

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Committee on Legislative Oversight  
and the Committee on Transportation  
and Public Utilities

City Hall, Room 400  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, May 12, 2026  
1:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

CHAIR ISIAH THOMAS  
VICE CHAIR RUE LANDAU  
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA  
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL  
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

Ms. Jones, The Clerk

## P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIR THOMAS: Good  
afternoon, everybody. We're ready  
to get started.

Good afternoon, everybody.  
Welcome to Philadelphia City Council  
and the Committee on Legislative  
Oversight and the Committee on  
Transportation and Public Utilities.  
I now note that the hour has come.  
Before we get started, I just want  
to -- we good to go? You guys good?

All right. Thank you,  
everybody. We're now getting ready  
to start with our hearing.

Ms. Jones, will you please  
call to order of the roll to make  
sure that members are present.

THE CLERK: Chair Thomas.

CHAIR THOMAS: Present.

THE CLERK: Chair Driscoll.

COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:  
Present.

THE CLERK: Sorry. Vice

1 Chair Landau.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

3 Present.

4 THE CLERK: Vice Chair

5 Young. Councilmember Lozada.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

7 Present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilmember

9 Phillips.

10 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

11 Present.

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember

13 Squilla. Councilmember Brooks.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

15 Present.

16 THE CLERK: And

17 Councilmember Jones.

18 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.

19 A quorum of the Committee is

20 present, and the hearing is now

21 called to order. This is the public

22 hearing in the Committee on

23 Legislative Oversight and the

24 Committee on Transportation and

1 Public Utilities on Resolution No.  
2 250896.

3 Ms. Jones, will you please  
4 read the title of the hearing  
5 resolution to be heard today.

6 THE CLERK: Resolution No.  
7 250896: Authorizing the Committee  
8 on Legislative Oversight and the  
9 Committee on Transportation and  
10 Public Utilities to hold joint  
11 hearings to investigate the rising  
12 cost of energy bills, what is  
13 driving those increases, and what  
14 the City can and can't do to address  
15 why our energy bills are so high.

16 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
17 This is a direct -- this hearing is  
18 a direct, I guess you could say,  
19 request from constituents across,  
20 not just the City of Philadelphia,  
21 but the entire region. Folks are  
22 very, very concerned not just in the  
23 affordability crisis that we're  
24 facing but looking at the increase

1 in costs and utility bills and just  
2 general living.

3 And the concept of what we  
4 do moving forward is what we want to  
5 discuss today. So before we get  
6 started, I wanted to see if Chairman  
7 Driscoll wanted to be recognized for  
8 any remarks as well as any other  
9 members of the Committee before we  
10 go to the first panel.

11 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Thank you,  
12 Chairman. Yeah. Today is an  
13 important meeting for a lot of  
14 reasons. And, you know, there's  
15 some folks in Washington that think  
16 affordability is a made-up word.  
17 Well, they don't live in the City of  
18 Philadelphia. We know it's not a  
19 made-up word. And we've been  
20 working jointly in all our policies  
21 and in particular this budget season  
22 to make sure that we recognize that  
23 the folks in this region need help.

24 And we hope to get some

1 insights today from you, testifiers,  
2 that we can incorporate as we go  
3 forward in our policy direction. So  
4 thank you for being here and thank  
5 you for participating, and thank you  
6 Chairman.

7 CHAIR THOMAS: Any other  
8 members like to be recognized before  
9 we start? All right. Well, with  
10 that being said, Ms. Jones, will you  
11 please call the first panel to start  
12 our conversation today?

13 THE CLERK: First, we  
14 welcome the Mayor of Camden, Mayor  
15 Victor Carstarphen. Following them,  
16 we will have Representative Fiedler  
17 and Jamie Van Nostrand.

18 CHAIR THOMAS: Mayor  
19 Carstarphen, we'll take you first.  
20 Thank you for being here;  
21 representing the Great State of New  
22 Jersey. Rep Fiedler, I want to say  
23 thank you for being here as well,  
24 too. We'll be taking the Rep later.

1 I want to say also thank -- say  
2 thank you for being here to Camden  
3 Vice President and Council Person of  
4 the 1st Ward, Arthur Barclay. My  
5 bad, Arthur. Councilman Barclay.  
6 Thank you, sir. Appreciate you  
7 being here.

8 Mayor Carstarphen, again,  
9 thank you so much for being here.  
10 For those that are listening in  
11 public, today's conversation is a  
12 regional one. When you look at the  
13 increase in cost of utility bills is  
14 not a problem that is just isolated  
15 to the City of Philadelphia or even  
16 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.  
17 It's a -- it's a global problem;  
18 it's a national problem. But we  
19 want to try to address this issue  
20 from a regional approach, and we  
21 couldn't ask for a better partner  
22 than Mayor Carstarphen. So, Mayor  
23 Carstarphen, please state your name  
24 for the record and you may begin

1 with your testimony.

2 MR. CARSTARPHEN: Victor  
3 Carstarphen, Mayor of the city of  
4 Camden, New Jersey. Good afternoon.  
5 Thank you, Councilman Thomas for the  
6 today's invitation. Thank you,  
7 Council Members of Great City of  
8 Philadelphia, for having me here to  
9 talk about something so important.

10 As has been mentioned  
11 earlier, it's not just a  
12 Philadelphia thing, it's a national  
13 issue, it's a regional issue. So  
14 just glad to be able to join this  
15 event and give my perspective on how  
16 it's affecting Camden, but also some  
17 of our approaches in dealing with  
18 the utility rising cost. And that's  
19 -- as I said, let it be clear, this  
20 is not just a Philadelphia problem;  
21 it's a Pennsylvania problem, a  
22 Camden, New Jersey. A national  
23 issue that's impacting all of us in  
24 different ways in our various

1 communities. The city of Camden,  
2 it's an urban community similar to  
3 Philadelphia, just a lot smaller.

4 We have a large population  
5 of seniors and other residents who  
6 are either low or restricted income.  
7 Ordinary circumstances that on a  
8 regular day for our seniors and some  
9 of our residents, it can be  
10 challenging. We're talking about  
11 residents who are living paycheck to  
12 paycheck, and count on public  
13 assistance just to get by. When  
14 rates go up, our residents are  
15 forced to choose between issues like  
16 the lights being on and meeting  
17 other basic needs.

18 A recent statewide survey  
19 found that more than half of the  
20 voters identify energy cost as one  
21 of the most persistent financial  
22 burdens that they face. The strain  
23 is felt, especially and acutely in  
24 communities like my community, the

1 city of Camden, where household  
2 budgets are tighter. Energy costs  
3 consume a large share of their  
4 monthly income. So, when the  
5 utility crisis -- it hits, it  
6 impacts my residents citywide.

7           So some of the things that  
8 I'll talk about today is some ways  
9 that we're trying to relieve the  
10 pressure in the city of Camden. The  
11 pressure of this added burden that's  
12 been placed on our residents in our  
13 city. We've been fortunate enough  
14 to work in close collaborations and  
15 work well with our public and  
16 private partners on all levels of  
17 government to address issues that's  
18 concerning us today. Fortunately,  
19 that to have worked with our  
20 congressman, Congressman Donald  
21 Norcross, along with our Governor,  
22 Mikie Sherrill, and our senator  
23 within our district, Senator Cruz-  
24 Perez. and everybody is firmly

1 committed to working lock stop to  
2 freeze or reduce utility costs in  
3 the State of New Jersey.

4 In addition, both the city  
5 and our county are offering utility  
6 assistance to residents, you know,  
7 based on income. And some of the  
8 things I'm sure are mirrored in the  
9 City in Philadelphia and mirrored in  
10 other municipalities, the city, the  
11 county, the state. We work with our  
12 utility providers, which is PSE&G,  
13 in Camden to provide additional  
14 resources to those who qualified.

15 Now, PSE&G has just --  
16 they've acknowledged that New Jersey  
17 depends on imported electricity for  
18 more than 40 percent of its supply.  
19 A figure that -- that's only  
20 expected to grow. The city of  
21 Camden is uniquely positioned to  
22 advocate for local distributed  
23 energy resources, which is solar  
24 installations, battery storage,

1 virtual power plants that reduce  
2 dependence on the regional grid and  
3 lower cost and create local jobs.

4 In addition to that, the  
5 New Jersey Board of Public  
6 Utilities, NJBPU, recently awarded  
7 \$5 million in grants to fund more  
8 than two dozen projects that will  
9 expand cooling infrastructures and  
10 reduce energy demand, and improve  
11 public health while strengthening  
12 climate resilience in the state's  
13 most heat-vulnerable communities.

14 The awards issued through  
15 NJBPU, Urban Heat Island Mitigation  
16 Programs span 10 municipalities  
17 throughout our state. With major  
18 investments concentrated in Newark,  
19 Camden, Trenton, and additional  
20 projects in Paterson, Atlantic City,  
21 Elizabeth Roselle, Egg Harbor City,  
22 Lakewood Township, Pennsauken  
23 Township. These are municipalities  
24 across our region.

1           This project includes tree  
2     planting along major street  
3     corridors, conversion of public  
4     buildings into resilience hubs,  
5     shade structures, water features,  
6     community gardens, pop-up cooling  
7     phases; all designed to lower  
8     surface temperatures and cooling  
9     costs on the hottest days of the  
10    year.

11           I've worked with our City  
12    Council to opt into a community  
13    solar initiative that we're working  
14    on. That will help some of our  
15    residents reduce utility costs, in  
16    certain cases, that could be up to  
17    45 percent. I feel a new community  
18    solar program will help to unlock  
19    the benefits of clean and affordable  
20    energy for many of our Camden  
21    residents who might otherwise not  
22    have access to solar. We took some  
23    decisive steps last year, September  
24    2025, to address increasing energy

1 bills that were borne by our city  
2 residents.

3 The city decided to  
4 participate in this community solar  
5 program, which is overseen by the  
6 NJBPU. And this program will allow  
7 certain city residents to access the  
8 benefits from solar energy without  
9 installing panels on their homes.  
10 Qualifying residents will once --  
11 once the program is finalized, will  
12 receive a credit of no less than 20  
13 percent of their homes' electric  
14 bills.

15 We have since issued an RFP  
16 to identify solar developers willing  
17 to construct solar arrays within the  
18 PSE&G and service territory, which  
19 will generate clean energy, which  
20 will be credited to certain  
21 residents in the city of Camden.  
22 Many of whom, of course, that cannot  
23 install solar panels on their homes,  
24 where residential rooftops and

1 ground-mount solars are not remotely  
2 possible. The program aims to  
3 advance equity within the solar  
4 sector for homeowners, those who  
5 rent, live in apartments, or reside  
6 in multi-unit dwellings. The  
7 board's regulations calls for  
8 municipal community solar projects  
9 to serve a minimum of 80 percent  
10 low- and moderate-income  
11 subscribers.

12 The board also is ensured  
13 that community solar subscribers  
14 will be guaranteed a minimum  
15 discount of no less than 20 percent  
16 of the utility bill, which will  
17 apply for the duration of their  
18 customer's subscription.

19 Now, all these programs,  
20 and I'm mentioning right now, it's a  
21 huge start, you know, of trying to  
22 bridge the gap, of the discrepancy  
23 of the costs that are hitting my  
24 community, your community, and all

1 over. But Camden, we need to  
2 sustain permanent assistance  
3 infrastructure. You know, we have  
4 LIHEAP, USF, REACT, must -- they  
5 must actively be promoted in our  
6 communities where we have language  
7 barriers, lack of digital access  
8 that prevent residents from  
9 enrolling. And I -- I've always  
10 talked about the power of  
11 information and the power of  
12 messaging to our community because  
13 we have all the programs in the  
14 world.

15 And if our -- if our  
16 community and our -- we're not  
17 breaking through language barriers,  
18 and we're not getting to  
19 Ms. Williams' house with  
20 information, we rely on social media  
21 so much, I think half -- that's half  
22 the battle. And my colleagues, my  
23 staff, will tell you, you know,  
24 there's funding out there. We got

1 to get it out to our -- we got to  
2 meet our people where they're at, so  
3 they understand that this is  
4 available.

5 Camden has committed to  
6 modernize our infrastructure. We've  
7 been working really hard. I'm  
8 talking water, sewer, electrical  
9 infrastructure. Millions of dollars  
10 has been invested in updating new  
11 LED streetlights, updating water  
12 wells, water lines, gas lines, and  
13 gas meters. Both existing and new  
14 developments have implemented  
15 increased solar elements, in some  
16 cases, solar parking canopies.

17 And our city code also  
18 supports green and sustainable  
19 building practices or build to LEED-  
20 certified requirements. While we  
21 don't have a singular solution, you  
22 know -- the -- you know, coming  
23 together in hearings like this and  
24 working together with all levels of

1 government to advance legislation  
2 and advocate together on critical  
3 funding and making investments and  
4 new and efficient infrastructure  
5 while enhancing open spaces that we  
6 have. Committing to strategic  
7 plannings and restoring the urban  
8 tree canopy and building strong  
9 environmental partnerships. All of  
10 this helps.

11           While I feel these  
12 initiatives are a part of a larger  
13 effort to keep costs down, as I'm  
14 sure you'll hear everyone testifying  
15 on, you know, their scenarios.  
16 While -- will these large efforts  
17 result in immediate decrease on  
18 individuals that are paying everyday  
19 bills? No, they won't.

20           But in my community, this  
21 will require a serious conversation  
22 with organizations who regulate  
23 utilities, BPU and utility  
24 providers. This is a conversation

1 that has to reach them. Through  
2 these types of discussions, these  
3 forums, we have opportunity to think  
4 bigger, not just utility bills; this  
5 conversation is about fairness, you  
6 know, economic opportunity, public  
7 health, and the future of all of our  
8 communities.

9           So energy affordability  
10 should not be a privilege. It  
11 should be a basic expectation for  
12 every family. As Camden and this  
13 region continues to grow, we have to  
14 ensure that the growth lowers cost  
15 of our residents and not increases  
16 the burden.

17           Again, thank you for  
18 allowing me to just bring a little  
19 slice of what's happening in the  
20 city, what's going on in the State  
21 of New Jersey, and how the  
22 legislators are trying to work  
23 together to continue -- to continue  
24 to bridge the gap and costs that are

1 continually rising up. So we can  
2 work collectively, and then I can do  
3 anything on my side of the bridge;  
4 you know, Councilman Thomas knows  
5 I'm a phone call away. Thank you.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
7 Thank you, Mayor Carstarphen. We  
8 appreciate it. What we want to do,  
9 if it's okay with members of the  
10 Committee, I want to allow State Rep  
11 Fiedler to provide the State Rep's  
12 testimony.

13 And then if it's okay with  
14 you, Mayor Carstarphen, and we know  
15 members of your team are here, we're  
16 hoping that a few members of your  
17 team can take some questions along  
18 with the State Rep dealing with  
19 energy costs outside of  
20 Philadelphia. Is that okay with  
21 everybody on the panel?

22 COUNCILMEMBERS: Yes.

23 CHAIR THOMAS: Rep, you  
24 want to come on up, please?

1 MS. FIEDLER: Good  
2 afternoon.

3 CHAIR THOMAS: You may  
4 state your name for the record, and  
5 you may begin with your testimony.

6 MS. FIEDLER: Good  
7 afternoon, Chairs Driscoll and  
8 Thomas and members of City Council.  
9 Thank you for the opportunity to  
10 speak today. I am State  
11 Representative Elizabeth Fiedler,  
12 representing the 184th Legislative  
13 District in South Philadelphia. I  
14 now have the pleasure of chairing  
15 the House Energy Committee, where  
16 we're working very hard to  
17 understand and address the issues  
18 that you are hearing about today.

19 I want to begin with the  
20 reality facing too many  
21 Philadelphians, one that you know as  
22 well as I do. Energy bills are  
23 rising faster than household  
24 incomes, and people simply don't

1 have the money to pay.

2           Affordability, the struggle  
3 to survive, it's not new for a lot  
4 of working people, but it is even  
5 harder than it's ever been. Seniors  
6 on fixed income come into my office  
7 in South Philadelphia talking about  
8 the impossible choices they are  
9 making. Should they pay for heat,  
10 or should they pay for medicine?  
11 Parents come in talking about things  
12 that they're doing without, so they  
13 can afford to pay their bills and  
14 get their kids the things they need  
15 and buy groceries.

16           I'm grateful to City  
17 Council for holding this hearing  
18 today and for inviting me to share a  
19 little bit about the work we are  
20 doing on the state level. I do want  
21 to emphasize that this is a moment  
22 of real pain for a lot of people. I  
23 have the chance to speak with these  
24 people often in my district office,

1 and I know you all do in your  
2 districts as well.

3 This is truly a difficult  
4 moment for our city and for our  
5 country, and I am grateful to you  
6 all for coming to this hearing with  
7 open minds and hearing from so many  
8 folks who have ideas of things we  
9 can do to help our neighbors.

10 Let me speak briefly about  
11 why I believe electricity and gas  
12 bills are going up. That's one of  
13 the most common questions I get,  
14 especially in my new position as the  
15 Energy Chair. We've held hearings  
16 and had dozens and dozens, hundreds  
17 of meetings on the topic. Demand on  
18 our regional grid is rising due to  
19 extreme weather, greater  
20 electrification, artificial  
21 intelligence, video conferencing  
22 that we all use, all sorts of  
23 technology, and the growth of data  
24 centers.

1           At the same time, bringing  
2   new energy supply online, whether  
3   it's gas, renewable energy, nuclear  
4   or transmission infrastructure faces  
5   long delays and high costs. Simply  
6   put, when demand rises faster than  
7   supply, prices go up. And our  
8   neighbors are feeling it right now.

9           Just as importantly,  
10   Pennsylvania's regulatory structure  
11   allows utilities to reliably recover  
12   costs and earn guaranteed profits  
13   even when some of those delays and  
14   inefficiencies are contributing to  
15   difficult cost burdens.

16           Residential consumers bear  
17   the risk while some of these utility  
18   companies are being insulated from  
19   bearing risks as well. I want to  
20   emphasize that rising bills are  
21   difficult; they're painful. But  
22   they are not inevitable. They're  
23   the result of choices, policy  
24   choices, regulatory choices, and

1 market choices. And as a state  
2 elected official, I look forward to  
3 continuing to work with you all, my  
4 city counterparts, to do everything  
5 we can. Always keeping in mind  
6 those folks who come into our  
7 district offices, who are faced with  
8 this reality every day.

