center City residents receive each
19 year from the city.

20 A market rate parking spot
21 in Center City is about \$3,000 per
22 year, and the city charges a measly
23 \$75 for the privilege of parking
24 their private vehicle on public

1 streets. Each parking permit
2 constitutes a subsidy of thousands
3 of dollars to the city's richest
4 residents.

5 If my neighbors are also
6 concerned about the cost of safety
7 improvements, hope they can get
8 behind drastic increases in the
9 parking permit costs to pay for
10 these improvements.

11 While the bike lanes are in
12 Philadelphia's richest neighborhood,
13 they do serve residents from every
14 part of the city. They're an
15 essential affordable connection to
16 the jobs and services in Center
17 City. 7,000 Philadelphians joined
18 our petition demanding Congress
19 protection on Spruce and Pine, 1,000
20 living in Center City and 6,000 from
21 other districts. Philadelphians in
22 every district want these
23 improvements. I do agree with my
24 neighbors that the challenge the

1 city faces in traffic violence go
2 far beyond Spruce and Pine Street.

3 The DVRCP estimates that
4 Philly needs an investment of two
5 billion to actually achieve Vision
6 Zero. While the proposed 10 million
7 is a welcome step in the right
8 direction, it falls well short of
9 the investment needed to really keep
10 Philadelphians safe on their
11 streets. If we were serious about
12 protecting people from traffic
13 deaths, we should be investing tens
14 of millions, not -- sorry.

15 We should be investing
16 hundreds of millions, not tens of
17 millions. I hope this council and
18 the mayor can build upon these huge
19 investments to finally actually work
20 to eliminate traffic deaths in our
21 community. Thank you.

22 MS. BRUNETTE: Hello. My
23 name's Nicole Brunette. Thank you
24 so much, Council. I'm the policy

1 director for the Bicycle Coalition
2 of Greater Philadelphia, and I'm
3 here testifying in support of the
4 proposed Vision Zero budget found in
5 Mayor Parker's Proposed FY26 capital
6 budget.

7 The Mayor's proposed budget
8 is one way to show the city's
9 commitment to Vision Zero and
10 reaching zero traffic fatalities.
11 The main budget line for Vision Zero
12 was increased -- from 1 million last
13 year to 3.5, and an additional 1.5
14 for Vision Zero shows up in another
15 set of budget lines.

16 This Vision Zero budget
17 line also includes \$5 million from
18 another source of funding to pay for
19 concrete protected bike lanes on
20 Spruce and Pine Streets. So this
21 issue is really important to me.

22 Philadelphia is a beautiful
23 historic city, and parts of the city
24 have maintained dense neighborhoods

1 with small roads and short blocks.

2 This design is perfect for
3 safe streets, for people walking,
4 biking, taking transit, and even
5 driving by encouraging lower speeds.

6 However, over the past half century,
7 city planners have built highways
8 through a majority/minority
9 neighborhoods, causing the most
10 diverse neighborhoods of
11 Philadelphia to have some of the
12 most dangerous roads. There's a
13 discrepancy between the safety of
14 state roads versus city-owned roads.

15 The state roads are
16 typically wider cross cut through
17 full neighborhoods and require state
18 and federal funding to improve.
19 With the uncertainty of federal
20 infrastructure funding, having
21 stable city funding to improve
22 locally-owned roads and work with
23 state partners is critical to
24 improving the safety of underserved

1 communities.

2 I applaud the Parker
3 administration for increasing the
4 city's contribution to Vision Zero
5 and listening to community members
6 who feel the largest impacts of
7 traffic violence. Now it's up to
8 all of you to approve a budget that
9 continues to prioritize safety for
10 all users over the speed of one.

11 I was also surprised to see
12 a new budget line for multimodal
13 trails and side pass to help
14 maintain trails throughout the city
15 in Fiscal Year 2027. However, it
16 currently doesn't include funding
17 for this coming fiscal year. I
18 request the budget line include
19 \$500,000.

20 Having this money could
21 provide funds to help with any
22 additional costs for state or
23 federally funded trail projects,
24 safeguarding against potential

1 delays caused by unexpected costs.

2 This is especially important during
3 the time of federal uncertainty.

4 Thank you so much and for your
5 consideration.

6 MR. HANNICK: Good
7 afternoon, Councilmembers and
8 neighbors. My name is Paul Hannick.
9 I'm a human rights lawyer. I'm a
10 proponent of transparency and
11 accountability. My comments involve
12 the Philadelphia Police Department's
13 budget and also Vision Zero.