9           At the federal level,  
10 recent decisions by the Trump  
11 administration have stalled  
12 investments that could have lowered  
13 energy costs, could have  
14 strengthened our grid, and could  
15 have made this problem a little less  
16 bad. The key of -- the rollback of  
17 key provisions of the Inflation  
18 Reduction Act, in particular, halted  
19 so many projects that could have put  
20 people to work, improved  
21 reliability, expanded clean energy,  
22 and reduced bills for families and  
23 small businesses. It makes me sad  
24 to think about what we lost because

1 that was pulled back.

2 In addition, of course,  
3 there's global instability; tariffs  
4 and war that have pushed up fuel  
5 prices, pushed up heating costs, and  
6 wholesale electricity rates. Only  
7 Washington has the financial  
8 capacity, the big borrowing power,  
9 and the national reach to build the  
10 scale of energy infrastructure we  
11 really need.

12 But I believe the city and  
13 the state can do important --  
14 incredibly important and useful work  
15 for our neighbors. There are things  
16 we can do to lower bills. We are in  
17 an energy crisis, and I believe it's  
18 only going to get worse if we do not  
19 act. That said, let me get to a few  
20 ideas.

21 This session, the House  
22 Energy Committee has advanced 15  
23 Bills related to energy generation,  
24 efficiency data center oversight,

1 working closely with our partners in  
2 the Consumer Protection Technology  
3 and Utilities Committee and the  
4 House Finance Committee. They got  
5 long committee names, I just got  
6 Energy. Working closely with the --  
7 with Chairman Burgos and Chairman  
8 Samuelson of both of those  
9 committees.

10 One significant Bill we've  
11 gotten through is House Bill 1834,  
12 the Data Center Act from my  
13 colleague, Representative Rob  
14 Matzie. This legislation would give  
15 the Public Utility Commission  
16 regulatory authority over data  
17 centers, prevent utilities from  
18 shifting data center related costs  
19 onto residents and small business  
20 customers, require data centers to  
21 contribute to the LIHEAP and other  
22 assistance programs our neighbors  
23 count on, encourage renewable  
24 investment here in Pennsylvania, and

1 promote onsite energy generation by  
2 those data centers.

3 House Bill 1834 recognizes  
4 that utilities have an obligation to  
5 serve all customers, including large  
6 industrial loads. But it also  
7 emphasizes that the folks who live  
8 in those spaces right now should not  
9 be expected to pay more simply  
10 because they have a new neighbor.

11 A second important Bill is  
12 called Advanced Transmission  
13 Technologies, ATTs. House -- it's  
14 called -- it's House Bill 8 -- House  
15 Bill 2223. And it passed the house  
16 unanimously. I know, thank you. We  
17 still have to get it through the  
18 Senate, so maybe I'll wait on the  
19 applause, but I do appreciate it.  
20 And we worked very hard.

21 Advanced Transmission  
22 Technologies are modern tools,  
23 hardware and software upgrades that  
24 can increase the capacity and

1 reliability of our existing  
2 transmission lines. It's a simple  
3 concept, but it will help us to save  
4 a lot of money. We will avoid  
5 costly new construction and be able  
6 to transmit more energy with less  
7 energy lost in the process.

8 Another bill, House Bill  
9 2264 from Representative Davidson,  
10 would establish what are known as  
11 Virtual Power Plant Programs. This  
12 concept, with the name, took me a  
13 minute; it is not exactly a power  
14 plant in your home, but it's a  
15 similar idea.

16 These programs use existing  
17 technologies that many residents  
18 have: rooftops, solar, home  
19 batteries, smart thermostats, to  
20 reduce peak demand. That means  
21 fewer expensive upgrades and lower  
22 bills. While participants in these  
23 VPP Programs can earn money for the  
24 services their equipment provides,

1 basically turning their heat down  
2 just a little bit during peak times  
3 to make sure the grid is reliable  
4 for everybody.

5 I do want to talk just a  
6 little bit about new sources of  
7 energy that we are working to get  
8 online. One comes from  
9 Representative Arvind Venkat from  
10 Allegheny County. It's House Bill  
11 2076, and it would create a  
12 regulatory framework for geothermal  
13 development. A lot of people don't  
14 think about geothermal as a useful  
15 source of energy here in  
16 Pennsylvania, but it is, and it can  
17 be even more. This legislation  
18 enables Pennsylvania to tap into a  
19 clean, constant resource.

20 There's also Representative  
21 Jose Giral's House Bill 2017, which  
22 removes unnecessary barriers to new  
23 nuclear technologies, allowing safer  
24 advanced reactors to be built in our

1 state. And we have legislation to  
2 reduce barriers to the construction  
3 of distributed solar and storage  
4 projects, as you were hearing about  
5 from the Mayor of Camden.

6 I believe that the growth  
7 of the solar industry here in  
8 Pennsylvania and certainly in  
9 Philadelphia presents a -- presents  
10 us with a tremendous opportunity to  
11 get more energy online quickly,  
12 create good paying jobs here in  
13 Philadelphia, and ideally to keep  
14 people's bills down.

15 I do want to add that we  
16 are also taking a hard look at  
17 utility profits. PECO's recent  
18 proposed 12.5 percent rate increase,  
19 which the governor himself described  
20 as, "pure greed", was withdrawn  
21 after significant public pressure.  
22 But the episode highlighted the need  
23 for deeper reform. That's why I am  
24 working with my colleague, the Chair

1 of the Consumer Committee, Chair  
2 Burgos, on House Bill 2224, which  
3 would establish new standards for  
4 determining utility profit levels,  
5 ensuring investors earn fair but not  
6 excessive returns.

7           This is a big step. It is  
8 a challenging piece of legislation,  
9 but yet again, I am guided by the  
10 people who come into my district  
11 office already having trouble paying  
12 their bills and making very  
13 difficult decisions right now.

14           The last Bill I want to  
15 mention is House Bill 2131, which  
16 I'm working on with my colleague,  
17 Representative Heather Boyd. This  
18 legislation reforms Pennsylvania's  
19 retail electricity market. If  
20 you're not familiar with that --  
21 with that language, it's the folks  
22 who come to your door knocking and  
23 asking if you want to change your  
24 supplier. Too many consumers that

1 shop for electricity are unknowingly  
2 re-enrolled -- re-enrolled into high-  
3 cost variable rate plans.

4           This Bill would curb  
5 predatory practices and better  
6 protect consumers, our neighbors and  
7 constituents, from price gouging.  
8 And of course, there are Solar for  
9 Schools. A piece of legislation  
10 that I was proud to champion and to  
11 celebrate here in Council Chambers.  
12 We continue to work with the School  
13 District of Philadelphia, as well as  
14 school districts across the  
15 Commonwealth to apply for the \$25  
16 million that is available from the  
17 state, to help them put up solar  
18 panels on their buildings and on  
19 their grounds. All with the goal of  
20 saving School Districts and  
21 taxpayers' money.

22           As you all consider next  
23 steps, things that you can do on the  
24 municipal level, I hope that you'll

1 -- I hope that these thoughts may be  
2 helpful to you. Given that the city  
3 owns both the Philadelphia Gas Works  
4 and the Philadelphia Water  
5 Department, that ownership gives the  
6 city unique responsibility and  
7 authority to protect our residents.

8 I urge the city to look at  
9 strengthening consumer protections  
10 to the best of your ability,  
11 improving billing practices, and  
12 ensuring that shutoff policies  
13 prioritize health and safety, which  
14 I know are important to all of us as  
15 elected officials.

16 Second, I encourage you to  
17 look for ways to invest more  
18 aggressively in weatherization. For  
19 residents living in older housing  
20 stock, weatherization is one of the  
21 most effective ways to reduce energy  
22 burdens.

23 Given some of the folks in  
24 the audience today who will be

1 speaking, I'm quite sure you will  
2 hear from more experts about how  
3 every dollar spent on insulation,  
4 air sealing, and efficient heating  
5 systems lowers monthly bills, not  
6 just one year, but for years to  
7 come.

8 Finally, I would like to  
9 thank Councilmember O'Rourke for  
10 some of the work that he is doing on  
11 this issue. Philadelphia has clear  
12 authority over building codes and  
13 landlord tenant law. Stronger  
14 efficiency standards for new  
15 construction, better insulation,  
16 modern HVAC systems, higher  
17 performance windows can  
18 significantly cut long-term energy  
19 waste.

20 And at the same time, the  
21 city can hold landlords accountable  
22 for keeping rental units in good  
23 repair, ensuring tenants are not  
24 paying inflated bills caused by

1 drafty windows or broken heating  
2 systems. And the city can strengthen  
3 oversight of sub-metering to ensure  
4 billing is fair, transparent, and  
5 not used to exploit tenants. I  
6 remember not that long ago as a  
7 tenant myself, and when I read over  
8 Councilmember O'Rourke's  
9 legislation, I found myself nodding  
10 and saying, "We should do that. We  
11 should do that. We should do that."

12 Thank you, Councilmember O'Rourke,  
13 for your work and for being here.

14           And finally, shout out to  
15 the Philadelphia Energy Authority.  
16 Our city truly has a powerful asset  
17 in GEM and PEA. PEA has already  
18 demonstrated the ability to scale up  
19 rooftop solar distributed  
20 generation, and energy efficiency  
21 programs. I would like to suggest  
22 the possibility of more funding so  
23 that PEA can expand its work to  
24 reduce -- to reduce energy costs for

1     Philadelphians.

2             In short, while Washington  
3     and Harrisburg must act, and I will  
4     do my best, Philadelphia holds great  
5     power. I am grateful to all of you  
6     for your focus on these issues and  
7     for caring as I do about all of our  
8     neighbors in Philadelphia. Thank  
9     you, and I'm glad to answer any  
10    questions.

11            CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you  
12    for your testimony. Thank you both  
13    for your amazing testimonies.  
14    Always great for us to hear  
15    perspective outside of local  
16    government. I want to take a moment  
17    if you are okay, Rep, just to ask a  
18    few questions to you as well as some  
19    of the representation from New  
20    Jersey as well. I'll start with you  
21    Rep, you mentioned some of the renew  
22    -- renewable projects from  
23    Washington D.C. not necessarily  
24    being an option anymore.

1           When we look at just the  
2       average everyday person, as I was  
3       promoting this hearing, I got a lot  
4       of comments that said, you know,  
5       "Oh, my bill went from this amount  
6       to this amount." Those projects that  
7       you spoke of, can you just elaborate  
8       a little bit about some of those  
9       renewable projects being canceled.

10           And just in your opinion, I  
11       know that you're not like the  
12       technical expert, but you're a  
13       legislative expert. Do you think  
14       that those renewable projects being  
15       canceled has a direct correlation to  
16       the increase in utility bills that  
17       folks in Philadelphia and other  
18       places are seeing?

19           MS. FIEDLER: Sure. Thank  
20       you for the question. So when we  
21       talk about the changes that have  
22       happened at the federal level, there  
23       are many. And, in some cases,  
24       project have been -- projects have

1     been pulled completely, they've been  
2     slowed down.

3             And in other cases, there's  
4     just been a massive level of  
5     confusion and uncertainty. And for  
6     anyone who has ever been a developer  
7     of any project, having uncertainty  
8     about whether you can acquire the  
9     materials that you need, in the time  
10    that you need, is not a good thing.  
11    So in particular, I could talk --  
12    you know, I mentioned Solar for  
13    Schools. One of the tax credits  
14    that was available was scaled back  
15    rapidly.

16            So the dates were pulled  
17    back pretty significantly in a way  
18    that makes it very hard for schools  
19    to be able to qualify for the  
20    federal reimbursement that they  
21    would've received for solar panels.

22            So in many cases, like for  
23    that, it's not a program that's been  
24    completely eliminated, but it has

1 made the timelines much more  
2 challenging. Restrictions have been  
3 put in place on where items can be  
4 procured. And I think we are still  
5 in the process of trying to build  
6 out American manufacturing in a way  
7 that recognizes that it would be  
8 ideal for us not to be reliant on  
9 having some of these goods sourced  
10 from other countries, to make sure  
11 that they're built here in the  
12 United States.

13           There are still -- you  
14 know, there's solar panels that are  
15 built in Canada and other countries,  
16 but if we could have a very robust  
17 system in place here in the U.S.,  
18 that would certainly go a long way  
19 to getting a lot of these projects  
20 online.

21           That's one of the other  
22 things that we're working on with  
23 the finance committee as a clean  
24 manufacturing tax credit, which

1 would be added to the existing edge  
2 tax credit. And it would  
3 incentivize the production of things  
4 like heat pumps here in America to  
5 make sure that we are building them  
6 here so that we don't come into --  
7 you know, have challenges in the  
8 future when it comes to, for  
9 example, tariffs, which can really  
10 throw a lot of development into  
11 tailspin.

12 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
13 For anybody on the panel, one of the  
14 things that both folks -- both  
15 elected officials who testified,  
16 essentially talked about, was the  
17 importance of producing more energy.  
18 And, Rep Fiedler, you gave some  
19 examples. Mayor Carstarphen, you  
20 gave a few examples as well, too.

21 If anybody could, could you  
22 just elaborate on the idea of  
23 producing more energy and anything  
24 that you feel like, not only the

1 legislation that was communicated,  
2 but other ideas that's on the  
3 horizon that can put us in a  
4 position that can help just more  
5 energy for the region. I think one  
6 of the things I heard someone say is  
7 just the idea that the supply of far  
8 as what we want as it relates to  
9 using energy, it doesn't match the  
10 demand. At least not what it used  
11 to.

12           The demand has increased  
13 significantly, and the supply has  
14 not increased in the same capacity  
15 that the demand has. So any  
16 thoughts on that? Any communication  
17 folks who want to add to the  
18 dialogue, we would definitely  
19 appreciate it.

20           MS. FIEDLER: It's a great  
21 question. Thank you, Councilman. I  
22 think that -- and again, you'll hear  
23 I know later today from some folks  
24 who are experts in -- certainly in

1 the renewables field. I think  
2 renewables play a key role in our  
3 energy right now and can play even  
4 more. They are relatively cheap to  
5 get online, relatively quick. And  
6 they are things that can go up  
7 really fast and suddenly be  
8 connected to the grid and be  
9 generating energy.

10 So I think the more that we  
11 can do to try to get renewable  
12 energy projects like solar, but I  
13 also mentioned geothermal. You  
14 know, obviously hydro and wind are  
15 options as well, even though they in  
16 part have been subject to some of  
17 the pullback of these federal  
18 incentives. The role of renewables  
19 to me feels like a place where we  
20 really should be doing absolutely  
21 everything we can in and for  
22 Philadelphia.

23 That said, I do think, you  
24 know, we can't overlook the need for

1 base load energy and the fact that,  
2 you know, when there was that cold  
3 snap, which now feels like a distant  
4 memory, and it was --

5 CHAIR THOMAS: Sure did.

6 MS. FIEDLER: -- really,  
7 really cold --

8 CHAIR THOMAS: Yep.

9 MS. FIEDLER: -- everybody  
10 turned up their thermostats, right?  
11 We all needed to be warm. So we  
12 need to have a -- sort of a diverse  
13 portfolio of energy to make sure  
14 that all of our needs are met. But  
15 I don't think that means we overlook  
16 any of them. We just recognize that  
17 it's a mix and it's something that  
18 we all have come to expect.

19 You know, everybody expects  
20 when they turn up their heat just a  
21 few more degrees, that it'll get  
22 warmer. And so I think it is going  
23 to take a pretty thoughtful approach  
24 from a lot of people, and that's

1 where the VPPs legislation comes in.

2 I think that gets back to the idea  
3 of energy efficiency and how can we  
4 all use a little bit less energy for  
5 the good of everybody else.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: Want to  
7 state your name for the record?

8 MR. CUNNINGHAM: Sure.

9 CHAIR THOMAS: You can  
10 respond with anything you want to  
11 add.

12 MR. CUNNINGHAM: Good  
13 afternoon, Chairs and to the members  
14 of the Council. My name is Timothy  
15 J. Cunningham. I'm the city  
16 administrator in the city of Camden.  
17 Having the privilege to work for  
18 Mayor Carstarphen. Building off the  
19 Representative's comments, in the  
20 renewable space, Mayor Carstarphen  
21 testified about the community solar  
22 program that the city is advancing,  
23 and that's through our New Jersey  
24 Board of Public Utilities.

1           We are very lucky in New  
2     Jersey to have a governor that  
3     understands that additional  
4     generation is in fact needed to  
5     reduce energy burdens. To that end,  
6     the community solar, again as the  
7     mayor testified, will allow Camden  
8     City residents to benefit from solar  
9     arrays even when they don't have the  
10    capacity to put solar on their  
11    properties.

12           We have a very diverse  
13    city, both in terms of our  
14    population and our ethnicity, our --  
15    the income of our people and our --  
16    and our properties. And many of  
17    those properties are smaller rental  
18    row homes.

19           And because of that, the  
20    way the community solar program  
21    works through our New Jersey Board  
22    of Public Utilities, is that the  
23    city of Camden as a participant, is  
24    allowing our residents to receive a

1 benefit on their utility bill, a  
2 direct benefit by issuing an RFP.

3 The city issues an RFP for the  
4 construction of solar. That solar  
5 can occur anywhere in our utilities  
6 geographic area.

7 And Public Service Electric  
8 and Gas is a very large regional  
9 supplier in New Jersey. So we issue  
10 an RFP and developers can build  
11 solar anywhere there. And as a  
12 participant in that BPU program, a  
13 certain portion of that solar  
14 generation is credited to the mayor  
15 and the councilmen's constituents.

16 In addition, I agree with  
17 the Representative that not being  
18 too dependent on one particular type  
19 of energy is important. And in the  
20 city of Camden, the mayor has  
21 supported the gas side of PSE&G as  
22 we work, and it's a very disruptive  
23 process, to replace older gas mains  
24 and service lines. Until additional

1 renewables and other opportunities  
2 come online, we need to make sure  
3 that our residents maintain access  
4 to clean and reliable power or at  
5 least reliable power including gas.

6 And many of our older homes  
7 and mayor in the -- in the Fairview  
8 section of Camden, which was, you  
9 know, at one point, you know, the  
10 shipyards, they're very small homes  
11 and it's one of the oldest gas maps  
12 in the state of New Jersey. So at  
13 least upgrading that to make it as  
14 efficient as possible, to make it as  
15 safe as possible, and to make sure  
16 that homes have access to that is  
17 extraordinarily important. So,  
18 Chair, that's what I would offer on  
19 the generation side.

20 CHAIR THOMAS: Yeah. I --  
21 just one question before we close  
22 out. So as we begin to do a deeper  
23 dive into this issue, and today's  
24 conversation is just the beginning.

1     Myself and my colleague, we're  
2     really committed to this issue  
3     because we understand it's a big  
4     problem for the constituents in the  
5     city of Philadelphia.

6             The idea of producing new  
7     energy, listening to everybody, that  
8     is a big part of the solution. And  
9     as we begin to produce new energy,  
10    it impacts everybody in the entire  
11    region. So we want to attack this  
12    as it relates to looking at it  
13    through the lens of the entire  
14    tri-state area, right? We don't see  
15    it as just a Philadelphia problem.  
16    I'm glad that folks from Jersey are  
17    here saying that they don't see it  
18    as just as a New Jersey problem.

19            And so, what we want to do  
20    is create the idea of a coalition  
21    that comes together to figure out  
22    what do we do to lower the cost for  
23    the entire region.

24            In the midst of doing that,

1 there's been a big cry as it relates  
2 to issues around not just producing  
3 energy, but what makes the energy  
4 cost go up. I heard a number of  
5 people talk about data centers. I  
6 heard folks talk about AI and  
7 different technology that's being  
8 used now that's like really putting  
9 people in a position to increase the  
10 average person's -- the average  
11 person's electric costs.

12 And so based on looking at  
13 where we are right now, looking at  
14 the fact that Philadelphia City  
15 Council wants to attack this as a  
16 regional problem. Looking at the  
17 entire tri-state area, essentially  
18 working together, what can -- what  
19 do you think we should -- what do  
20 you think our expectations should be  
21 out of Washington D.C. as it relates  
22 to not the climate that we're in  
23 right now, because that -- there's a  
24 lot of uncertainty right there.

1           But, Rep Fielder, and the  
2    -- and this is my last question, I  
3    promise. Rep Fielder, in the midst  
4    of your comments, one of the things  
5    you talked about was the decisions  
6    from D.C. have really put us in a  
7    position to have to act on our own.  
8    So we have this uncertainty in D.C.  
9    While being state and local elected  
10   officials, we know we have the  
11   limitations that we have. But we  
12   understand that it's a tri-state  
13   problem and it's in a regional  
14   problem.

15           So as a region, what should  
16   we be thinking about when looking at  
17   the uncertainty that's coming out of  
18   D.C. because we can't say, well,  
19   we're going to rely on D.C. for  
20   some of the solutions that I heard  
21   communicated today. It's -- it is  
22   going to have to be us who attack  
23   this problem, at least for the next  
24   couple of years. And I know

1 constituents in Philadelphia,  
2 they're not really trying to hear,  
3 wait until an election for your  
4 utility bills to go down.

5 And so again, regional  
6 approach producing energy, we all  
7 agree, significant level of  
8 uncertainty coming out of D.C., but  
9 what can we expect moving forward  
10 throughout the course of our  
11 regional dialogue?

12 MS. FIEDLER: I think it's  
13 wise to take the regional approach,  
14 especially given that we're in PJM.  
15 I know you'll hear from those folks  
16 shortly. We --

17 CHAIR THOMAS: So let me  
18 rephrase that because you brought up  
19 PJM. Let me just -- and I'm sorry,  
20 Rep, and, you know, I got love for  
21 you. So PJM, for example, was  
22 founded about 100 years ago, right?  
23 I believe the year was like 1927.  
24 And don't think that I'm like an

1 energy expert; we just prepared very  
2 well for the hearing.

3 And so thinking about the  
4 fact that PJM was created about 100  
5 years ago as a outcry to the  
6 conditions that we were facing to  
7 provide some type of regulation, do  
8 you think we need to have that type  
9 of conversation again? Should there  
10 be instead of a -- just a  
11 conversation around just PJM and  
12 looking at it from the perspective  
13 of individual states and individual  
14 commonwealths.

15 Do you think that it is  
16 worth us revisiting what we did 100  
17 years ago to have a different  
18 conversation around regulations,  
19 around energy, around energy costs,  
20 around what we do for consumers, and  
21 around the profit margins dealing  
22 with energy? So I guess that's a  
23 better way to phrase the question.  
24 And I would love to hear your

1 thoughts as we close out this panel.

2 MS. FIEDLER: I'll respond  
3 with, yes, I think that would be a  
4 good idea. Taking a -- taking  
5 another look at it, right? We talk  
6 in Harrisburg also a lot about our  
7 tax system, which was put in place  
8 about a century ago. Things have  
9 changed in 100 years, right?  
10 Technology exists, new sources of  
11 energy.

12 And so yes, I think it  
13 would be wise to take another look  
14 at whether this makes sense. I do  
15 think in the absence of PJM, in a  
16 hypothetical absence, something else  
17 would have to be built. And I don't  
18 think that that is a small task at  
19 all. The governor has certainly  
20 worked with his counterparts within  
21 the region to also talk about the  
22 challenges and potential strains  
23 presented by membership and PJM.  
24 But I do think a conversation is a

1 good idea.

2 I'm working with  
3 counterparts on the state level  
4 across that same region to see what  
5 we could do in a collective fashion  
6 to protect all of our neighbors from  
7 rising costs. So, yes, I think that  
8 kind of conversation is very -- is  
9 overdue and would be very useful  
10 across state lines.

11 And I do think that the  
12 affordability -- whether you call it  
13 the affordability crisis or the  
14 energy crisis or just like a crisis,  
15 it's hitting everyone. It's hitting  
16 everyone in all these states: our  
17 counterparts in other states and in  
18 other cities. And I know that  
19 elected officials on the federal  
20 level in D.C. are also taking, kind  
21 of, a second look at whether some of  
22 the pullback on some of these tax  
23 credits make sense given that we're  
24 in an energy crisis.

1                   So it is quite possible  
2   that we will see change, you know, a  
3   180, a 360, whatever it is, on the  
4   federal level. But you're right,  
5   people can't wait until the next  
6   election or until an elected  
7   official in D.C. or anywhere else  
8   changes their mind. So I think  
9   those sorts of conversations are  
10 very useful.

11                  And I do think that there  
12 are ways to lower people's energy  
13 bills. I -- that to me feels  
14 incredibly important, because a lot  
15 of folks feel like the prices are  
16 out of control and are losing hope  
17 because they're struggling so much  
18 to keep up. So I'm grateful to all  
19 of you for being willing to do that  
20 work.

21                  CHAIR THOMAS: Well, thank  
22 you. Thank you for your advocacy.  
23 I don't know if you guys want to add  
24 anything, but again, just please be

1 on the lookout, right? We -- again,  
2 100 years ago, this conversation  
3 started and this is how we got some  
4 of the regulations that's in place  
5 right now. And any idea that's 100  
6 years old, probably needs to at  
7 least be revisited to see if it  
8 still fits today's time.

9           So that's one of the things  
10 that we want to continue to discuss  
11 as it relates to today's dialogue.  
12 I want to say thank you to everybody  
13 on this panel for being here. We  
14 respect you as elected officials.  
15 Thank you for the work you do as  
16 public servants and the people that  
17 you represent. And you spent a hour  
18 of your time, some of you even more  
19 with your time with us today, and we  
20 truly appreciate that. So thank  
21 you. Can we giving them a round of  
22 applause?

23           All right. The clerk is  
24 going to call the next panel, but

1 I'm going to take the liberty as the  
2 Chair to modify the panel that's  
3 coming up. So I'm going to add --  
4 matter of fact, Madam Clerk, do you  
5 have all the names for this panel?  
6 All right. Go ahead. You can call  
7 up the next panel.

8 THE CLERK: Next we will  
9 hear from the former Chair of the  
10 Massachusetts Department of  
11 Utilities and current Senior Fellow  
12 at Kleinman Center for Energy Policy  
13 at the University of Pennsylvania.  
14 And Ashley Coles, a CLS client.

15 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.  
16 We -- who -- we should --

17 THE CLERK: We'll also be  
18 hearing from the director of the  
19 Philadelphia Office of  
20 Sustainability, Elizabeth Lankenau.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.  
22 So for this panel, if it's okay, and  
23 for -- and I also want to -- Yeah.  
24 Okay. Yeah. So I just wanted to

1 make sure we had somebody from the  
2 admin here. Thank you for your  
3 patience. We appreciate you.

4 If you guys are okay, can  
5 we allow Ashley to testify first  
6 just because she have time  
7 restriction. And then after Ashley,  
8 we'll allow the rest of the panel to  
9 provide their testimony and then  
10 we'll open it up for questions.

11 Please state your name for  
12 the record.

13 MS. COLES: Good afternoon.  
14 My name is Ashley Coles. And so I  
15 am reaching out because I do have,  
16 like, some disagreements with the  
17 PECO. So once again -- sorry. Good  
18 afternoon to the Councilman Thomas,  
19 Councilman Driscoll, and the members  
20 of the Joint Committee of the  
21 Legislation Oversight and the  
22 Transportation and Public.

23 So one -- once again, I am  
24 -- my name is Ashley Coles, and I am

1 here today to explain how hard it is  
2 when it comes to my utilities. So I  
3 am a single mama too. I live in the  
4 North Philadelphia area. I've been  
5 living at this house for close to  
6 three years now.

7 All my PECO bills and  
8 everything been fine, but then now  
9 every single month is like at risk  
10 of being shut off. I have a 16 and  
11 a six-year-old. So like every  
12 month -- I'm very independent, so I  
13 was fine to try to pay and get on a  
14 payment arrangement, but it was very  
15 confusing because they did a payment  
16 arrangement on a back bill and not a  
17 current bill that's coming in.

18 So I've been working since  
19 I was 14. I tried to keep  
20 everything on control, but once --  
21 pretty much after 18. And I had --  
22 2024 I had -- 2019, I'm sorry, I'm  
23 getting a little nervous. But 2019  
24 I was diagnosed with epilepsy. So

1 -- but I still was working as hard  
2 as I can. But at the end of  
3 December of 2024, I had to  
4 physically stop because my epilepsy  
5 did get out of control. So I tried  
6 to get that under control, but as of  
7 right now, I still can't work.

8 So I am on disability.

9 Now, the thing that comes with the  
10 PECO is that the bill is extremely  
11 high, more than \$700 like each  
12 month. Now, many times I always do,  
13 for some reason it came in 1,000.  
14 But I always try to, you know, save  
15 my energy and to actually try to pay  
16 it off.

17 Now, I keep my thermostat  
18 on 70, so I don't want no heat or no  
19 air because the house is all  
20 central. So that's -- my mom told  
21 me that way to try to keep little  
22 sheets and stuff under the window  
23 seals, under the doorways just to  
24 keep the air and stuff out. And

1 then when it's hot out, I don't cut  
2 my system on at all. I still just  
3 use the fans to just try to keep  
4 everything under control. But  
5 evidently it is not.

6           So I was on -- I never  
7 received LIHEAP until this month  
8 when CLS had helped me. LIHEAP  
9 always declined me stating that I  
10 was -- my bill was way over 5,000.  
11 So they couldn't help because they  
12 maxed out at 3000 cap. Every time  
13 they put me on the cap, the cap --  
14 well, it would hit my account and  
15 then it would immediately be capped  
16 out stating that it already hit the  
17 -- reached the limit.

18           Now, every time I try to  
19 call PECO to try to get an  
20 understanding of the bill, they  
21 never give me a good understanding.  
22 I asked for a payment arrangement,  
23 but my payment arrangement was for  
24 me to manage my main bill that's

1 coming in. They made a payment  
2 arrangement for a back bill.

3 So all the money that I put  
4 into the account goes to the back  
5 bill and not my current bill. So  
6 every month I will receive a 10-day  
7 shut off notice because they  
8 constantly keep saying my current  
9 bill is not being paid. So when I  
10 put the \$700 in every month, because  
11 that's how much the bill come, they  
12 says that goes to the back bill and  
13 not the current bill.

14 So as of right now, I had  
15 asked my doctor to get a sign off  
16 paper to try to put a hold on it for  
17 30 days. So they did that, but then  
18 they still not giving me an  
19 explanation as in what's going to go  
20 on with the next bill. They just  
21 say, it is what it is, that I have  
22 to pay for the energy, if not get it  
23 shut off. It was shut off in a  
24 point in time and I had to -- they

1 said the minimum I could pay is \$300  
2 to get it cut back on.

3 But the additional \$400 had  
4 to be paid by the next following  
5 week to try to clear a monthly bill.  
6 Other than that, they not giving me  
7 no explanations. Every time I call,  
8 I get hang up on.

9 Now, I had one little  
10 concern while I was actually mad  
11 with the PECO because I am on  
12 Section 8. So the last time when I  
13 was conversating with him, he made a  
14 little smart comment to me saying,  
15 "Well, if your rent is being paid,  
16 why can't you keep your utilities  
17 paid?" You -- I'm getting, he's  
18 pretty much saying, oh, well, I'm  
19 getting free rent from Section 8, so  
20 you telling me that you can't use  
21 your utility bill paid.

22 But I'm like, well, I'm on  
23 disability, I only receive 1,300 a  
24 month and it's impossible to try to

1 choose \$800 on a utility bill and  
2 then still try to figure out the  
3 next three weeks for my two  
4 children. So they pretty much -- I  
5 just asked to speak to a supervisor,  
6 but they quickly just hang up, which  
7 is all the time.

8           So other than that, as of  
9 right now, when PECO came out to try  
10 to resolve a problem, they said,  
11 yeah, your house is very drafty and  
12 whatever. They don't know how --  
13 what's going on with the AC system.  
14 But they gave me two PECO blankets,  
15 and they just said, "oh, somebody  
16 going to contact you to see if we  
17 can get on a different arrangement."  
18 But other than that, no, nothing.

19           And that's about it. I'm  
20 just -- pretty much I'm trying to  
21 speak on PECO, which I really don't  
22 like, but PECO is the main one  
23 that's always constantly giving me  
24 problems. Before it wasn't ever like

1 this. But since I moved into this  
2 house, that's all AC, all central  
3 air. It's just been hectic, just  
4 been hectic. They never can explain  
5 what's the usage of my bill. I keep  
6 my thermos -- I keep the system off  
7 because every time they try to  
8 explain it, they don't explain it.

9 So the bill will come in  
10 like 7-, \$800 a month, and then they  
11 still just telling me to pay for the  
12 back bill. So as of right now, the  
13 bill will stay 5,000 because I put  
14 the \$700 on thinking I'm paying May  
15 5th, but no, they put it to the back  
16 bill and saying my monthly bills is  
17 still not going to be paid. Unless  
18 the back bill is completely paid  
19 off, and then I can get a regular  
20 monthly bill and get on a payment  
21 arrangement with a monthly bill.

22 Other than that, contacting  
23 PECO is never no help and that's the  
24 only thing that they does. And I'm

1 about to say PECO, light, heat and  
2 everything, nothing. That's about  
3 it.

4 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Well,  
5 thank you for your testimony. I  
6 don't know who would like to go  
7 next.

8 THE CLERK: Jamie Van  
9 Nostrand next, if you would.

10 MR. NOSTRAND: Thanks,  
11 Dave.

12 CHAIR DRISCOLL: And state  
13 your name for the record and proceed  
14 with your testimony.

15 MR. NOSTRAND: Yes. I'm  
16 James Van Nostrand, V-A-N  
17 N-O-S-T-R-A-N-D. Good afternoon.  
18 I'm Jamie Van Nostrand, senior  
19 fellow with the Kleinman Center for  
20 Energy Policy at the University of  
21 Pennsylvania. The views I express  
22 today are my own and do not reflect  
23 the institutional position of the  
24 Kleinman Center or the University of

1 Pennsylvania.

2 As a relatively new  
3 resident of my new now favorite  
4 city, Philadelphia, I moved here  
5 last May. I'm happy to share my  
6 thoughts on energy affordability  
7 this afternoon with the Committees  
8 on Legislative Oversight and  
9 Transportation and Public Utilities.

10 I appear before these committees  
11 with over 45 years of experience in  
12 the energy industry, including a  
13 recent two-and-a-half-year stint as  
14 Chair of the Massachusetts  
15 Department of Public Utilities in  
16 Boston.

17 Since November, I have been  
18 working as the policy director at  
19 the Future of Heat Initiative, which  
20 is a national nonprofit working on  
21 energy affordability issues with the  
22 focus on the effective regulation of  
23 natural gas distribution companies.  
24 Prior to my tour of duty as a

1 utility regulator in Massachusetts,  
2 I spent 12 years as an energy  
3 environmental law professor, three  
4 years running an environmental NGO  
5 in New York, and over 20 years  
6 representing investor-owned  
7 utilities and rate proceedings in  
8 the Pacific Northwest.

9           The urgent need to address  
10 energy affordability is a national  
11 issue that extends far beyond  
12 Philadelphia. According to a report  
13 issued two weeks ago by RMI, average  
14 residential electric bills have  
15 outpaced inflation in 41 states over  
16 the past two years. This follows  
17 more than a decade of household  
18 electricity bills growing with or  
19 slower than the rate of inflation.

20           PowerLines, a national  
21 nonprofit focusing on energy  
22 effective utility regulation and  
23 affordability, reports that rate  
24 increases are surging nationally

1 with requests reaching a record \$31  
2 billion in 2025. More than double  
3 the \$15 billion in 2024 impacting 81  
4 million Americans. Residential  
5 electricity rates across the country  
6 have risen roughly 40 percent since  
7 2021.

8 Energy affordability has  
9 received even greater attention in  
10 the Mid-Atlantic region, in which  
11 Philadelphia is located, due in  
12 large part to the forecasted load  
13 growth attributable to new data  
14 centers in the region, primarily to  
15 meet additional requirements related  
16 to AI and the impact of that  
17 anticipated low growth on capacity  
18 prices in the PJM wholesale market.

19 The Lawrence Berkeley  
20 National Laboratory did a 2024  
21 report on U.S. data center usage,  
22 and found that data centers consumed  
23 about 4.4 percent of U.S.  
24 electricity in 2023, but are

1 expected to consume approximately  
2 6.7 to 12 percent of total U.S.  
3 electricity by 2028.