14 The other day I called my
15 police district to bring attention
16 to multiple observations in my
17 neighborhood of motorist: personal
18 and commercial unlawfully covering
19 the registration plates and
20 rendering them unreadable, Amber
21 alerts, stolen vehicles, valid
22 insurance arrest warrants, all
23 checked based on reading license
24 plates.

1 I mentioned that after I
2 took a photo in a public place of an
3 illegally parked vehicle in the
4 bicycle lane, pretty typical, I was
5 chased, physically stopped in
6 accosted in the middle of the
7 intersection of Pine and 17th. And
8 Philadelphia Police's response was,
9 "We know you're upset about people
10 parking the bicycle lane. Next
11 time, don't engage."

12 Why not? Thanks for
13 bringing attention to this unlawful
14 behavior of obscuring plates. We'll
15 ensure our officers patrolling those
16 areas keep an eye out."?

17 On any given day I observe
18 7-8 police officers on bicycles in a
19 gaggle near the south side of City
20 Hall. They can't spare one or two
21 to ride along the unprotected,
22 unenforced, high-injury network
23 streets to provide presence and
24 enforcement in those areas. It

1 probably has nothing to do with me
2 publicly expressing to municipal
3 leaders of their duty to ensure the
4 safety of all its residents, and
5 alleging the unreasonable delays in
6 implementing valid safety laws
7 breached that duty, and that city
8 were to implement and enforce
9 would've clearly prevented
10 unnecessary, preventable traffic
11 deaths.

12 I'm certain that my reports
13 to the District Attorney's office
14 and the Inspector General have
15 nothing to do with the disrespect I
16 experienced. And by not enforcing
17 public safety and traffic laws,
18 officers often violate the laws
19 themselves. The PPD, not allowing
20 hostility to grow between vexed
21 neighbors that underlies the very
22 violence your department struggles
23 to subdue.

24 Stop over policing black,

1 indigenous people of color
2 communities and start fighting
3 rampant corruption. Free Palestine.
4 I yield.

5 THE CLERK: Next, we have
6 Jenny Zhang, Devren Washington,
7 Jordan Brittingham, Thomas
8 Kowalczyk, and Jules Rodgers.

9 MS. ZHANG: My name is
10 Jenny Zhang. I'm with the Alliance
11 for a Just Philadelphia, APIPA, and
12 I live in Chinatown. We're seeing
13 every day at the federal level cuts
14 to lifesaving programs and essential
15 services, and these affect every
16 Philadelphian, and especially our
17 most vulnerable and marginalized.

18 And that is why it is
19 crucial our city not accept this
20 budget at face value, we need more.
21 Our libraries, parks, transit,
22 housing, other services are already
23 at risk, this budget puts them at
24 further risk through the tax cuts to

1 big business.

2 We need Council to pass the
3 wealth tax so that ultra wealthy
4 Philadelphians pay their fair share.
5 Why are we codifying 13 years of tax
6 cuts? They're already getting tax
7 cuts at the federal and state
8 levels. If we want to budget that
9 protects and supports Philadelphia
10 for the people long term, we need to
11 fund it. In order for a budget to
12 function properly, it needs funding,
13 billionaires need to pay up.

14 And one of the things we
15 really need to fund in this city are
16 mobile mental health crisis units.
17 I'm speaking today in support of \$20
18 million of funding for mobile crisis
19 units in Philadelphia. We need
20 care, not more policing. And I'm
21 also here today because of Christian
22 Hall. Many of you already know his
23 story, but Christian was
24 experiencing a mental health crisis

1 in Monroe County. When police
2 arrived, they shot and killed him.
3 Access to mobile -- multi mobile
4 crisis unit could have saved his
5 life and it could have saved many
6 people -- these units could have
7 saved many people's lives.

8 When these units are fully
9 funded, they can save even more
10 lives. May is Mental Health
11 Awareness Month, and we need to take
12 mental health seriously in this
13 city.

14 As Council considers the
15 budget and as we face potential
16 federal cuts, we cannot afford to
17 skimp on life-saving resources in
18 favor of over-policing. It is now
19 more important than ever that we
20 fully fund culturally competent
21 linguistically accessible mental
22 health services that protect the
23 health and safety of Philadelphians.

24 We need and deserve

1 compassionate, professional mental
2 health response to mental health
3 crisis. Thank you.