4           And it is not just data  
5 centers driving this load growth.  
6 After decades of relatively flat  
7 loads, electric loads nationwide,  
8 U.S. electricity demand is  
9 experiencing unprecedented surge and  
10 is predicted to grow by 25 percent  
11 by 2030 and up to 78 percent by 2050  
12 compared to 2023. Due to  
13 manufacturing expansion, increased  
14 electrification, as consumers take  
15 advantage of more efficient electric  
16 heat pumps and electric vehicles to  
17 avoid high natural gas prices.

18           In response to this  
19 anticipated load growth, electric  
20 utilities are planning massive  
21 investments in transmission and  
22 distribution, T&D infrastructure, to  
23 deliver more and more electrons to  
24 consumers and to harden the grid in

1 response to the increasing frequency  
2 of extreme weather events.

3 Again, according to  
4 PowerLines, U.S. investor-owned  
5 utilities are planning a record  
6 breaking \$1.4 trillion in capital  
7 expenditures, CapEx, through 2030,  
8 marking a 21 percent increase in  
9 planned investments in T&D  
10 infrastructure. Under cost of  
11 service regulation in place  
12 throughout the United States, this  
13 increased investment will create  
14 significant upward pressure on  
15 electricity rates going forward as  
16 utilities earn their profits on this  
17 capital spending.

18 And in this regard, I note  
19 the testimony of Representative  
20 Fiedler and the work that she's  
21 doing in the Pennsylvania  
22 legislature on rate reform,  
23 particularly HB 2224, which is  
24 looking at how utilities set their

1 ROEs. You know, Governor Shapiro  
2 issued an -- a letter last April  
3 29th, just a couple weeks ago, in  
4 terms of how utilities set their  
5 ROE.

6 As a former regulator, I  
7 think in response to the question  
8 that Chair Thomas had in terms of  
9 this business model. You know, when  
10 states passed the statutes that  
11 regulates investor-owned utilities,  
12 those -- there was a -- for the most  
13 part were passed in 1907. We're  
14 talking 120 years ago, is when the  
15 rate of return, the regulatory --  
16 utility regulatory statutes were  
17 passed. Originally in Wisconsin and  
18 New York, and then within a few  
19 years thereafter about half the  
20 states in the country.

21 So I think it is -- it's  
22 long overdue, I think, to have that  
23 look one at the utility business  
24 model itself. And there was a

1 reference by the mayor to Governor  
2 Sherrill in New Jersey. I testified  
3 last Friday or last Thursday up in  
4 Trenton. The BPU convened a  
5 workshop on looking at the utility  
6 business model. And basically, is  
7 there a -- is there a better way to  
8 set rates? I think there's a  
9 consensus that the way we've been  
10 doing it, it might have worked fine  
11 in a -- in a -- in a period of  
12 relatively low load growth.

13 But these -- this statutes  
14 been put in place for 120 years ago.  
15 And maybe it's time to figure out is  
16 this -- is the cost-of-service  
17 formal regulation really working?  
18 And I think Governor Shapiro's  
19 letter really -- and I think the  
20 legislation that Representative  
21 Fiedler is working on in terms of  
22 how we -- how we estimate the  
23 utilities profit, necessary profit  
24 level, it's also worth

1 reconsidering. It's not just bills  
2 on the electric side that are  
3 increasing, it's also the natural  
4 gas bills on which I focus in my  
5 current work at the Future of Heat  
6 Initiative.

7 CHAIR THOMAS: Sir, can you  
8 do me a favor? Can you just move  
9 that mic over just a little bit?

10 MR. NOSTRAND: Sure. Yeah.  
11 Nationally, the delivery portion of  
12 the typical gas bill has doubled  
13 over the past 15 years, increasing  
14 it more than twice the rate of  
15 inflation. Even though residential  
16 customers on average are using 21  
17 percent less gas, the average  
18 natural gas bill is up by 33  
19 percent. Gas customers now pay  
20 roughly twice as much to have the  
21 gas delivered than for the gas  
22 itself.

23 In Pennsylvania, the gas  
24 utilities are investing billions to

1 excavate and replace old pipes and  
2 install new infrastructure. Nearly  
3 tripling their gas assets upon which  
4 they earn a return from \$8.3 billion  
5 to \$22.6 billion over the last 10  
6 years.

7           This continued spending to  
8 maintain the gas distribution system  
9 ultimately will lead to significant  
10 future rate increases as sales  
11 volumes continue to decline due to  
12 the inevitable transition to  
13 electric heat pumps, which are more  
14 efficient and a more cost-effective  
15 heating solution for utility  
16 customers.

17           Apart from the rate  
18 increases driven by infrastructure  
19 spending by the electric and gas  
20 utilities, there is the cost of the  
21 energy commodity itself. Whether  
22 energy remains affordable is largely  
23 a function of national energy  
24 policies. And on this point, it is

1 largely an issue of supply and  
2 demand. As noted above, future  
3 demand is expected to soar.

4 The question is what  
5 actions the federal government has  
6 taken to bring a new generation  
7 online to help meet that expanded  
8 demand? It is fair to say that the  
9 Trump administration over the past  
10 15 months, has taken every available  
11 action, both legal and illegal, to  
12 slash new energy supplies by  
13 crippling the development of the  
14 cheapest new sources of energy;  
15 wind, and solar.

16 It is not an all of the  
17 above energy strategy.  
18 Notwithstanding the Trump  
19 administration's claims, renewable  
20 sources have clearly been targeted  
21 and excluded from that strategy.

22 From my days in  
23 Massachusetts, I'm most familiar  
24 with the offshore wind where the

1 Trump administration on day one  
2 issued an Executive Order to stop  
3 all offshore wind projects,  
4 thwarting New England's plan to  
5 build 9,000 megawatts of offshore  
6 wind by 2030. Most of the  
7 administration's arbitrary actions  
8 with respect to offshore wind have  
9 been overturned in the courts, but  
10 the uncertainty has dampened any new  
11 development.

12 More recently, the Trump  
13 administration is paying billions to  
14 buy out the leases for offshore wind  
15 projects off the coast of North  
16 Carolina, New Jersey, and New York,  
17 and California. As far as the tax  
18 credits that would've made wind and  
19 solar projects cheaper, the one big  
20 ugly bill, I call it, from last  
21 July, drastically curtailed the 30  
22 percent tax credits available under  
23 the Inflation Reduction Act by  
24 requiring projects to begin

1 construction by July 4th, 2026, or  
2 be in service by January 1st, 2028.

3 The EPA's Solar for All  
4 program, which was canceled by the  
5 Trump administration last August,  
6 would've provided \$7 billion to  
7 expand residential solar access for  
8 low income and disadvantaged  
9 communities. Pennsylvania was  
10 scheduled to receive \$156 million.  
11 Most recently for onshore wind, the  
12 Trump administration two weeks ago,  
13 pulled the plug on 165 onshore wind  
14 projects representing 30 gigawatts  
15 of generating capacity based on  
16 claimed national security interests.

17 It is simple economics that  
18 when demand vastly outstripped  
19 supply, prices go up and consumers  
20 are bearing the impacts of a deeply  
21 flawed and skewed national energy  
22 policy. These rising energy costs  
23 impose real challenges for  
24 Philadelphians struggling to pay

1 their utility bills.

2 And while the forces  
3 driving these cost increases are  
4 largely outside of the city's  
5 control, there are some actions the  
6 city could take to help address this  
7 issue. For one, the recent creation  
8 of the Green Bank by the  
9 Philadelphia Energy Authority will  
10 create new opportunities for  
11 low-cost financing of energy  
12 projects that should reduce reliance  
13 on regional markets and produce  
14 lower energy bills for customers.  
15 Continued commitment to energy  
16 efficiency programs is critical to  
17 give retail customers the tools they  
18 need to manage their energy bills.

19 And finally, the city may  
20 want to consider getting more  
21 involved in utility rate cases at  
22 the State PUC. While the  
23 proceedings are complex, and I'm  
24 certainly well aware of that, having

1     been in that hearing room for over  
2     40 years, the city could have an  
3     impact in shaping the outcomes by  
4     thoughtfully weighing in on issues  
5     of particular importance. I  
6     appreciate the opportunity to be  
7     able to share these comments with  
8     the Council.

9             CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.

10            Please state your name for  
11     the record. I'm sure you know the  
12     routine, and you may begin with your  
13     testimony. After this panel is  
14     testify, I'll open it up to  
15     questions for members of the  
16     Committee. Thank you.

17            MS. LANKENAU: Great.  
18     Thank you. Good afternoon,  
19     Chairperson Thomas, Chairperson  
20     Driscoll, and members of the  
21     Committees on Legislative Oversight  
22     and Transportation and Public  
23     Utilities. My name is Elizabeth  
24     Lankenau, and I am the Director of

1 the Office of Sustainability.

2 I'm here today to testify  
3 on Resolution No. 250896 regarding  
4 the rising costs of energy bills.

5 Thank you for convening a wide range  
6 of perspectives on this issue. The  
7 Office of Sustainability was created  
8 in 2008 to promote policies and  
9 programs to meet the city's  
10 sustainability goals.

11 To this end, our office  
12 works with partners throughout the  
13 city to improve quality of life for  
14 all Philadelphians through advancing  
15 environmental justice, reducing  
16 carbon emissions, and preparing for  
17 a hotter and wetter future. As a  
18 key part of our office's mission, we  
19 work to improve all Philadelphians'  
20 access to clean, affordable energy.

21 As many of you here today  
22 are aware, Philadelphians face some  
23 of the highest energy costs relative  
24 to residents' income in the country.

1 With a quarter of low-income  
2 households in our metro area,  
3 spending more than 19 percent of  
4 their income on energy. This crisis  
5 is caused by interrelated factors  
6 such as poverty, aging housing  
7 stock, rising energy costs, and  
8 insufficient resources invested in  
9 building repairs and energy  
10 upgrades.

11 High energy burden or a  
12 high ratio of energy costs to income  
13 disproportionately affects  
14 low-income owners and renters, as  
15 well as BIPOC households in  
16 Philadelphia. To address this  
17 urgent situation, in 2021, OOS held  
18 a series of Energy Burden Focus  
19 Groups across six of the most  
20 energy-burdened communities in  
21 Philadelphia.

22 Drawing from this resident  
23 feedback in 2023, OOS initiated the  
24 development of an Energy Poverty

1 Alleviation Strategy. Key  
2 recommendations from this report  
3 include the following: First,  
4 partnering with energy utilities and  
5 encouraging continued investment in  
6 expanded access to utility  
7 assistance and energy usage  
8 reduction programs. Second,  
9 expanding the city's energy  
10 efficiency initiatives with a focus  
11 on home weatherization.

12 Modeled data shows that  
13 approximately 70 percent of the  
14 city's single-family dwellings leak  
15 energy, which significantly  
16 increases energy costs.

17 Interventions include cool  
18 roofs, increasing adoption of heat  
19 pumps for affordable cooling, and  
20 expanding access to rooftop solar,  
21 such as through the Philadelphia  
22 Energy Authority's programs.  
23 Strengthening partnerships in  
24 community and -- Third,

1 strengthening partnerships in  
2 community capacity to address energy  
3 costs, especially supporting the  
4 city's network of 16 Neighborhood  
5 Energy Centers.

6           The Neighborhood Energy  
7 Centers are an established, trusted  
8 network of community-based  
9 organizations that serve as a  
10 one-stop shop for community members  
11 to learn about utility bill  
12 assistance programs, home repair and  
13 weatherization, budget counseling,  
14 and connection to services.

15           Since the launch of the  
16 Energy Poverty Alleviation Strategy,  
17 the city with its community and  
18 agency partners has advanced several  
19 initiatives to address energy  
20 affordability. Key achievements  
21 include the launch of the city's  
22 first Mobile Energy Center,  
23 increased investment in energy  
24 education, a community scale cool

1 roofs pilot in Strawberry Mansion,  
2 the launch of a clean energy  
3 workforce strategy, and continued  
4 investment in housing programs to  
5 better address rising energy costs  
6 through the division of Housing and  
7 Community Development, the  
8 Philadelphia Housing Development  
9 Corporation, the Philadelphia Energy  
10 Authority, and the Office of  
11 Community Empowerment and  
12 Opportunity.

13           The Energy Coordinating  
14 Agency is the city's implementing  
15 partner for mobile -- the Mobile  
16 Energy Center, energy education, and  
17 cool roofs projects.

18           A first of its kind  
19 nationally, the Mobile Energy Center  
20 expands the city's ability to reach  
21 Philadelphians who need energy  
22 support. While Neighborhood Energy  
23 Centers provide critical services in  
24 the communities they serve, many

1 residents live in areas outside of  
2 their reach. Operated by the Energy  
3 Coordinating Agency, the Mobile  
4 Energy Center helps close that gap  
5 by bringing energy assistance,  
6 education, and resources directly to  
7 residents. Connecting more  
8 households to the support they need  
9 to reduce their energy costs.

10           Shortly after its launch in  
11 March 2026, the Mobile Energy Center  
12 connected 28 residents with energy  
13 and bill assistance programs. The  
14 Energy -- and the Energy  
15 Coordinating Agency separately held  
16 62 energy education workshops for  
17 adults and 18 for children,  
18 empowering 1400 adults and children  
19 to manage and reduce their energy  
20 use.

21           In another recent  
22 accomplishment, the city has  
23 launched a community scale cool  
24 roofs project in Strawberry Mansion

1 with the Energy Coordinating Agency  
2 as the city's implementing partner.  
3 Cool roofs reflect more sunlight and  
4 absorb less heat than conventional  
5 roofs, helping keep buildings cooler  
6 while also extending the lifespan of  
7 roofs.

8           The EPA estimates they can  
9 reduce indoor air temperatures by  
10 two to five degrees and reduce  
11 cooling demand for air conditioning  
12 by 10 to 20 percent. When applied  
13 at community scale, as with the  
14 pilot in Strawberry Mansion, they  
15 may also help reduce the urban heat  
16 island effect.

17           This relatively low-cost  
18 intervention can not only provide  
19 benefits for individuals through  
20 lower energy costs and cooler indoor  
21 air temperatures, but can also  
22 deliver broad benefits for  
23 communities; lowering heat  
24 vulnerability, improving air

1 quality, and leading to safer and  
2 healthier communities. To date, 62  
3 cool roofs have been installed in  
4 Strawberry Mansion.

5 Another opportunity  
6 identified in the Energy Poverty  
7 Alleviation Strategy was the need to  
8 scale up Philadelphia's clean energy  
9 workforce to meet the growing demand  
10 for energy upgrades. In May 2026,  
11 OOS in partnership with the City  
12 College for Municipal Employment and  
13 Workforce Programming team, will  
14 publish Building Green Futures. A  
15 roadmap to strengthen Philadelphia's  
16 clean energy workforce critical to  
17 reducing energy costs while  
18 expanding access to quality jobs and  
19 economic opportunity.

20 In addition, the city has  
21 expanded its energy and housing  
22 programs to better address rising  
23 energy costs. The Philadelphia  
24 Housing Development Corporation now

1 administers the Weather Resistant --  
2 Weatherization Assistance Program,  
3 increasing the city's capacity to  
4 deliver energy efficiency  
5 improvements.

6 PHDC expects to weatherize  
7 around 400 homes this calendar year.  
8 CEO operates the BenePhilly program  
9 in partnership with community  
10 organizations to offer residents  
11 free, one-on-one assistance  
12 enrolling in public benefit  
13 programs, including energy  
14 assistance programs like the  
15 Low-Income Heating and Energy  
16 Assistance Program, or LIHEAP and  
17 PECO and PGW's customer assistance  
18 programs.

19 Mayor Parker's historic  
20 investment in the HOME Initiative is  
21 also critical. Many Philadelphia --  
22 pardon me. Many Philadelphia homes  
23 require basic repairs before they  
24 can be weatherized or upgraded with

1 energy efficient systems making  
2 housing repair a foundational step  
3 toward energy affordability.

4 Expanded programs such as  
5 the Basic Systems Repair Program and  
6 Restore, Repair, Renew are helping  
7 more households complete these  
8 essential repairs and preparing  
9 homes for future energy upgrades,  
10 with One Philly Front Door  
11 facilitating ease of access to these  
12 programs.

13 The Rental Improvement Fund  
14 also supports small landlords and  
15 making repairs and energy efficiency  
16 upgrades. By providing direct  
17 funding for repairs and energy  
18 efficient upgrades, RIF, the Rental  
19 Improvement Fund, circumvents the  
20 split incentive challenge that often  
21 disincentivize landlords from paying  
22 for upgrades that lower tenant  
23 utility bills. The Eviction  
24 Diversion Program helps keep

1     Philadelphians housed by supporting  
2     renters whose ability to pay rent  
3     may also be strained by rising  
4     energy costs.

5             DHCD also supports the  
6     distribution of financial assistance  
7     to low-income housing to help  
8     residents avoid utility shutoffs.

9     In addition, the Philadelphia Energy  
10    Authority's program, such as Build  
11    to Last and Solarize Philly,  
12    continue to help residents lower  
13    energy costs and become more energy  
14    secure and resilient.

15            Together, these investments  
16    play an important role in making  
17    energy more affordable for  
18    Philadelphians, while also  
19    delivering broader quality of life  
20    benefits for individuals and  
21    communities.

22            Addressing rising energy  
23    costs is a complex challenge that  
24    requires action at multiple levels.

1 While many drivers of these costs  
2 are shaped by regional markets and  
3 decision at the Commonwealth and  
4 federal levels, OOS in partnership  
5 with city departments is committed  
6 to continuing to advance local  
7 solutions that reduce energy burden  
8 for all Philadelphians.

9 Thank you for this  
10 opportunity to testify. With me are  
11 Nidhi Krishen, OOS's Program  
12 Director of Citywide Energy  
13 Solutions; Rachel Mulbry, the  
14 Director of Policy and Strategic  
15 Initiatives for PHDC; and Beth  
16 McConnell, Deputy Executive Director  
17 for Policy and Programs from CEO to  
18 assist me in answering any  
19 questions. So thank you.

20 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
21 Chair recognizes Chairman Driscoll.

22 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Jamie,  
23 I've got two questions. First one,  
24 I think is very important, Patriots

1 or Eagles?

2 MR. NOSTRAND: I've never  
3 been a Patriots fan. Always Eagles.  
4 I love it lately.

5 CHAIR DRISCOLL: There you  
6 go.

7 MR. NOSTRAND: Never been a  
8 Patriots fan.

9 CHAIR DRISCOLL: You're up  
10 to a good -- you're up to a good  
11 start here in Philadelphia. I just  
12 have a question, you know, I know  
13 that New England, obviously it's  
14 very cold up there. I did spend  
15 some time there, and you have some,  
16 you know, very high energy costs,  
17 right? So at one point, I think you  
18 imported -- they imported liquid  
19 natural gas from Russia.

20 MR. NOSTRAND: Yes.

21 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Right?  
22 And then during that time that very  
23 cold time, I guess the heating oil  
24 was the most used method of heating.

1 What could we learn from your  
2 experience there?

3 MR. NOSTRAND: One of the  
4 things I learned -- I mean, I spent  
5 a lot of time teaching law at West  
6 Virginia University, so I was very  
7 familiar with PJM. And one of the  
8 things I learned going to New  
9 England is it's very much an energy  
10 island, which was very bad in the  
11 case of -- so they're dependent upon  
12 LNG. And LNG is now a, I guess, a  
13 global commodity.

14 So when Russia invades  
15 Ukraine, LNG prices went through the  
16 roof as did electricity prices and  
17 natural gas prices in New England.  
18 So, I mean, I think it's great being  
19 part of a very vibrant thermal  
20 market. I think it's -- and there's  
21 a -- you know, there's a lot of  
22 discussion of should there be more  
23 natural gas brought into New  
24 England. And I think, you know, we

1 had -- we had a governor of New York  
2 who tended to block all those  
3 pipelines that would've taken the  
4 Marcellus Shale gas into New  
5 England.

6 I think electricity prices  
7 would probably be lower. I think  
8 what was the decision was made by  
9 New England was we're going to go  
10 big on offshore wind, and I think  
11 that was actually a pretty good  
12 strategy, but it's been completely  
13 stymied by just pulling the plug on  
14 all those -- all those projects.  
15 But I think -- I think a diverse  
16 source of resources and I think it's  
17 -- and wind and solar need to be  
18 part of that mix. And battery  
19 storage technologies has amazing  
20 advances. So I think, you know,  
21 taking advantage of really truly all  
22 the above energy strategy, and PGM  
23 is off to a great start. They just  
24 got to get more stuff -- more stuff

1 built.

2 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Okay.

3 CHAIR THOMAS: Great  
4 questions, great answers. Chair  
5 recognizes Councilmember Landau.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:  
7 Thank you. This is for Director  
8 Lankenau. What's the city's  
9 strategy for intervening in PECO  
10 rate cases, PJM proceedings, and  
11 other regulatory proceedings in  
12 order to make energy bills more  
13 affordable, clean our air, and  
14 protect a livable climate?

15 MS. LANKENAU: Sure. I can  
16 speak more to intervening in the  
17 PECO rate case. We reached a  
18 settlement in the prior case. We  
19 were coordinating with the  
20 administration on whether to  
21 intervene on the one that was  
22 recently dropped. And so those are  
23 active conversations. I think one  
24 area that we do need to strengthen

1 on is being more present with the  
2 PUC for sure.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: And  
4 how about PJM?

5 MS. LANKENAU: In PJM we  
6 have not done any work there yet.  
7 Yeah.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:  
9 Okay. And how are you working with  
10 the Neighborhood Energy Centers to  
11 ensure that they can provide  
12 residents with essential information  
13 and support?

14 MS. LANKENAU: Sure. Yes.  
15 We're working through our Deputy  
16 Director Nidhi Krishen, and she can  
17 come up and give more detail, but  
18 she is working very closely with the  
19 Energy Coordinating Agency, whoever  
20 oversees all of the NECs and worked  
21 very closely through federal  
22 funding, formula funding that we  
23 received, the Energy Efficiency  
24 Conservation Block Grant to make

1 sure that some of that funding went  
2 toward the Mobile Energy Center.

3 And so that's delivering  
4 all kinds of information to  
5 neighborhoods or individuals who may  
6 not be able to access the 16 sites.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

8 Uh-huh.

9 MS. LANKENAU: So that's  
10 been -- and it's new. Even -- we've  
11 already done a lot since March. So  
12 the Energy Coordinating Agency has  
13 already done a lot since March,  
14 yeah.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

16 Okay. Thank you.

17 MS. LANKENAU: You're  
18 welcome.

19 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
20 Two questions before I let you go.  
21 The first question is please, both  
22 of this, and I'm going to ask both  
23 questions. You can answer them and  
24 then we'll let you go. The first

1 question is around data centers.  
2 Just talk to us about your  
3 perspective on data centers. How  
4 should we be thinking about them as  
5 a region?

6 The second question is,  
7 similar questions that I asked to  
8 the last panel. PJM was founded  
9 about 100 years ago, and it was a  
10 idea that came out of the region  
11 coming together to determine that  
12 the cost of energy and the impact it  
13 was having on people wasn't working.  
14 And so that's how PJM was created.  
15 A hundred years later, do you think  
16 that we need to revisit the  
17 conversation that we had 100 years  
18 ago around PJM and think about our  
19 perspective on energy?

20 I think for us on this  
21 legislative body, I think one of the  
22 things that we're challenging is the  
23 idea of people profiting off of  
24 energy, right? Like, energy is

1 something that is mandatory, like  
2 water and air. And the idea that  
3 some people should be able to profit  
4 off of other people being required  
5 to have to use these things to  
6 survive, I think it does raise some  
7 ethical and moral questions, and I  
8 think that's the foundation of what  
9 inspired the Chairman and I to have  
10 this conversation today. So I would  
11 love to get your perspective on  
12 those two things. And after that,  
13 we'll move on to the next panel.  
14 Thank you both for being here.

15 MS. LANKENAU: Sure. And  
16 are both questions for both of us,  
17 or both for me?

18 CHAIR THOMAS: I will -- I  
19 would definitely appreciate it if  
20 both of you can answer both  
21 questions, if that's okay.

22 MS. LANKENAU: Do you want  
23 to go first?

24 MR. NOSTRAND: Sure.

1 Thanks for the question, Chair  
2 Thomas. On data centers, I mean, I  
3 look at the testimony Representative  
4 Fiedler and the bill that was passed  
5 unanimously in the house. I mean,  
6 those are the things that we need to  
7 be thinking about, making sure  
8 existing customers are not adversely  
9 affected by the addition of the data  
10 center loads. And there, I think  
11 we're learning more and more about  
12 the flexibility that data centers  
13 may have. We can actually treat it  
14 as a -- as a resource to some  
15 extent. But so we're -- we're  
16 learning a lot and certainly been a  
17 lot in terms of -- it's kind of a  
18 moving target. All the things that  
19 have happened with data centers,  
20 with the governors getting involved,  
21 the White House getting involved,  
22 and PJM coming up with different  
23 proposals that they're filing with  
24 FERC. FERC getting involved. It --

1 it's kind of a moving target. But  
2 the bottom line is, it seems like  
3 it's important for this  
4 administration that we win the AI  
5 race, which means the data centers  
6 need to be built, but we just need  
7 to make sure that existing customers  
8 aren't adversely affected.

9 PJM, I think it's a great  
10 question, and I think it -- I think  
11 it worked fairly well when you have  
12 relatively stable or no load growth.  
13 And I think what we've seen with  
14 this data center load and these --  
15 and these massive load growth  
16 projections, the capacity market's  
17 really not well designed to get  
18 things built. And it's sending a  
19 pricing, but we're not actually  
20 getting enough things built. So it  
21 needs to be a combination. One of  
22 the things, in terms of lessons  
23 learned -- back to Chair Driscoll's  
24 questions, lessons learned from New

1 England is, you know, we had a --  
2 like a procurement that was going  
3 on, states were procuring offshore  
4 wind, states were doing things on  
5 their own in addition to the  
6 capacity market that was run by ISO  
7 New England. It seems to me you  
8 need that hybrid model to make sure  
9 that the resources -- adequate  
10 resources are coming online to make  
11 sure that we don't have these price  
12 spikes in response to increasing  
13 load growth.

14 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you,  
15 sir. Great answer.

16 MS. LANKENAU: Great.  
17 Yeah. So for data centers, I think  
18 you're going to hear from -- I  
19 previewed your -- the testimony,  
20 you're going to hear from a lot of  
21 different entities. And  
22 objectively, yes, they are certainly  
23 energy powerhouses. I would say  
24 that, you know, we and other

1 departments have given feedback, but  
2 we are not able to speak on behalf  
3 of the mayor. But, you know, we  
4 have advised from a sustainability  
5 perspective on things to consider as  
6 well as other departments.

7 In terms of PJM, yeah, I  
8 mean, I think all kinds of models  
9 need to be reviewed. This --  
10 they've been around forever, as  
11 everyone has discussed so far. I'll  
12 be honest that this is not my depth  
13 of expertise, but I have more of  
14 that expertise on my team, and so  
15 that's something that we should  
16 definitely talk about as a  
17 sustainability office about how we  
18 get involved more with the PUC and  
19 PJM. So I appreciate that question.

20 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
21 Thank you. Thank you both for being  
22 here. Thank you for the work you've  
23 done as public servants. Thank you  
24 for traveling and taking the time to

1 come to Philadelphia to have the  
2 support and conversation for us. We  
3 appreciate it. And know that for  
4 the admin, we are -- we're looking  
5 at this as a regional approach,  
6 right? We want to be able to have a  
7 conversation about the tri-state  
8 area to figure out what can we do?  
9 And we're looking to the  
10 administration as leaders to figure  
11 out how do we address the  
12 affordability crisis that we're  
13 facing. Councilmember O'Rourke,  
14 and, you know, as council members,  
15 you see us on our phone, but we're  
16 working. Councilmember O'Rourke  
17 sent us information that says that  
18 in one of the largest cities in the  
19 entire world, one of the biggest  
20 concerns that they have is the  
21 increase in cost of utility, not  
22 crime, right? Not schools, right?  
23 But the increase in cost of utility.  
24 That's unfortunate -- that's an

1     unfortunate crisis that we as  
2     government have created for the  
3     average everyday person who's  
4     already struggling with so many  
5     other issues. And so I think it's  
6     up to us as government to figure out  
7     how do we solve it. And I  
8     appreciate you both for taking the  
9     time as public servants to be a part  
10    of this conversation today. So  
11    thank you.

12                 MS. LANKENAU: Thank you.

13                 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.

14                 Madam Clerk, can you please  
15    call up the next panel?

16                 THE CLERK: Next, we will  
17    have the director of policy advocacy  
18    and external affairs at PECO, Thomas  
19    Bonner, followed by Denise Adamucci,  
20    and Steven Bennett.

21                 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you  
22    all for being here. And thank you  
23    for the work that you do. Similar  
24    to the other panels that was here

1 before you.

2 Please state your name for  
3 the record and we'll allow all three  
4 of you to provide your testimony  
5 before we open it up from questions  
6 from members of the Committee.

7 MS. ADAMUCCI: Good  
8 afternoon, Chair Thomas, Chair  
9 Driscoll, members of the Joint  
10 Committee, and guests. My name is  
11 Denise Adamucci. I'm the senior  
12 vice president of Customer and  
13 Regulatory Affairs at PGW. Thank  
14 you for the opportunity to speak on  
15 energy affordability, a daily  
16 reality for hundreds of thousands of  
17 Philadelphia families and  
18 businesses. PGW has submitted my  
19 full testimony in response to  
20 Resolution 250896, and I am going to  
21 provide an elevated summary for  
22 today's discussion. While natural  
23 gas remains the most affordable and  
24 cost-effective primary heating fuel

1 for a household, these important  
2 conversations are vital, especially  
3 considering the initiatives that PGW  
4 is exploring to potentially  
5 diversify its offerings. Most could  
6 be prohibitively expensive for large  
7 portions of Philadelphia's  
8 population to afford.

9           So who is PGW? We are not  
10 an investor-owned utility. We are  
11 municipally owned, PUC-regulated,  
12 non-profit gas utility. So we are  
13 two -- only two of them are in the  
14 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. That  
15 means we have no shareholders, we  
16 pay no dividends, and we earned no  
17 rate of return. Every dollar that  
18 we collect then goes back into  
19 serving our roughly 500,000  
20 customers. So in the end, that  
21 structure defines everything that we  
22 do.

23           So how do we keep rates  
24 low? Despite inflationary pressures

1 over the last decade, the  
2 residential PGW customer saw a 6.3  
3 percent decrease in average annual  
4 bill costs between 2014 and 2025. I  
5 would like to make that very clear.  
6 In 2014, the average annual bill for  
7 a residential customer was \$1,257.  
8 In 2025, the average annual bill for  
9 a residential PGW customer was  
10 \$1,178. That is the result of  
11 disciplined financial management and  
12 strategic investment. A critical  
13 and often overlooked driver of that  
14 affordability is our Liquified  
15 Natural Gas or LNG infrastructure.  
16 For over 50 years, we've stored  
17 pre-purchase gas locally and  
18 deployed it precisely when demand  
19 peaks and market prices spike. This  
20 past winter, when other utilities  
21 struggled to secure supply, PGW  
22 maintained uninterrupted service  
23 throughout. We estimate that our  
24 customers avoided \$90 million in

1 additional gas costs during that  
2 cold weather event alone. Over the  
3 life of the program, our local LNG  
4 has saved customers over \$4 billion.  
5 This is one of the most  
6 consequential investments this city  
7 has ever made in energy  
8 affordability.

9           So how do we support our  
10 most vulnerable customers? Of our  
11 500,000 customers, approximately  
12 234,000 are low income or working  
13 poor. This is the highest  
14 proportion of financially vulnerable  
15 rate payers of any utility in the  
16 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Our  
17 customer responsibility provides  
18 reduced bills and debt forgiveness  
19 with an average annual benefit of  
20 \$909 per participant. Our  
21 low-income usage reduction programs  
22 invest in weatherization that lowers  
23 every bill going forward, not just  
24 one.

1           In 2024, we launched a  
2   Hardship Fund Pilot Program that  
3   targeted the working poor  
4   population, so households earning  
5   too much to qualify for traditional  
6   assistance, but not enough to  
7   comfortably afford their bills.  
8   This provided one-time grants of up  
9   to \$750 per customer. In 2025, our  
10   universal service program spent over  
11   \$77 million in rate payer spending  
12   directed at Philadelphia's most  
13   vulnerable residents. We also  
14   depend heavily on LIHEAP funding.  
15   This season, more than 35,000  
16   Philadelphia households receive  
17   nearly \$11 million in LIHEAP  
18   assistance. Yet Pennsylvania  
19   remains a cold weather state without  
20   a state supplement to the federal  
21   LIHEAP allocation. That must  
22   change.

23           So how can this body  
24   support -- help support our efforts?

1 Our asks are specific and  
2 actionable. First, help to support  
3 the creation of a Pennsylvania state  
4 supplement to LIHEAP and ways to  
5 better share the cost of supporting  
6 customers so the burden is not left  
7 solely to Philadelphia's rate  
8 payers. Second, support continued  
9 infrastructure investment in  
10 Philadelphia, including our LNG  
11 storage operations, federal grant  
12 programs, and modernization  
13 initiatives that improve safety,  
14 reduce emissions, and lower long-  
15 term customer costs. Our LNG  
16 infrastructure is not legacy  
17 infrastructure; it is a strategic  
18 community asset that saved  
19 Philadelphia customers \$90 million  
20 in a single weather event and over  
21 \$4 billion across its lifetime.  
22 Third, continue to help PGW promote  
23 customer utilization of our  
24 universal service programs. These

1 represent a proven and targeted  
2 investment in the residents who need  
3 help the most. And fourth,  
4 recognize natural gas as an  
5 essential component of  
6 Philadelphia's energy affordability  
7 story. Pennsylvania's natural gas  
8 abundance and even more, essentially  
9 our ability to store and deploy it  
10 locally through LNG, is a structural  
11 economic advantage. Policy should  
12 build on that advantage and not  
13 erode it.

14 In closing, PGW exists for  
15 one purpose; to provide safe,  
16 reliable, and affordable and  
17 sustainable energy for every  
18 Philadelphian. This past winter  
19 when temperatures dropped and demand  
20 surged, our customers stayed warm.  
21 Their increased bills reflected  
22 their usage, not a market end  
23 crisis. That is what 190 years of  
24 responsible infrastructure

1 investment looks like. We do ask  
2 you for your continued support in  
3 ensuring we can keep delivering it.  
4 Thank you.

5 MR. BONNER: So thank you  
6 Chairman Thomas and Driscoll, and  
7 members of the Committee for holding  
8 this important hearing today. My  
9 name is Tom Bonner, and I serve as  
10 director of Policy Advocacy and  
11 External Affairs for PECO. During  
12 my 19 years at PECO, I've focused on  
13 the development of public policy  
14 solutions that encourage clean and  
15 advanced technologies while  
16 maintaining customer affordability.  
17 I've had the pleasure of working  
18 with many of the people in the room  
19 today, and many of the folks that  
20 you're hearing from. I'm a native  
21 Philadelphian and a graduate of the  
22 University of Pennsylvania. In my  
23 testimony today, I'd like to  
24 describe how our industry is

1 structured and discuss our  
2 commitment to affordability.

3           So first of all, the main  
4 components of a customer's electric  
5 bill are distribution, transmission,  
6 and generation. About 38 percent of  
7 the average residential customer  
8 bill is for energy delivery charges;  
9 that's the transmission and  
10 distribution. Okay. And 42 percent  
11 is for generation with the 20  
12 percent for a range of government  
13 mandated charges, including  
14 universal services, energy  
15 efficiency, renewable energy, and  
16 taxes. Distribution reflects the  
17 cost of owning, operating, and  
18 maintaining the local grid that  
19 delivers electricity directly to  
20 homes and businesses. These costs  
21 include both capital investments and  
22 our O&M expenses. Distribution is a  
23 regulated utility service provided  
24 to all customers at rates reviewed

1 and approved by the PUC through  
2 tariffs that treat similar customers  
3 equally.

4 We are pleased that the PUC  
5 has recognized PECO as the  
6 Pennsylvania's most reliable large  
7 electric utility, and the only large  
8 utility in the state to meet PUC's  
9 reliability benchmarks. Since 2010,  
10 the investments that we've made in  
11 improved reliability have improved  
12 reliability by 35 percent. That  
13 means fewer lost hours for those  
14 working or studying at home, less  
15 lost operating hours for small  
16 businesses, and fewer lost school  
17 days for children. Reliability  
18 investments have real and concrete  
19 benefits for the public that you  
20 represent and that we serve. And as  
21 extreme weather events become more  
22 frequent and severe, the investment  
23 we've made in the grid is making a  
24 real difference.