4 MR. WASHINGTON: Good
5 afternoon. My name is Devren
6 Washington. I'm the organizing
7 director at People's Tech Project,
8 and co-convener of the Philly Tech
9 Justice Collective. We are also
10 members of the Alliance, and we work
11 on -- we fight for community control
12 over the technology that shapes our
13 lives, especially when used by the
14 government and corporations.

15 Right now, the Mayor's
16 budget earmarks tens of millions of
17 dollars for tech projects that
18 include police surveillance. At
19 their hearing, the police admitted
20 that the surveillance data that is
21 captured is shared at times with the
22 federal government.

23 This is the same government
24 that is conducting mass deportations

1 to El Salvador, and targeting
2 citizens for their first -- for
3 exercising their first amendment
4 rights. This is also the same
5 government that just opened a
6 detention center next to the Newark
7 Airport in New Jersey and arrested
8 the mayor.

9 And so this isn't
10 hypothetical, right? ICE and other
11 law enforcement agencies, federal
12 law enforcement agencies use local
13 data to persecute immigrants, black
14 and brown communities, and by
15 funding surveillance, you're
16 bankrolling the tools they need to
17 violate our rights.

18 We have a -- we also want a
19 safe and thriving Philly too. A
20 clean, green, safe Philadelphia with
21 economic opportunities for all, like
22 the mayor says. But we think that
23 by -- that we demand that you all
24 divest from surveillance, and invest

1 in what actually works, which is a
2 fully funded people's budget.

3 Organizations like YEAH
4 estimate that the city could be
5 spending around \$30,000 per youth to
6 almost eradicate youth involved
7 violence by focusing on the youth
8 that are most at risk instead of the
9 220,000 that they are spending to
10 maintain the Juvenile Justice
11 Center.

12 So just to wrap it up,
13 because I know my time is just about
14 over, you know, we want to move away
15 from policing, we want to make sure
16 we're continuing to fund things like
17 the PHL Connected program, and we
18 also need for City Council to start
19 holding hearings on how the city is
20 using technology especially with the
21 police department because we
22 understand that there are -- there's
23 a lack of transparency in how it's
24 used. Thank you.

1 MR. BRITTINGHAM: Hello.
2 Good afternoon. My name is Jordan
3 Brittingham and I'm an organizer at
4 Peoples Tech Project. For the last
5 two years, we at Peoples Tech have
6 been talking with community members,
7 leaders, and organizers to build our
8 understanding of technologies impact
9 on our communities. Through those
10 conversations, we can see how tech
11 is changing our society right before
12 our eyes and not always in the best
13 way.

14 Particularly, in this
15 proposed budget, we can see how tech
16 is going to be an integral part of
17 the city's plan to exercise services
18 and running city programs. We see a
19 lot of money being spent on drones
20 and other technologies. However, we
21 do not see much oversight around
22 these technologies. We are calling
23 City Council to ask more questions
24 about tech purchasing and its

1 efficacy, as well as challenge this
2 administration on full public
3 transparency of the acquisition,
4 implementation, and implementation
5 of tech.

6 Mass deportation is
7 happening. Most of these
8 technologies and data sharing
9 practices are assisting the federal
10 law enforcement with these
11 deportations tearing families apart.
12 We need to protect every member of
13 our community and not allow for this
14 type of application of tech and
15 data. Tech should be used to
16 improve the lives of our community
17 members and not used as a way to
18 surveil and incarcerate them.

19 As members for JP, we are
20 supporting real people's budget, and
21 thank you for your time.

22 MS. RODGERS: Good
23 afternoon, Councilmembers. My name
24 is Jules Rodgers and I live in West

1 Philadelphia. I work at Amistad Law
2 Project, and I'm here with the
3 Alliance for a Just Philadelphia
4 asking you all to pass a people's
5 budget. We know that you do what
6 you do because you care about the
7 people.

8 So please hear us out. I'm
9 here specifically today to say that
10 I am completely dismayed that less
11 than two months ago, on March 20th,
12 Philadelphia police shot and killed
13 Aaron Rainey while he was suffering
14 from a mental health crisis. Aaron
15 Rainey was a black father, he was
16 unarmed, and he was voluntarily
17 seeking treatment at the age of 36
18 years old.

19 If mobile crisis teams had
20 been dispatched, Aaron Rainey would
21 still be alive. A social worker, a
22 peer support specialist, an EMT
23 would've approached him with care in
24 a calm manner. They would've had no

1 guns, so there would've been no guns
2 at the site for him to be shot with.