1           Transmission is the cost of  
2     operating and maintaining the high  
3     voltage grid that delivers  
4     electricity from generators to local  
5     distribution systems. These costs  
6     are reviewed federally and allocated  
7     to utility customers by the electric  
8     distribution company, in our case,  
9     PECO. Supply is the cost that the  
10    customer pays for the electric  
11    commodity, the actual electrons that  
12    flow through the system, either by  
13    their competitive supplier or  
14    through utility default service.

15           In Pennsylvania's  
16    deregulated electricity market,  
17    customers have the option to  
18    purchase their supply from either a  
19    non-utility supplier or receive  
20    default service from their utility.  
21    While competitive suppliers are  
22    unregulated, utility default service  
23    procurements are conducted under the  
24    oversight of the PUC and must be

1 made on a competitive, least cost  
2 basis and passed through to  
3 consumers without any markup.

4 Rising supply costs,  
5 particularly higher capacity costs  
6 in wholesale energy markets, are  
7 putting significant pressure on  
8 customers. Since 2024, average  
9 residential bills have increased by  
10 \$28 or 28 percent, driven primarily  
11 by higher capacity costs. Capacity  
12 costs are the charges that utilities  
13 pay to ensure that we can meet peak  
14 demand during the -- during extreme  
15 conditions. Another factor for many  
16 customers, and one you heard from  
17 Chair Fiedler about, is retail  
18 supplier overcharges. Last year,  
19 the small percentage of PECO  
20 customer -- electric customers,  
21 about 20 percent, who elect to buy  
22 their energy from retail suppliers,  
23 paid more than \$100 million more  
24 than they would have if they were on

1 utility default service. What's  
2 worse in many cases, it appears that  
3 the suppliers are actively targeting  
4 our lowest income, most vulnerable  
5 communities, for their marketing  
6 efforts. So when we get to some  
7 recommendations at the end, we will  
8 strongly support the Bill that that  
9 Chair Fiedler talked to you about  
10 there.

11 In terms of affordability  
12 and utility rates, as my friend Liz  
13 Lankenau mentioned, we did reach a  
14 settlement with the city on our 2024  
15 rate case. And successfully  
16 competed -- completed about 15  
17 commitments that we made in that  
18 case, including building a solar  
19 savings calculator for low-income  
20 customers, and also assisting the  
21 city in evaluating potential  
22 locations for fleet EV charging. In  
23 terms of our most recent rate case  
24 proposal last month, PECO did

1 withdraw this case. While the  
2 proposed rates were designed to  
3 support long-term safety and  
4 reliability investments, customer  
5 affordability concerns have  
6 certainly risen to the top.  
7 Basically, there's a balance we're  
8 always trying to strike between  
9 reliability and affordability. And  
10 the message we heard from our  
11 stakeholders, our customers, and  
12 others loud and clear was, now is  
13 the time to take a step back on some  
14 of the new capital investments.

15 Moving forward, we'll  
16 continue to invest in our electric  
17 and natural gas systems to maintain  
18 safety and reliability, but there  
19 will be some investments in  
20 proactive upgrades to the system  
21 that will be deferred. And this  
22 will require some difficult  
23 decisions. While we try -- while we  
24 work to minimize impacts on

1 reliability, some investments like  
2 the upgrade of our oldest and lowest  
3 capacity distribution system, our  
4 four-kV system, those may have to  
5 wait for another day. But we are  
6 looking to find that balance between  
7 expanding and promoting greater  
8 reliability, but also preserving  
9 affordability.

10 In terms of our programs  
11 for low-income customers in 2025,  
12 our CAP program, Customer  
13 Assistance, provided over \$200  
14 million in discounted bills and  
15 arrearage forgiveness for low-income  
16 customers. CAP is based on an  
17 affordability index set by the  
18 Pennsylvania Public Utility  
19 Commission to ensure that a customer  
20 only pays a fixed percentage of  
21 their income, as long as they stay  
22 within certain usage targets.

23 In terms of the person who  
24 testified earlier, I have greatest

1 sympathy for their situation.  
2 They're doing many of the right  
3 things. They're on our CAP program  
4 or have been in the past. They did  
5 sign up for LIHEAP. We hold about  
6 300 events a year encouraging people  
7 to sign up for LIHEAP and trying to  
8 make that as easy as possible.  
9 Since they are a electric heating  
10 customer, I don't know if that  
11 customer is on a budget bill where  
12 they pay a flat amount every month  
13 rather than a higher bill during the  
14 winter, but that sounds like it  
15 would be a really good idea for  
16 them. And then one other thing that  
17 I did discuss briefly with our  
18 friends from CLS, it sounds like the  
19 core problem here is the customer is  
20 a very, very high user because their  
21 home needs significant repairs.

22 One of the Bills, and I'll  
23 have to say Chair Fiedler was a  
24 little too modest. She didn't

1 mention one of the good Bills that  
2 her -- that the House has passed to  
3 reform, Pennsylvania's energy  
4 efficiency programs that would allow  
5 PECO, as we fulfill our state  
6 mandates, to set aside more of that  
7 money to help with those very  
8 expensive whole home improvements  
9 outside of what's called -- what's  
10 our mandate for total usage  
11 reduction. Right now, if we don't  
12 hit those mandates, we get fined up  
13 to \$20 million. So you tend to  
14 focus on the savings that are easier  
15 to achieve, so you don't get fined.  
16 The law that the House passed would  
17 let us set aside programs that are  
18 targeted for the low-income  
19 community and be able to say, we'll  
20 spend more dollars there because we  
21 know that's helping our most  
22 vulnerable. We've really strongly  
23 supported that bill.

24 Just want to talk briefly

1 about --

2 CHAIR THOMAS: Can we -- we  
3 do want to get the questions. So  
4 can you --

5 MR. BONNER: Sure.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: -- kind of  
7 summarize it a little bit?

8 MR. BONNER: Absolutely.

9 CHAIR THOMAS: We want to  
10 allow the other panel. We have one  
11 more panel and then we want to get  
12 the questions too.

13 MR. BONNER: Yeah. Data  
14 center consumer protection, we  
15 absolutely agree that customer --  
16 our -- the rest of our customers  
17 should not subsidize data centers.  
18 That's why we have what we call  
19 Transmission Security Agreements,  
20 where they have to commit money  
21 upfront. That if they don't meet  
22 the usage they say they're going to  
23 use to pay back investments in  
24 rates, we just take the money

1 directly from the bank.

2 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.

3 That's my bad. Slow down.

4 MR. BONNER: Yeah, no  
5 problem.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: Can you  
7 explain that again please?

8 MR. BONNER: Yeah. So when  
9 -- so when a data center applies to  
10 be interconnected, it usually takes  
11 a pretty significant amount of  
12 investment in the transmission  
13 system to bring that customer  
14 online. And then you count on  
15 recovering that investment in your  
16 rates over time. The thing we're  
17 trying to avoid is building it and  
18 they don't come. Where we would  
19 make the investment in the  
20 transmission system and that  
21 customer never uses anywhere near as  
22 much energy as they said they were  
23 going to use, in which case we'd  
24 have a revenue shortfall. So what

1 we do is we say you have to put up a  
2 10-year Letter of Credit where if  
3 you don't use what you said you were  
4 going to use, we go to the bank and  
5 we draw down that Letter of Credit.  
6 It's basically a take or pay  
7 contract with the data center to  
8 ensure they contribute as much to  
9 the system as they said they would.

10 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.

11 MR. BONNER: Does that  
12 help?

13 CHAIR THOMAS: Yeah. So if  
14 you can summarize your testimony,  
15 and then we can allow the third  
16 panelist. I want to try to jump  
17 into questions to allow members to  
18 discuss this issue before we move on  
19 to the final panel, because I think  
20 we have a hard stop that's  
21 approaching pretty soon. So --

22 MR. BONNER: The last thing  
23 I'll say is agree with you. There's  
24 no way we can address any of these

1 challenges without more generation.  
2 And we need to re-look at our state  
3 laws and make sure we have a system  
4 in place that guarantees there is  
5 always enough generation. Compare  
6 it to being -- if you're on an  
7 airplane, would you rather have the  
8 runway maybe be a hundred feet too  
9 short or a hundred feet too long?  
10 I'd always -- I'd always opt for a  
11 hundred feet too long, and we have  
12 to look at our electric generation  
13 supply.

14 CHAIR THOMAS: I'll bet  
15 some members are going to ask you  
16 questions about that, but that's  
17 great information and great intel.  
18 And I think that that's part of the  
19 reason why we had this hearing,  
20 Mr. Chairman, to have this type of  
21 information. So thank you.

22 MR. BONNER: Thank you.

23 CHAIR THOMAS: If you could  
24 state your name for the record at

1 begin your testimony, and then we  
2 could open it up to questions, that  
3 would be appreciated.

4 MR. BENNETT: Yes. Thank  
5 you. So Chair Driscoll, Chair  
6 Thomas, members of Council, thank  
7 you for the invitation to  
8 participate in this hearing to  
9 provide PJM's perspective as it  
10 relates to preserving electric grade  
11 reliability during this period of  
12 heavy forecasted load growth and  
13 affordability challenges that, to  
14 Chair Thomas's point, are not just a  
15 regional or tri-state challenge, but  
16 they are a national and global  
17 challenge. My name is Stephen  
18 Bennett, and I serve as senior  
19 manager of governmental services for  
20 PJM Interconnection. PJM is based  
21 in Audubon, Pennsylvania, just off  
22 of Route 422 North of the Schuylkill  
23 River. And I say that because I  
24 would like to invite the Council

1 members to visit us whenever you may  
2 like. If you can come to PJM, we  
3 can have an extended conversation  
4 about who we are, what we do, the  
5 challenges that we're facing, the  
6 opportunities that we have to help  
7 address those. As well as, you can  
8 have an escorted tour of our  
9 operation center where we have  
10 university, military, and trade  
11 school trained professionals there,  
12 24 by seven, to make sure that the  
13 grid is safe and reliable at all  
14 times.

15 PJM serves 67 million  
16 people over our footprint of 13  
17 states in the District of Columbia.  
18 We are a mission-driven  
19 organization, and our mission is  
20 reliability. PJM is a federally  
21 regulated entity, and we are a  
22 not-for-profit. So I want to break  
23 that down just a little bit. PJM is  
24 subject to the statutory provisions

1 of the Federal Power Act. We are  
2 subject to the regulatory oversight  
3 of the Federal Energy Regulatory  
4 Commission or FERC. And we have  
5 governing documents that are  
6 approved by FERC that dictate how  
7 PJM runs our markets, how we plan  
8 the transmission grid, how we run  
9 our operations, and how our members  
10 participate in PJM. We liken our  
11 role to that of an air traffic  
12 controller; we do not own the  
13 infrastructure inside of PJM. We  
14 are a not-for-profit; we do not  
15 benefit or profit from any of the  
16 energy that's generated or  
17 transmitted across our footprint.  
18 In fact, neither I nor any of my  
19 colleagues nor our families are  
20 permitted to own stock or financial  
21 interest in any of the companies  
22 that participate in PJM. We are a  
23 not-for-profit organization, and our  
24 mission is reliability.

1 I'm going to pull a little  
2 bit of a Jalen Hurts audible here  
3 because I have -- I have a whole  
4 thing of testimony. I've submitted  
5 it a bit late last night. You may  
6 or may not have had an opportunity  
7 to look through it. But I really  
8 want to focus on data centers and  
9 the impact that data centers are  
10 having on our industry right now.  
11 Data centers are an extremely  
12 important economic development  
13 opportunity for the State of  
14 Pennsylvania and other states.  
15 Governor Shapiro has made it very  
16 clear to PJM both in his direct and  
17 indirect communications to us that  
18 he wants to see data centers built  
19 here in the Commonwealth. Data  
20 centers are important to national  
21 security, and what I hope, and many  
22 of us hope, is that they're  
23 important to maintaining the United  
24 States' position in technology and

1 medical research. But they use a  
2 lot of energy, and they're coming  
3 online in a way that -- in a speed  
4 that we have not seen before in our  
5 industry.

6 This is a precedent setting  
7 moment. This is a paradigm change  
8 for the utility industry. You think  
9 about utilities and absolutely no  
10 disparagement to utilities or to PJM  
11 or anything, but we are not a fast-  
12 moving industry usually. Our focus  
13 is on conservative management of  
14 reliability. If we move too fast  
15 and break things, then that means  
16 blackouts or worse. The technology  
17 industry, the Silicon Valley  
18 industry that's largely funding and  
19 is investing in data centers operate  
20 at a very different speed. And one  
21 of the mantras of Silicon Valley was  
22 "move fast break things."

23 So we were actually trying  
24 to marry up these diametrically

1   opposed industries to move forward  
2   and capture the national security  
3   and economic development priorities  
4   of building data centers but also  
5   maintaining the reliability that is  
6   gained by deliberate and  
7   conservative approach to designing  
8   the grid. It's challenging and it's  
9   becoming expensive because as one of  
10   the -- and I believe it was Chair  
11   Thomas but apologize if it was -- if  
12   it was someone else. This load is  
13   coming on so fast, it's coming on --  
14   it's the equivalent of dropping a  
15   city's worth of load in a warehouse  
16   facility in 6 to 12 to 18 months.  
17   To build a power plant, it can take  
18   two years, five years, seven years.  
19   So there is a disconnect between how  
20   fast -- and in fact, many of the  
21   data center developers will tell you  
22   that speed to market is of more  
23   value and importance to them than  
24   the actual cost of developing the

1 facility. So we are in a situation  
2 where we need to make sure that we  
3 can build generation faster. That  
4 we can get it onto the system  
5 faster.

6 And that is a challenge for  
7 us because of things like supply  
8 chain backlogs. Right now, it takes  
9 about five years to get a natural  
10 gas turbine. That's just it. You  
11 know, there are some opportunities  
12 to get them a little faster, but for  
13 the most part, five years. Grid  
14 infrastructure, things like  
15 transformers have a -- have an, on  
16 average, a seven-year backlog. And  
17 we need grid infrastructure to  
18 interconnect both the data centers  
19 and the generators. So we're  
20 looking at systemic obstacles to  
21 getting more generation on and  
22 getting it on faster. That doesn't  
23 mean we're not trying.

24 So PJM's board of managers

1 recently, in some way in response to  
2 the White House and all 13 governors  
3 of PJM came up with a plan to try to  
4 do a couple things to make this  
5 situation better and to meet this  
6 data center moment. One thing is  
7 that we have to improve our load  
8 forecasting. So a lot of this is --  
9 a lot of the load that we are seeing  
10 is coming in as load forecast. We  
11 don't know that we're going to see  
12 all of that load and if it's going  
13 to actually materialize. So we have  
14 to make sure our forecasts are as  
15 accurate and as informed as  
16 possible.

17 We're also looking for the  
18 data centers to help us bring  
19 generation. So we are doing things  
20 like bring your own capacity. So if  
21 you're a data center and you want to  
22 interconnect at PJM and you want to  
23 do so at speed, help us bring more  
24 capacity onto the grid. Because by

1 doing so, that not only addresses  
2 reliability, but that also helps us  
3 with an affordability perspective.  
4 And if you can't or don't want to  
5 help us bring capacity on what we're  
6 trying -- what we want to have  
7 happen is that as a data center, you  
8 would be the first entity curtailed  
9 in the event that we had to --  
10 sorry, in the event that we had to  
11 shed load in periods of grid  
12 instability. And so by saying,  
13 like, help us address reliability,  
14 help us address affordability, and  
15 if you can't, then you're likely  
16 going to be the first one to come  
17 off the system as opposed to a  
18 residential customer. We don't want  
19 to curtail a residential customer  
20 ahead of a data center if that data  
21 center is creating part of the  
22 challenge that we have from a  
23 reliability perspective.  
24 We're working with policy

1 makers at all levels. We're open to  
2 suggestions. We want to -- we --  
3 PJM is mostly a policy taker. We're  
4 certainly not a policy maker. So we  
5 want to be a platform that allows  
6 for the policy priorities of our  
7 states and our local jurisdictions  
8 to move forward with the energy  
9 policy that they see fit. But  
10 please understand that this is a  
11 global issue. This is a regional  
12 issue. This is a global issue.  
13 This is a national issue. Everybody  
14 is challenged by these -- by the  
15 situation that we find ourselves in.  
16 How do we get more supply  
17 infrastructure affordable, but in a  
18 way that matches the speed at this  
19 moment?

20 The last thing I'll say,  
21 and then I'll -- I will -- I look  
22 forward to your questions. Chair  
23 Thomas, you're absolutely right. We  
24 were formed a hundred years ago. We

1 were formed at that time because  
2 there was a recognition of the value  
3 of regional cooperation. So PSE&G  
4 and PECO understood that it was  
5 better to cooperate than to try to  
6 do everything on your own. A little  
7 bit later, BG&E down in Baltimore,  
8 recognized the value and joined as  
9 well. So PJM, Pennsylvania, Jersey,  
10 Maryland. And since then, we now  
11 serve 13 states in the District of  
12 Columbia. I will say that, that  
13 idea of the benefit and value of  
14 mutual cooperate -- cooperation,  
15 scalability, and geographic  
16 diversity, that actually hasn't  
17 changed. That still is -- to this  
18 day, is still demonstrably valuable  
19 to the people that live and work in  
20 our footprint.

21 Thirty years ago, we  
22 actually became a system operator  
23 and we've evolved a little bit, but  
24 at the time we were an ISO and we

1 use a lot of acronyms. Now we're an  
2 RTO, the Regional Transmission  
3 Organization, and we agree with you,  
4 Chair Thomas. It is time to take a  
5 look at all the things that we do.  
6 We actually just released a paper  
7 a few days ago that said PJM commits  
8 to looking at absolutely -- to  
9 potentially redesigning every aspect  
10 of what we do because again, this is  
11 a paradigm changing moment. And  
12 although a lot of what PJM has done  
13 in the past was successful in  
14 maintaining reliability and  
15 affordability, there's no guarantee  
16 that what we've done in the past  
17 will actually work in the future.  
18 So we're going to look at our market  
19 structures, we're going to look at  
20 our load forecast. We're going to  
21 look at our planning to make sure  
22 that we're sending the right  
23 signals, that this is an investible  
24 market where infrastructure can be

1 built and that we're minimizing the  
2 affordability challenges to the  
3 people that live in our footprint.  
4 Thank you, and I look forward to  
5 your questions.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
7 Chair recognize -- thank you. And  
8 that was very informative for the  
9 record. I appreciate all three of  
10 your testimony and I think that the  
11 other witnesses were great, but this  
12 is why it's important to have this  
13 conversation. I recognize Chairman  
14 Driscoll.