3 Instead, Philadelphia
4 police responded, they threw him in
5 the back of a van, and when they got
6 to the hospital, he was confused.
7 There was a struggle. He didn't
8 understand what was going on. A
9 scuffle broke out, and a police
10 officer shot and killed his -- shot
11 his partner by accident and then
12 shot and killed Aaron Rainey.

13 Aaron Rainey should still
14 be here. I'm also dismayed that
15 this has gotten very little
16 attention in the city, that the
17 family hasn't heard from the Mayor,
18 from the police chief. I just -- I
19 feel, I think this is really
20 outrageous.

21 At any point in
22 Philadelphia, there are 20 percent
23 -- 21 percent of Philadelphians have
24 a serious mental health diagnosis.

1 And that means at any point one in
2 five Philadelphians, that's 357,000
3 people are at risk of a serious
4 mental health crisis. We shouldn't
5 be at risk of the police killing us
6 when this happens. That is a
7 cousin, this is a daughter, this is
8 a mother or father.

9 And speaking as somebody
10 who grew up with a mentally ill mom,
11 I had to watch her be forcibly
12 removed from our home against her
13 will multiple times. It was
14 traumatic. It's traumatic to see
15 that happen to a mother, a child, a
16 family member.

17 So what we're asking for to
18 make sure that mobile crisis teams
19 can be fully staffed operating 24/7
20 citywide, we need \$20 million in the
21 budget to go to them. This is a
22 very reasonable ask. Mayor Parker
23 has set aside \$872 million to go to
24 the Police Department. It is very

1 fair and reasonable to ask that 20
2 million go to the Philadelphians
3 suffering from a mental health
4 crisis. Thank you for your time.

5 THE CLERK: Thomas Gwalsic,
6 Dyymond Whipper, Angela Woods,
7 Tyrese Rogers, Charles Haynes, Gail
8 Banks, Allen Drew.

9 MR. DREW: Good morning.
10 My name is Reverend Allen Drew. I'm
11 a resident of the 5th District. I'm
12 a pastor in the Christian Reform
13 Church, and I direct the Hunting
14 Park Community Solar Initiative or
15 HPCSI, which is working to help the
16 community of Hunting Park gain
17 access to affordable solar and is
18 currently running its seven-solar
19 installer job training course for
20 low-income Philadelphians.

21 I'm here today on behalf of
22 myself and HPCSI because we have
23 seen firsthand the incredible
24 benefits of the Philadelphia Energy

1 Authorities Built to Last program on
2 people's lives. In 2023, HPCSI and
3 HPNAC worked together to bring the
4 BTL program to a number of
5 low-income homes in Hunting Park.

6 A documentary was made that
7 followed six of them, What Needs to
8 Be Done: Six Stories of Built to
9 Last. You can find it on YouTube.

10 One of HPCSI's board
11 members was a beneficiary. She's a
12 rock star in the neighborhood
13 running her own community
14 organization, helping out with other
15 orgs, and providing steady
16 leadership on her block. BTL helped
17 repair and improve some serious
18 issues in her home and had installed
19 solar panels and heat pumps for her.

20 She and the other
21 beneficiaries in the documentary
22 were deeply, positively impacted by
23 this program. It stabilized their
24 homes in the face of aggressive

1 gentrification, helping them
2 preserve generational wealth, it
3 made their homes healthier places to
4 live in, and the weatherization,
5 heat pumps and solar power are now
6 saving them significantly on their
7 utilities. And they represent just
8 six families. 214 other families
9 have been impacted by this program,
10 400 others are in the pipeline, and
11 2,600 are on a growing wait list for
12 this program.

13 As if these weren't enough,
14 BTL Clean Energy projects mean more
15 work opportunities for the graduates
16 of HPCSI's Solar installer training
17 program. Build to Last has proven
18 itself to be an extremely valuable
19 program and there's a huge demand
20 for more of it.

21 And so, I respectfully ask
22 that you allocate a full \$10 million
23 at minimum to the Philadelphia
24 Energy Authority this fiscal year so

1 that BTL is given the support it
2 needs to expand. Its incredible
3 work for all the families that are
4 begging for it.

5 I believe both City Council
6 and the mayor care a lot about
7 housing, and BTL is a powerful tool
8 in your toolbox. I hope you will
9 use it. Thank you for the
10 opportunity to speak and for your
11 consideration.