15 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Thanks for  
16 the invite, Steve. I think we're  
17 going to try and take you up on that  
18 this summer.

19 MR. BENNETT: Great.

20 CHAIR DRISCOLL: And I just  
21 wanted to start off by thanking both  
22 PGW and PECO. You know, everybody  
23 talked about that January, February  
24 cold snap, but we actually had one

1 in late October, early November, and  
2 you folks worked with us to, in a  
3 notch, move the shutoffs -- stop the  
4 shutoffs and provide some further  
5 guidance to our community. So  
6 upfront, I wanted to thank you for  
7 that. And also for the rate  
8 withdrawal that I think you, you  
9 know, you guys recognize how  
10 important that was, and we thank you  
11 for that. And so as, you know,  
12 Chairman Thomas as I think, you  
13 know, highlighted today is this  
14 regional cooperation approach is how  
15 we have to move forward. You know,  
16 we need new energy sources; we need  
17 affordable sources. And I think,  
18 you know, this hearing, Chairman, is  
19 very helpful for me and thank you  
20 for calling it.

21 CHAIR DRISCOLL: Thank you,  
22 Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your  
23 leadership with this. Before I open  
24 it up to questions, just a couple

1 things real quick. First and  
2 foremost, for consumer -- for the  
3 average citizen who's watching  
4 outside, right? I posted on social  
5 media that we were having this  
6 hearing and somebody just said, Oh,  
7 man, my bill went up \$300 in the  
8 last such and such. Can you -- can  
9 -- it doesn't matter which one of  
10 you, can someone just take 30  
11 seconds to, in regular terms that  
12 the average person can understand,  
13 tell them why their bill went up.  
14 Why did your bill go up and what  
15 caused your bill to go up? 30  
16 seconds that the average person can  
17 understand.

18 MR. BONNER: So as you  
19 noted PECO did withdraw its rate  
20 case and even if that had been put  
21 in place, nothing would've happened  
22 till next year. So it wouldn't have  
23 been on the distribution rate, it  
24 could be usage. The other thing we

1 talked about, the person could be  
2 with a retail supplier. Because a  
3 lot of times the person will get a  
4 bargain rate when they first sign up  
5 that might last for six months or a  
6 year. And then when that's over --

7 CHAIR THOMAS: So no, we're  
8 thinking about residents not  
9 businesses --

10 MR. BONNER: -- it could go  
11 way up.

12 CHAIR THOMAS: -- just like  
13 your average resident. Like for the  
14 average resident, why did my PECO  
15 bill go up? Why did my PGW bill go  
16 up? What is it with the average  
17 resident, you know, I haven't had a  
18 new business move into my  
19 neighborhood. Pretty much nothing  
20 in my life has changed, but for some  
21 reason my utility bill has gone up.

22 MR. BONNER: If it happened  
23 recently, it would either be  
24 increased usage or they're with a

1 supplier who changed their rate.

2 MS. ADAMUCCI: So January  
3 and February --

4 CHAIR THOMAS: We can't  
5 hear you.

6 MS. ADAMUCCI: January and  
7 February are very cold, so customers  
8 did receive larger bills. The most  
9 essential thing for us is when that  
10 occurs and you're struggling, you  
11 should reach out to us. We have a  
12 myriad of programs that can help  
13 you, and it's really important that  
14 we make sure that you're being  
15 served by all those programs.

16 CHAIR THOMAS: So I --  
17 shameless plug, in the midst of the  
18 programs that you-all have. I'm  
19 just going to -- I'm just going to  
20 ask that we do a little better with  
21 customer service. So I know that  
22 the programs that you have are ones  
23 that are extremely effective. We --  
24 I haven't always been a City Council

1 person, and sometimes when you're  
2 trying to opt into some of these  
3 programs, there's a lot of steps.  
4 It's very time consuming and  
5 sometimes the person on the other  
6 end, they're not like the Chick-fil-  
7 A worker, right? So just want to go  
8 ahead and put that out there in the  
9 midst of talking about programs. I  
10 think that's something that's really  
11 important. Because just remember,  
12 if someone calls, something is  
13 wrong, right? They're not calling  
14 to congratulate you. The Chairman  
15 just congratulated you, we'll  
16 congratulate you in rooms like this.  
17 For the average customer that's  
18 struggling, I think that that's  
19 something that should be considered.  
20 Because folks -- you know, that's  
21 why they call our offices, because  
22 they know if we call on their  
23 behalf, it'll just be a little less  
24 of a shameful experience. And I say

1 some things, I think sometimes when  
2 people go through these experiences,  
3 there's a certain level of shame  
4 that comes from that person on the  
5 other side dealing directly with the  
6 customer.

7 My last question, same  
8 question I asked all the other  
9 panels, and I know you spoke to it  
10 in your statement, but I would love  
11 to hear from all three of you. PJM  
12 started a hundred years ago, and it  
13 started because we were facing this  
14 affordability crisis, this utility  
15 crisis. And like you said, folks  
16 decided to step in and say that we  
17 want to be a part of this solution  
18 to decide how do we regulate and  
19 deal with this new economy.

20 When you look at where we  
21 are right now, I think that there's  
22 really a climate out there as far as  
23 how we charge people for utilities.  
24 And so do you think that we should

1 revisit this conversation like we  
2 did a hundred years ago? And I'm  
3 not saying get rid of PJM, I don't  
4 think you've heard me say that in  
5 any of my comments thus far. But I  
6 do think that we are in a space and  
7 a place right now where, like you  
8 said, things are happening so fast;  
9 it's moving faster than what we've  
10 ever seen. And should we be  
11 rethinking what regulations look  
12 like? And what does a collaborative  
13 effort mean between all levels of  
14 government, especially for the  
15 tri-state area, to assure that we  
16 are managing people's utility bills  
17 to the best of our ability. If each  
18 of you could just take 30 seconds to  
19 answer that, and then I want to open  
20 it up to other members of this  
21 committee, and then I want to move  
22 on to the last panel before we meet  
23 our time constraints.

24 MR. BENNETT: Yeah, I would

1 say -- like I said in my testimony,  
2 we certainly agree with that. The  
3 idea that we need to look at  
4 everything because of the paradigm-  
5 shifting nature of where we are,  
6 with data centers, with the speed  
7 and the magnitude of load growth.  
8 So that's -- you know, that's what  
9 we're doing. We just revamped the  
10 way we interconnect generation  
11 because it wasn't well suited for  
12 the amount of renewable generation  
13 that we get. So we recognized that,  
14 and we were -- we spent a couple of  
15 years fixing it, and now we have our  
16 first cycle where we're seeking new  
17 generator interconnection. We had  
18 811 projects with over 220 gigawatts  
19 of potential capacity that are  
20 seeking interconnection. So that's  
21 a good outcome.

22 Now, just to put that in  
23 perspective, right now we have about  
24 180 gigawatts. So we're actually

1 the PJM market structure the way it  
2 is now. And not all of that's going  
3 to come online. I don't want to say  
4 that we're going to get 220  
5 gigawatts of new generation, but  
6 that's the kind of interest there is  
7 in investing in our markets. And we  
8 get even a fraction of that --

9 CHAIR THOMAS: So you're  
10 basically saying that PJM will be  
11 open to a conversation to figure out  
12 what's --

13 MR. BENNETT: A hundred  
14 percent and we absolutely are. And  
15 I will -- sorry. I will send you  
16 that paper that kind of goes over  
17 that thought.

18 CHAIR THOMAS: Sure. That  
19 would be helpful. I'm not going to  
20 ask you guys to answer that question  
21 because I don't -- I think that -- I  
22 think that's a tough position to put  
23 you in. So -- did you want to?

24 MR. BONNER: Yeah, so --

1 CHAIR THOMAS: Oh, please  
2 go ahead.

3 MR. BONNER: I would say  
4 number one -

5 CHAIR THOMAS: You don't  
6 want to argue with me though, right?

7 MR. BONNER: No. Not at  
8 all.

9 CHAIR THOMAS: Okay.

10 MR. BONNER: Number one, we  
11 don't believe that the PJM capacity  
12 market is ideally constructed. A  
13 one-year auction, three years in  
14 advance, probably isn't ideal for  
15 power plants to take five to seven  
16 years to build. And historically  
17 you've recovered the investment over  
18 30, 40 years. We think we need to  
19 move to something that is better  
20 aligned with building new capacity.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: Okay.

22 MR. BONNNER: And the  
23 other thing is the state; we believe  
24 that laws should be changed to have

1 the PUC be able to serve as a  
2 backstop to order new generation  
3 built when needed.

4 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
5 And I'm good. I'm good. You're  
6 good. I'm going to open up to my  
7 colleagues. Colleagues, just keep  
8 in mind that we got a hard stop and  
9 I want to let the stenographer and  
10 the tech team get the thing too. So  
11 Chair recognizes Vice Chair Landau,  
12 and then we'll follow up with  
13 Councilmember Young, and then we'll  
14 be done with this panel and we'll  
15 move on to the last panel.

16 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank  
17 you. Thanks so much. I'm going to  
18 give a couple of quick questions to  
19 PECO and PGW. I don't get you often  
20 in one place here. So I wanted to  
21 know how many shutoff notices have  
22 been issued thus far this year and  
23 how many Philadelphians have been  
24 shut off?

1 MR. BONNER: Ma'am, I don't  
2 have that. I have to get back to  
3 you, but we will get back to you  
4 immediately on that.

5 MS. ADAMUCCI: The same.

6 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Okay.  
7 And now that LIHEAP has closed, how  
8 much grant assistance is currently  
9 available for your customers?

10 MS. ADAMUCCI: So PGW has a  
11 hardship fund program. Last year,  
12 we spent 1.5 million. It's in  
13 cooperation with the City of  
14 Philadelphia. So the city provides  
15 half of the funding for that  
16 program. So we have that grant  
17 program. We have our Low Income  
18 Usage Reduction Program. We spend  
19 \$8 million a year on that. And  
20 shortly customers will be able to  
21 enroll themselves in that program so  
22 they can get their house  
23 weatherized. So those are our  
24 primary. We also have a demand side

1 management program; it's about \$2  
2 million. So if you're replacing  
3 your heater, you can get an  
4 incentive to get a more efficient  
5 heater. It's an example of one of  
6 the programs in there. We'll  
7 install a low-income smart  
8 thermostat for free in low-income  
9 customers' homes. You can also get  
10 a reduced cost one online. So we do  
11 have a number of additional  
12 offerings while LIHEAP is closed.

13 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Yes.

14 MR. BONNER: I do have our  
15 2025 numbers, and that is over 200  
16 million for customer assistance,  
17 both the month-to-month reduced  
18 bills and arrearage forgiveness, and  
19 around 15 million in LIHEAP  
20 assistance. And we hold about 300  
21 events a year with external parties  
22 to advertise both the CAP program  
23 and LIHEAP.

24 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Okay.

1 It's my understanding -- I'm the  
2 head of the Tech Committee, and so  
3 it's my understanding there's a data  
4 sharing agreement for LIHEAP  
5 participants to send information  
6 from their LIHEAP applications to  
7 utilities. We've done a similar  
8 thing with some city programs and  
9 the Water department for the TAP  
10 program, and it helped enrollment  
11 significantly. Are you  
12 automatically enrolling those  
13 customers in programs like CAP or  
14 CRP?

15 MR. BONNER: The last I've  
16 talked with our low-income folks  
17 about this; we're still waiting on  
18 final implementation of those  
19 systems from the Department of Human  
20 Services in Harrisburg. But we are  
21 very excited about that and believe  
22 that can help save a lot of  
23 administrative burden and get more  
24 people signed up.

1 MS. ADAMUCCI: So under a  
2 PUC order, we have implemented a  
3 program where we will help people  
4 with an expedited enrollment if  
5 they're in that DHS program. So we  
6 have 5,600 customers who will be  
7 part of that expedited enrollment.

8 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Okay.  
9 But are you -- are you automatically  
10 enrolling customers? I'm sorry.

11 MS. ADAMUCCI: So all they  
12 have to do is consent to being  
13 enrolled and they will be enrolled.

14 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Okay.  
15 And last question -- last joint  
16 question. We have a bunch of  
17 programs at the city that are  
18 income-based. Would you be willing  
19 to coordinate with the city to make  
20 enrollment in programs like CAP and  
21 CRP more streamlined?

22 MS. ADAMUCCI: So we are  
23 working with -- right now with the  
24 water department. We're working

1 with PECO also to make sure that our  
2 programs are weaved together more  
3 effectively so that customers don't  
4 have to go to multiple sources to  
5 get assistance.

6 MR. BONNER: Yes, we're  
7 trying to do everything we can to  
8 streamline. Obviously, we can't  
9 give away customer information  
10 without their consent to another  
11 party, but we have regular  
12 conversations with our friends at  
13 the city and PEA to develop the most  
14 efficient systems we can.

15 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: It's --  
16 I can't believe it's 2026 and how  
17 often we have these conversations  
18 about the fact that we have income  
19 guidelines. We have programs that  
20 can help people and people have to  
21 scour the internet or tables at  
22 resource centers to keep  
23 automatically individually applying  
24 to these programs. If we have to opt

1 into data privacy things all the  
2 time, you can imagine opting into a  
3 program that would get you  
4 automatically enrolled in other  
5 programs as well.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: Just  
7 important moment of -- I'm sorry.  
8 Moment of privilege from the Chair.  
9 What would you like to see from  
10 these -- in an ideal situation, what  
11 would it look like for a customer to  
12 be automatically enrolled in these  
13 programs, from your perspective?  
14 And once the Councilwoman says her  
15 perspective, I would love to hear  
16 your feedback.

17 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Yeah, I  
18 think you can have one joint  
19 application program that can get you  
20 in all of them. I mean, the TAP  
21 program doubled enrollment, right?  
22 When it automatically enrolled  
23 people. And the other thing is you  
24 can automatically enroll people and

1 they can opt out if they want to.  
2 It's the same thing we say about our  
3 low-income housing programs as well.  
4 Put everybody in the program, let  
5 them know they're in and say, if you  
6 want to pay us more, you can, but  
7 right now you're in here, and we --  
8 and we don't have to have people go  
9 through the --

10 CHAIR THOMAS: Can you guys  
11 give us your thoughts on that  
12 suggestion, please?

13 MR. BONNER: So I think on  
14 the intake side, if someone else has  
15 done the income verification and we  
16 hope that all clear, that is  
17 fantastic. That saves us all a lot  
18 of work. It is a question of us  
19 sharing someone else's income  
20 information and their PII that  
21 sometimes can be a hurdle. And  
22 we're working on that.

23 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Can't  
24 you just share the fact that someone

1 is eligible, not their income  
2 information, but if they're income-  
3 eligible for one thing in the City  
4 of Philadelphia? There's a lot of  
5 things that could be. Isn't that  
6 enough, the proof and the  
7 verification?

8 CHAIR THOMAS: So I've  
9 learned some of your limitations the  
10 hard way, right?

11 MR. BONNER: Yeah.

12 CHAIR THOMAS: And so, this  
13 is -- let me ask this question, and  
14 in collaboration with Councilmember  
15 Landau, if there was a third party,  
16 i.e., I don't know, the City of  
17 Philadelphia --

18 VICE CHAIR LANDAU:  
19 BenePhilly.

20 CHAIR THOMAS: Yeah. And  
21 this third party was coordinating  
22 with all of you, would there be an  
23 appetite to do what the Councilwoman  
24 said? Because again, my original

1 question that I've asked every group  
2 was, what does it look like to  
3 rethink our approach as it relates  
4 to utilities, right? Your  
5 limitation on being able to share  
6 information is why I want us to go  
7 sit at the table and revisit how we  
8 do this. Because on the one hand, I  
9 understand wanting to protect  
10 people's privacy, but sometimes the  
11 same privacy that we're looking to  
12 protect ends up being the reason  
13 that that same person gets hurt,  
14 right? And I think the Councilwoman  
15 has identified an example, whereas  
16 though you're trying to protect  
17 people's privacy and it limits your  
18 ability to have that efficient  
19 communication. But if we can bend a  
20 little bit as it relates to what we  
21 thought a hundred years ago compared  
22 to where we are right now, that's an  
23 example of maybe how rethinking and  
24 coordinating can put us in a

1 position where the average person  
2 can save a ton of money. Because I  
3 can attest to what the Councilwoman  
4 is saying, the programs that you  
5 have, a lot of them are great. Most  
6 people who are eligible for the  
7 program don't know the program  
8 exists. And so if I automatically  
9 were eligible, right, who's going to  
10 say, ah, I paid you a little bit too  
11 much money this month, I think I  
12 need to opt out of this. No one is  
13 going to do that, especially people  
14 who are struggling. So talk to us a  
15 little bit about your thoughts, and  
16 I want to allow Councilmember Young  
17 to ask his questions as well before  
18 we go to the panel.

19 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: And  
20 before, I want to also -- at some  
21 point, have you do the math on how  
22 much it costs you to go through a  
23 shutoff process. Because if you can  
24 automatically enroll people and they

1 are automatically in a program they  
2 can afford, you will save money on  
3 the other end of the shutoffs.

4 MR. BONNER: Absolutely. A  
5 customer that gets into arrearage, a  
6 customer that goes through that  
7 process becomes a very complicated,  
8 expensive customer to serve. A  
9 customer that can stay current on  
10 their bill is a really easy customer  
11 to serve. And, you know, that's  
12 where -- you know, I know, in a city  
13 with as much poverty as Philadelphia  
14 has, there's kind of never enough in  
15 terms of resources, but over \$200  
16 million is a lot of money that is  
17 available to CAP customers. And  
18 most customers who are on CAP do  
19 stay full and current on their bill,  
20 the vast, vast majority.

21 And in terms of your  
22 question, Councilmember Thomas, I  
23 will confess, my knowledge on the  
24 details of our program enrollment

1     probably goes about 80 percent. I  
2     think to answer your question, you  
3     need somebody who can go all the way  
4     to a hundred. So I will go back to  
5     our program experts and share this.