12 MR. ROGERS: Good morning
13 -- I mean, good afternoon, all. My
14 name is Tyrese Rogers. I live in
15 District 9 of Philadelphia, and I'm
16 a proud member of OnePA Renters
17 United, and a lifelong
18 Philadelphian.

19 I was born in West
20 Philadelphia, lived in Southwest
21 Germantown, Logan, North Philly,
22 Somerton, and now Frankford. My
23 family has dealt with evictions, and
24 as a member of OnePA, I am very

1 concerned about housing justice in
2 the city. It is not fine for some
3 of our landowner corporations to
4 neglect tenants' complaints, or
5 retaliate against them for doing so,
6 or consistently raising rents on
7 these establishments that probably
8 should be condemned.

9 I am here to speak up for
10 an increase to the budget, that's
11 for L&I, that's \$10 million for
12 proactive inspections, and what was
13 it? Hold up just a moment. And --
14 what, going to L&I -- oh, that's
15 right, I'm sorry.

16 Okay. That's \$10 million
17 going to them, and somebody in here
18 can get them on board with what they
19 need to do. I was here a couple of
20 weeks ago, so I heard it. And \$10
21 million for a Built to Last program
22 for continuing to do their good
23 work. I've heard about them, too.

24 It's disgusting that some

1 landlords keep getting the way with
2 not making repairs that they -- and
3 then they retaliate against people
4 that complain.

5 Right now, our department
6 of L&I is not funded well enough to
7 be effective. There are only about
8 20 inspectors for rental units for
9 the entire city. And the department
10 needs a significant increase in
11 staff to actually conduct proactive
12 inspections. We are -- oh, that's
13 me. Okay. All right.

14 We are the only major city
15 in America that doesn't fund
16 proactive inspections or rental
17 units. And this being the city with
18 the oldest housing stock in America,
19 it is sorely needed.

20 I want to employ City
21 Council to increase the budget for
22 Built to Last by \$10 million. It's
23 already a great process, it gives
24 people a chance to stay in their

1 homes and build community, it builds
2 generational wealth, which is
3 critical for Philadelphia as we are
4 once again, the nation's largest
5 poor city. Thank you for your time.

6 MS. YOUNG: Hello. My name
7 is Dymond Whipper Young. I am an
8 artist, and I know we talked about a
9 lot of numbers, but I just want to
10 share my testimony. I came to
11 Philadelphia as a Temple student. I
12 am an artist and an educator.

13 And the first thing I
14 noticed is I was a part of the
15 gentrification happening in North
16 Philadelphia, being a Temple
17 student. So my first goal was to
18 look how could I use my tools and my
19 gifts to help this community? And
20 the best program I could have ever
21 been introduced to was the Mural
22 Arts program.

23 I was introduced to them
24 through the Guild program, which if

1 anyone knows is they were help
2 returning citizens, and
3 unfortunately, my family is affected
4 by that to this day. I thought it
5 was so important how they gave jobs,
6 so I wanted to learn more.

7 And through my years, I've
8 interned with them, I've acted as an
9 artist assistant, and now a lead
10 artist with multiple murals around
11 the city. Since working with Mural
12 Arts, I have won a Guinness World
13 Record with Franklin and Crayola.
14 But because of Mural Arts, I then
15 brought my students into the museum
16 and taught them about careers in
17 arts.

18 Since Mural Arts, I have
19 won 150,000 grant for the percent
20 for art to make a bronze in South
21 Philadelphia. And because of Mural
22 Arts, I learned how to incorporate
23 the community and incorporate
24 community healing. Mural Arts has

1 been so important to my career and
2 my purpose as an artist.

3 I have traveled all over
4 the world from Brazil -- doing
5 murals in Brazil, traveled to
6 Colombia. I just worked with an
7 artist in Cincinnati. And the
8 amazing thing as the world looks at
9 mural art as a blueprint, and I just
10 think that it's so important to
11 combat crime, to violence, and to
12 give artists jobs.

13 And I just want
14 Philadelphia to realize that what
15 they have in Mural Arts and increase
16 that \$1.5 million in the budget,
17 Mural Arts has the structure to fund
18 artists and to fund our livelihood,
19 Philadelphia, we are the city of
20 brotherly love, sisterly love, arts,
21 and culture, we cannot forget arts
22 and culture is the backbone of
23 Philadelphia.

24 So thank you so much.

1 Shout out to my artists, shout out
2 to the budget for all the people.
3 Philadelphia, to the people, artists
4 are everything that makes
5 Philadelphia go round, so thank you.

6 THE CLERK: Angela Woods,
7 Charles Haynes, Gail Banks, Joshua
8 Reeves, Manira Edens, Craig
9 Borowiak, Brad Forbes, Margaret
10 Guerrera, Sterling Scott, Martin
11 Lewis, Alejandro Castellano, Emily
12 Davis, and Alexia Clarke.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Anybody
14 else that hasn't been called?

15 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
16 Okay. Please proceed.

17 MR. BOROWIAK: Good
18 afternoon, City Council. Thank you
19 for the opportunity to speak. My
20 name is Craig Borowiak, I'm a
21 professor of Political Science at
22 Haverford College. I'm here to
23 testify in support of the
24 Philadelphia Area Cooperative

1 Alliance's request for a \$1.3
2 million grant and pro-bono technical
3 assistance fund for Philadelphia
4 cooperatives.

5 For over 15 years, I have
6 been researching cooperatives in
7 Philadelphia. This research has
8 culminated this past year with the
9 publication of a book that's
10 entitled Solidarity Cities, in which
11 my co-authors and I analyzed
12 cooperatives and other solidarity
13 economy initiatives in Philadelphia,
14 Worcester, Massachusetts, and New
15 York City.

16 I want to briefly share a
17 few -- a few of our findings.
18 First, as you know, Philadelphia is
19 a divided city characterized by both
20 deep poverty and sharp lines of
21 racial, ethnic, and poverty
22 segregation. We find that
23 cooperatives have particular
24 salience in precisely such context.

1 This is because they operate
2 differently than conventional
3 investor-owned firms.

4 They're animated by
5 different values, the cooperative
6 principles which prioritize
7 cooperation, community building, and
8 democratic governance above
9 competition. This is really
10 important in communities that are
11 underserved by the conventional
12 capitalist economy. When we map
13 cooperatives in Philadelphia, we
14 find that they cluster in what we
15 call edge zones.

16 These are urban spaces
17 characterized by extensive racial
18 and economic mixing of populations.
19 This is in large part because
20 cooperatives animated by those
21 cooperative principles do the edge
22 work of building bridges, fostering
23 community learning, and working
24 through cultural differences with

1 intention.

2 A second major finding that
3 we have is that cooperatives serve
4 as defensive ballparks for
5 disadvantaged communities facing
6 adverse economic forces. For
7 example, we find that dollar-for-
8 dollar cooperatives generate more
9 work, more jobs than conventional
10 firms do based upon dollar-for-
11 dollar investment.

12 We show how faith-based
13 credit unions, which are
14 predominantly located in poor
15 communities of color provide fair
16 access to finance, and we provide
17 and show how housing cooperatives
18 help people stay in their homes in
19 the face of gentrification.

20 And finally, I want to
21 observe that cooperatives achieve
22 scale differently than investor-
23 owned firms do. And this is
24 important. They build scale through

1 cooperation, they build scale by
2 developing a cooperative ecosystem,
3 and this is why PACA is so
4 important. It provides the
5 networking, the communication, and
6 the technical skills, so
7 cooperatives can build that kind of
8 cooperative ecosystem. So thank you
9 for your time.

10 MR. FORBES: My name is
11 Brad Forbes. I am the current
12 president of PACA. I'm also the
13 treasurer of a cooperative Land
14 Trust in southwest Philadelphia
15 called the Life Center Association.
16 There's a lot I can say to echo what
17 the good professor just said about
18 the utility, and the real answer
19 that is embodied in the cooperative
20 economic model.

21 My co-op personally is
22 bridging the gap in a lot of the
23 issues that we have heard about
24 today. We are in housing. We have

1 co-ops in food, we have co-ops
2 building knowledge bases for skills
3 in construction, in farming, in food
4 production, food preparation,
5 housekeeping, childcare, education,
6 where building initiatives around
7 knowledge-based building so that
8 folks can have -- can walk into a
9 space with no skills and gain those
10 skills and then pipeline those
11 skills into operating businesses
12 that they own.

13 Imagine a housing co-op
14 like my own, which is not just a
15 housing co-op, it is a land trust,
16 but we do a whole lot of housing.
17 And one of the things that we are --
18 one of our main initiatives right
19 now is a space on Baltimore Avenue,
20 the West Philly Cultural Center.

21 Thank you, Councilmember
22 Gauthier, for your support. And
23 I've had the pleasure of discussing
24 with Councilmember Gauthier's office

1 the ways in which the cooperative
2 economy is really the one truly
3 concrete answer to a lot of these
4 issues and economic issues. We're
5 talking about the people of
6 Philadelphia taking self-
7 determination.

8 We're talking about all of
9 these things that we're coming to
10 the trough here and saying, we need
11 money for this, we need money for
12 that. Right now, we're building
13 initiatives, particularly in our
14 Baltimore Avenue model right now,
15 where we can actually begin to
16 address some of these issues, and we
17 can ask you to invest in the
18 Philadelphian people directly into
19 sustainable models so that we
20 actually don't have to come back
21 here, and keep asking because we're
22 building it from the ground up.

23 So I'm asking for \$1.3
24 million of investment, which is a

1 pitiful investment into something
2 that will return massively in the
3 ability for Philadelphia to once
4 again be a leader in really a
5 revolution for independence and
6 economic independence of our people.

7 So please invest in the
8 people of Philadelphia, invest in
9 the care for technical assistance
10 for these businesses to really get
11 off the ground and to really be the
12 concrete answer that so many people
13 are looking for. Thank you.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank
15 you. State your name for the
16 record.

17 MS. DAVIS: My name is
18 Emily Davis, and I'm a resident of
19 Philadelphia and a climate -- okay.
20 And a climate voter. I ask you to
21 fully fund Philadelphia Energy
22 Authority. In fact, I think it
23 would be great if you could give
24 them even more than the 10 million

1 that they're asking for, given that
2 PEA has a record of creating \$75 of
3 investment for every \$1 that the
4 city provides in funding, it seems
5 logical not to give them more. Who
6 wouldn't want that kind of
7 investment?

8 The Built to Last program,
9 in particular, is a bright star for
10 our city. PEA's ability to
11 coordinate the work of 12 different
12 agencies has probably saved badly
13 deteriorating homes from abandonment
14 or owners from homelessness. PEA is
15 part of fulfilling the Mayor's goal
16 of making Philadelphia the safest,
17 cleanest, and greenest city in the
18 nation.

19 Given that about 75 percent
20 of the carbon footprint comes from
21 homes, we need this program to make
22 our homes more efficient.

23 Homes in the program become
24 energy efficient, some even get

1 solar panels, and at times add
2 energy to the grid. Their workforce
3 development program provides
4 training and experience and a path
5 to employment for city use and leads
6 them to a brighter future.

7 The city has a great need
8 for affordable housing. One part of
9 being affordable is being able to
10 afford your utility bills.
11 Low-income houses on average have a
12 10 percent of their income on
13 utilities, spend 10 percent of their
14 income on utilities. So having an
15 energy efficient home provides
16 greater economic stability to the
17 household. Mixed income housing
18 bill requires developers in the city
19 to provide funding payments in lieu
20 of affordable housing if they don't
21 wish to include affordable units in
22 their project.

23 To date, only about 1.5
24 percent of these funds have gone to

1 affordable housing until the housing
2 trust fund is fully funded, perhaps
3 some of this could be used for PEA.
4 Again, I ask you to fund -- fully
5 fund PEA. Thank you.

6 MS. CLARKE: Good
7 afternoon. My name is Alexia
8 Clarke. I am the CEO at Covenant
9 House, Pennsylvania, and I want to
10 thank you for the opportunity to
11 speak to you today. We are the
12 largest provider of shelter,
13 housing, and support for young
14 people experiencing homelessness and
15 survivors of human trafficking in
16 Philadelphia and York.

17 Each year, we serve over
18 2000 young people aged 18 to 24,
19 primarily black or African American,
20 70 percent, 23 percent are LGBTIQ+,
21 40 percent have foster care
22 histories, and many are survivors of
23 violence and trafficking. They are
24 among Philadelphia's most

1 vulnerable, and yet with the right
2 supports, they thrive. Eighty-five
3 percent of our youth in transitional
4 housing transition to stable housing
5 and employment, but right now, we're
6 turning youth away.

7 We turned away 121 young
8 people last year, and this year so
9 far we've turned away 59. And
10 that's not because we lack space,
11 but because we lack the resources to
12 fund all the beds that we have.
13 That's an avoidable crisis. And so
14 I'm asking the city to fully fund
15 existing beds and existing units
16 that exist in the city.

17 I'd like the City Council
18 to invest in the full continuum of
19 care from shelter, transitional
20 housing, workforce, and behavioral
21 health so young people don't just
22 survive, they stabilize and they
23 thrive. Fifty-seven percent of our
24 young people experience a mental

1 health disorder. And we ask the
2 city to commit to housing policies
3 that create true affordability for
4 youth.

5 Our youth earn 13.83 per
6 hour, and so we need affordable
7 housing that is for the lowest
8 income earners, dedicate at least 10
9 percent of home initiative or other
10 city housing investments
11 specifically to youth-focused
12 housing, and advance overlay and
13 zoning incentives that make room for
14 youth-serving organizations like
15 ours to build and operate housing in
16 every neighborhood.

17 And finally, support small-
18 project financing and CDBG
19 set-asides that make it possible for
20 youth-focused organizations to
21 compete to create affordable
22 housing.

23 It's a solvable problem and
24 I hope that we can work together to

1 actually ensure our youth are housed
2 and doing well. Thank you.

3 MS. BROWN: Hi. My name is
4 Regina Brown. I am a mother of 14
5 children. I currently live in West
6 Philadelphia. I'm testifying in
7 City Council today for two things:
8 One thing I want city to council to
9 increase funding for diversion
10 programs that keep kids out of
11 prison.

12 Two, I want City Council to
13 work with Mayor Parker's
14 administration to improve
15 partnerships with Philly-based
16 service providers. I want
17 Councilmembers to consider these
18 things because the juvenile justice
19 system has wrecked irreparable harm
20 on my family.

21 I have a son who is 17
22 years old. He got in trouble last
23 May. He got picked up by police, he
24 was charged, this put us in contact

1 with the court system. It was a
2 system that gave him and me
3 confusion information and a few
4 clear answers. We had little
5 stability; we had little support.
6 Eventually, he was sent to placement
7 earlier this year.

8 The problem was that he was
9 sent to a Braxton's youth detention
10 center because there were -- there
11 were no service -- no services
12 available in Philly.

13 For those who don't know,
14 Braxton is in South Mountain PA.
15 South Mountain PA is 150 miles away.
16 It's a three-hour drive to and from.
17 My son was in South Mountain for
18 nearly three months. During this
19 time, I only had virtual visits. At
20 times, that were not convenient for
21 me. The staff at Braxton told my
22 son that he had to make amends with
23 us. This is true, but how could he
24 do this when we were never able to

1 see him in-person? How can we do
2 this if he is 150 miles away from
3 home? He was given an impossible
4 task.

5 City Council, I know kids
6 make mistakes and they need to
7 learn. I also know from experience
8 that kids don't do this if they're
9 -- if you put them away in a new
10 environment and expect them to be
11 perfect.

12 Please do what you can so
13 that what happens to my son and me
14 does not happen to other families.
15 Fund diversion programs, make sure
16 that the service providers are
17 working closely with the juvenile
18 justice system here so that families
19 are not separated when they are
20 struggling. Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

22 Thank you. Is there anyone
23 else here for a public comment that
24 would like to speak? Okay.

1 Hearing none, the Chair
2 recognizes Councilmember Major
3 Leader Gilmore-Richardson --
4 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
5 RICHARDSON: Keep going --
6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 -- for a motion that the public
8 hearing admitting on the bills and
9 resolution before the committee
10 today stand in recess until
11 Wednesday, May 14th, 2025 at
12 10:00 a.m. in City Hall, Room 400.
13 CHAIR GILMORE-RICHARDSON:
14 So moved, Mr. Chairman.
15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 It has a moved -- it has been moved
17 and properly seconded. Jim Harrity
18 having a bad influence on you -- but
19 Member Gauthier.
20 It has been moved and
21 properly seconded that the public
22 hearing and meeting on the bills and
23 resolutions before the committee
24 today stand in recess until

1 Wednesday, May 14th, 2025 at
2 10:00 a.m. In Room 400, City Hall.
3 All those in favor will signify by
4 saying aye.

5 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 Those opposed? The ayes have it and
8 the motion carries.

9 This committee will stand
10 in recess until Wednesday, May 14th
11 at 10:00 a.m.

12 And thank you, everyone,
13 for taking time out of your schedule
14 and being here today to speak on the
15 FY26 proposed budget.

16 (Public hearing and meeting on bills and resolutions
17 concluded at 2:55 p.m.)

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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 are contained fully and accurately in the
notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a
correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda Rios
Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

(The foregoing certification of this
transcript does not apply to any reproduction of the
same by any means unless under the direct control
and/or supervision of the certifying reporter.)

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