6             CHAIR THOMAS: And we're  
7     going to keep revisiting this  
8     conversation, right? This is just  
9     the first. I'm the Chair,  
10    Councilmember Landau the Vice Chair,  
11    Chairman Driscoll is a big part of  
12    this conversation. Like, we're  
13    definitely going to revisit this  
14    because when we look at the  
15    affordability crisis in the city, we  
16    can't control everything as local  
17    government. But in the places where  
18    we can step up and put a little more  
19    skin in the game, we definitely want  
20    to do so. And based on the  
21    conversation that I'm hearing today,  
22    it sounds like you all have an  
23    appetite to do so as well too. So I  
24    think that's the blessing out of

1 this. Let me let Vice Chair Landau  
2 wrap up so I can pass it to  
3 Councilmember Young, and we can move  
4 on to the last panel.

5 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: So I  
6 look forward to following up with  
7 you on this. As the Chair of the  
8 Tech Committee, there are some, I  
9 think, really easy answers that will  
10 make everybody's lives easier. But  
11 I have one last question for PGW.  
12 You were allocated \$500,000 for a  
13 geothermal feasibility study in 2022  
14 operating budget. What's the status  
15 of that study? Is PGW planning to  
16 implement or pilot any gas-free  
17 energy projects in the near future?

18 MS. ADAMUCCI: So with  
19 respect to the geothermal, I'm  
20 probably not the right person to  
21 answer the question. But certainly  
22 can carry that back.

23 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Okay.  
24 Thank you. I look forward to --

1 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.

2 Thank you for your honesty. Chair  
3 recognizes Councilmember Young.

4 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank  
5 you, Mr. Chair. I think my question  
6 is on the line, similar to  
7 Councilmember Thomas. When we -- we  
8 have the ability to figure out how  
9 to lower costs for everyone, and I  
10 know our state law allows us to  
11 waive, like, late fees, so is --  
12 what's the -- I guess the appetite  
13 for some of -- for PECO or PGW to  
14 kind of help us lower costs for our  
15 constituents by waiving these late  
16 fees? And what do you see is the --  
17 I guess -- or what benefit do you  
18 have or do you see by keeping late  
19 fees on bills?

20 MS. ADAMUCCI: So for  
21 customers who get on our Customer  
22 Assistance Program, CRP, we don't  
23 charge late fees. So it's essential  
24 that a customer who really, you

1 know, has a very limited amount of  
2 money to spend every month gets on  
3 that program because even if they  
4 miss a couple bills, they can catch  
5 up on them later.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: But  
7 Councilmember Thomas just talked  
8 about how sometimes -- or you know  
9 -- because it's not an automatic  
10 enrollment now, right? Or sometimes  
11 people feel shameful about reaching  
12 out to try to get into these  
13 programs. I think we're just -- as a  
14 policy maker, as a policy -- as a  
15 baseline, I think what I'm getting  
16 at is trying to figure out what we  
17 can do as a municipality to help  
18 lower those costs, those everyday  
19 costs for people. I mean, my wife  
20 just said our gas bill went up \$60 a  
21 month. You know, I heard a bill  
22 went up a hundred dollars a month  
23 for her. So it's like -- you know,  
24 she pays the bills, I don't pay the

1 bills. But she -- you know, she  
2 notes that these costs are rising,  
3 right? So, like, what can we do to  
4 help Philadelphians keep costs down?  
5 And I think that, you know, trying  
6 to eliminate late fees are a way  
7 that will actually keep costs down  
8 for Philadelphians, you know, and  
9 throughout, you know, the region.  
10 Again, our state law allows it. And  
11 just wanted to see if it's something  
12 that you guys would want to  
13 consider.

14 MR. BONNER: And I want to  
15 go back and confirm what I'm about  
16 to say, but it's my understanding  
17 when we sign a customer up for CAP,  
18 that usually very often involves  
19 arrearage forgiveness. And the  
20 arrearage forgiveness can include  
21 the late fees. And I want to go  
22 back --

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:  
24 That's just CAP. So CAP does allow

1 for the low-income, or your 150  
2 percent of poverty or whatever I  
3 think it is, that's just for that  
4 program. I think I'm asking for,  
5 you know, all customers essentially,  
6 but again, because folks who may be  
7 eligible for the program aren't in  
8 the program, right? Because there's  
9 no automatic enrollment in the  
10 program. So I think that if we're  
11 talking about lowering costs, which  
12 that's the point of this hearing,  
13 right? I think that's a way where  
14 we can lower costs for our  
15 residents. It's not -- again, I'm  
16 getting at what is -- like, how much  
17 will that cost you all to do that?  
18 Like, is that that much of a burden  
19 and lift to eliminate late fees,  
20 that it's going to have a  
21 substantial impact on the operations  
22 of your entity?

23 MR. BONNER: I don't have  
24 the number of what the late fee

1 collections are for the year. We'll  
2 go back and get that for you. If a  
3 customer previously didn't apply for  
4 CAP and wasn't aware of it and was  
5 behind on their bill and called us  
6 up and said, you know, "Do you have  
7 programs to assist me?" We would try  
8 to get that customer onto CAP and  
9 part of getting them onto CAP would  
10 be -- you know, arrearage  
11 forgiveness would be, you know, part  
12 of that.

13 CHAIR THOMAS: Can you give  
14 us -- can you give us an idea of  
15 what percentage your profit margin  
16 comes from late fees? Is that  
17 something -- and I know you can't  
18 give it to us right now, but is that  
19 information that you could get back  
20 to us? Because we're going to  
21 continue this conversation, and so  
22 as we work together and think about  
23 it from a regional approach, are  
24 those numbers that you can give me

1 as it relates to what the  
2 Councilmember is asking for? Is  
3 that fair?

4 MR. BONNER: Yeah, we --

5 CHAIR THOMAS: You don't  
6 have it right now, but is it numbers  
7 you can get to us? And as we  
8 continue to examine -- because we're  
9 going to take Steve up on the offer  
10 to visit. I think that's important.  
11 I think, Steve, I appreciate the  
12 gesture. I think that if we're  
13 going to do a deep dive into this  
14 issue, it's important that we  
15 understand the entire gamut. So I  
16 think your offer is important, and I  
17 think in the midst of us continuing  
18 to work together as a region, if we  
19 can get those numbers so we can  
20 explore the impact that that has on  
21 your economics. Because we  
22 understand the impact it has on the  
23 economics of the constituents.  
24 That'll be appreciated.

1 MR. BONNER: Okay. Yes.

2 We'll get those numbers for you.

3 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank  
4 you.

5 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.

6 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank  
7 you.

8 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.

9 I just want to say thank you all for  
10 being here. Thank you for being  
11 open. This is an important  
12 dialogue. You provided so much  
13 great information, not just for us,  
14 but for constituents across the City  
15 of Philadelphia. And we're going to  
16 call one more panel and we have a  
17 few people to testify for public  
18 comment. We would just ask that you  
19 listen to the folks who come for  
20 public comment because they're  
21 coming really to talk more to you  
22 than us. So thank you. We  
23 appreciate it.

24 MS. ADAMUCCI: Thank you.

1 MR. BONNER: Thank you.

2 CHAIR THOMAS: Ms. Clerk.

3 THE CLERK: Next we will  
4 hear from Ali Perelman with Build  
5 Philly Now, followed by Rich Freeh,  
6 Vikram Patel, and Emily Schapira.

7 CHAIR THOMAS: Some great  
8 crew. We have four chairs, so we're  
9 good to go. And I think we have  
10 about nine people for public  
11 comment, and so we want to make sure  
12 that all those folks get an  
13 opportunity to communicate their  
14 public comment as well too. So  
15 thank you all for being here.

16 MS. PERELMAN: Chairman  
17 Thomas, with that in mind, would you  
18 like us to expedite, or would you --

19 MR. FREEH: I was glad to  
20 get to expedite.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: I mean --

22 MS. PERELMAN: Okay.

23 CHAIR THOMAS: So we have  
24 all of your written testimony that's

1    been submitted. And I know all of  
2    you, and I know that you all are  
3    intelligent folks, and I think if  
4    you could paraphrase your testimony,  
5    but then also provide perspective on  
6    some of the things that you heard as  
7    well too, because I do think that we  
8    got a lot of information. I've seen  
9    some of you nodding in the back as  
10   information was being communicated  
11   and I've seen some of you shaking  
12   your head, "no," as information was  
13   communicated to us. So this kind of  
14   gives you the opportunity to not  
15   just provide your testimony, but to  
16   also offer a perspective that might  
17   be in agreement or different from  
18   something you might have heard. So  
19   whoever wants to go first, you may  
20   state your name for the record,  
21   begin your testimony. We want to  
22   let the entire panel testify and  
23   then we'll open it up for questions.  
24   So please, you may begin.

1 MS. SCHAPIRA: I'll go  
2 first. Good afternoon, everybody.  
3 I'm Emily Schapira, president and  
4 CEO at the Philadelphia Energy  
5 Authority. We're actually a quasi-  
6 government entity, so I'm happy to  
7 actually testify with the advocates  
8 today. I will not repeat my  
9 testimony that's on the record. You  
10 guys have it. I've tried to give  
11 you a handful of really specific  
12 things that City Council can  
13 actually do. I'm going to list them  
14 real quick because I know some of  
15 them are not on everybody else's  
16 lists.

17 So the first one is energy  
18 efficiency design standards for city  
19 programs. Any place that we put a  
20 city dollar into a program, whether  
21 that's basic systems repair, the  
22 Rental Improvement Fund, Restore,  
23 Repair, Renew; places where we're  
24 doing a great program that provides

1 a great benefit. The thing we do  
2 not want to happen is that we will  
3 build new construction that meets  
4 only the basics of already outdated  
5 building energy code and recreates  
6 the same issues that we have today  
7 as these buildings age. We don't  
8 want to continue to replace old  
9 inefficient heating systems with new  
10 inefficient heating systems. We  
11 don't want to restore roofs without  
12 insulating attics or applying cool  
13 roof coatings. And we keep doing  
14 this and we're spending, as you  
15 heard from the utilities and from  
16 many others, millions and millions  
17 of dollars in what unfortunately can  
18 become stopgap measures if we don't  
19 take a smarter approach to this long  
20 term. So that's my first  
21 recommendation, is design standards  
22 across all programs that receive  
23 city funding.

24 Also, I think we forget

1 that when we do this sort of return  
2 on investment calculations or cost-  
3 benefit analyses, we're looking at  
4 the return to the city or the vendor  
5 or the utility. So for example,  
6 utilities are kind of bound by what  
7 types of measures they're allowed to  
8 do or weatherization is bound by  
9 what types of measures they're  
10 allowed to do because it has to have  
11 a payback. Well, in most cases, the  
12 payback goes to the homeowner.  
13 That's the generational wealth. And  
14 so if we're insisting that we can't  
15 do programs that don't pay back to  
16 the utility or don't pay back to the  
17 city, we're missing that opportunity  
18 to create that generational wealth  
19 and restore that generational  
20 wealth. So, again, energy standards  
21 are a very simple way to do that.  
22 Don't believe the skeptics here on  
23 how much that costs. I think we  
24 hear that all the time. That's an

1 old issue that is no longer the  
2 case.

3 Sometimes there's a little  
4 bit of a premium there, but we can  
5 change our systems and change the  
6 way we implement things to make sure  
7 that that cost is minimized. And  
8 happy to share more data with you  
9 guys on that. We've now done -- 430  
10 homes are complete with Built to  
11 Last. So we have real cost data  
12 from homes across the city, so we  
13 know exactly how much all of this  
14 costs here in Philadelphia.

15 Council should also support  
16 energy-efficient design standards  
17 for city-owned buildings. We have  
18 an ordinance that says new  
19 construction must be made to LEED  
20 Gold certification standards. A lot  
21 of buildings get waivers, so that's  
22 something Council can be requesting  
23 from the administration. But even  
24 those that don't, these are just new

1 buildings. We don't have  
2 requirements for retrofits of  
3 existing buildings, and that's what  
4 happens most of the time. And as  
5 we've gone to do energy efficiency  
6 work in big city buildings and small  
7 city buildings, we see that we are  
8 not able to spend enough at the city  
9 to maintain those buildings to a  
10 quality that is not just completely  
11 wasting money on energy. And all of  
12 that contributes to everybody else's  
13 costs going up.

14           The second category of  
15 things I want to talk about real  
16 quick is regulatory engagement. So  
17 you heard a little bit from the  
18 Office of Sustainability. I'm sure  
19 you-all individually have heard this  
20 from PEA as well. But there are all  
21 sorts of things going on at the  
22 Public Utility Commission that need  
23 our attention and hopefully our  
24 intervention. We participated in

1 rate case interventions before,  
2 intended to do so on PECO's latest  
3 that was withdrawn. But there are  
4 also other issues at the Public  
5 Utility Commission that without the  
6 perspective of a big user like the  
7 city and an implementer like PEA,  
8 they're missing opportunities to  
9 understand how those rate -- that  
10 rate-making and how that regulatory  
11 discussion affects actual people.  
12 And I think we talk to people like  
13 CLS Community Legal Services all the  
14 time about that intersection of  
15 affordability, short-term  
16 affordability, long-term and  
17 technology and data centers and all  
18 of that. And so we need the  
19 resources to be able to engage. The  
20 city doesn't have any specific team  
21 that is focused on that engagement.  
22 So that is something that we've  
23 embedded in the PEA FY27 budget  
24 request as well.

1           The third thing I just want  
2   to mention is about solar. And I  
3   want to be clear, everything we  
4   heard from PJM and from the  
5   utilities is about getting large-  
6   scale, utility-scale energy onto the  
7   grid. As everybody mentioned, that  
8   takes many years. It's not a quick  
9   process. And PJM has been -- has  
10   had things under review. The queue  
11   is now moving again, which is great.  
12   But what doesn't need that level of  
13   review is distributed energy  
14   resources. That means everything  
15   that you put on your rooftop, on a  
16   small local building, on your house.  
17   So we've already completed 4,400  
18   solar rooftops in Philadelphia.  
19   Over 55 percent of those are low and  
20   moderate-income homes. So we know  
21   this works. It is our best tool for  
22   long-term affordability. You do not  
23   end up being subject to the whims of  
24   politics or global affairs or data

1 centers or all these other things  
2 because you have a fixed asset on  
3 your roof that's generating your own  
4 power. It also saves money to the  
5 grid. So there's tons of data now  
6 that we didn't have just a few years  
7 ago showing that DERs like rooftop  
8 solar are providing huge  
9 efficiencies to the grid that makes  
10 everything easier to operate.

11 And the last thing I'll  
12 just highlight, which I know we've  
13 talked about, is City Council's role  
14 with data centers. This is a very  
15 big deal. I know you know this, but  
16 I want to flag it. If you leave it  
17 to the universe rather than taking  
18 some action, it will not be what we  
19 want it to be. Data centers need a  
20 load of 500 megawatts per data  
21 center or more. That's like putting  
22 another city of Philadelphia on top  
23 of the city of Philadelphia. It's  
24 an astronomical amount of power that

1 does not currently exist. And so  
2 what we can do as a local governing  
3 body is create data center zoning  
4 requirements. That is something  
5 that we have the power to do here.

6 And we can require that  
7 data centers bring their own power.  
8 We can require that it be a  
9 low-polluting power. There's  
10 certainly a role for different kinds  
11 of gas engagement. There's  
12 certainly a role for all sorts of  
13 different kinds of renewables, from  
14 geothermal all the way to  
15 distributed solar. And actually,  
16 because of the cost for data centers  
17 to delay, they're happy to sort of  
18 hear good rules from local  
19 governments.

20 And we know this because we  
21 talk to data center developers who  
22 are telling us, yeah, we expect that  
23 there will be years of delay. Every  
24 place we want to build one, we

1 expect to have to go to court. We  
2 understand how complex these issues  
3 are. And so they're eager for  
4 cities to say, here's the rules, and  
5 if you can meet these rules, you  
6 know, you're in. That makes it much  
7 easier for them. So I want to  
8 encourage City Council to take the  
9 time to get this right and to figure  
10 out how we can create local benefit  
11 so that we are not recreating the  
12 same environmental justice issues  
13 that we've had for 150 years from  
14 the refinery. And I'll leave it  
15 there. You have the rest of my  
16 testimony. PEA is as always at your  
17 disposal. We are happy to provide  
18 data, research, bring in experts,  
19 help craft legislation, whatever is  
20 needed for Council. We're available  
21 to you. Thank you.

22 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
23 Very informative. Thank you for  
24 your testimony and thank you for

1 your service.

2 MS. PERELMAN: Excellent.

3 Speed run. Okay. There you go.

4 Good afternoon, Chairman Thomas and  
5 the members of the committee. I'm  
6 Ali Perelman, the executive director  
7 of Build Philly Now. I'm also going  
8 to do an expedited version of this  
9 testimony, which is on the record.

10 Just to highlight at the top, I  
11 believe it has been noted here, but  
12 sort of the high-order question of  
13 what is causing this affordability  
14 crisis can be very easily distilled  
15 down to a supply-demand issue. One  
16 of the points that I think was  
17 alluded to here, but I just wanted  
18 to sort of like state much more  
19 clearly, it comes up in the  
20 conversations that we have around  
21 the cost of additional power when we  
22 had, for example, the cold spell in  
23 January and February. The issue  
24 there is that the additional

1 kilowatt hours which are required to  
2 heat people's homes at that time are  
3 the most expensive electrons you can  
4 possibly buy.

5 PECO has to buy them  
6 because they have an obligation to  
7 be reliable to us, the consumers.  
8 And so they have to pay more --  
9 much, much more in that moment so  
10 that we can pay -- so that we can  
11 heat our homes. And the nature of  
12 that as an energy market is a very  
13 interesting question. It's unlikely  
14 to change even if PJM itself sort of  
15 is reconstituted in some form or  
16 fashion. The only solution there  
17 from a practical and realistic  
18 perspective -- and I know that this  
19 has been highlighted a number of  
20 times during this hearing, is  
21 increased supply. So that when you  
22 do have a situation as we did in  
23 January and February, where --  
24 especially as we're going to have --

1 as I think we would all anticipate,  
2 more extreme weather moving forward,  
3 in those moments, the electrons  
4 which are the most expensive  
5 electrons in a comparative sense  
6 aren't in an absolute sense as  
7 expensive as they are now. And so I  
8 would just have a sort of like maybe  
9 a foundational concept that we're  
10 all thinking about here, how do we  
11 make like the most expensive power  
12 much less expensive than it is now?  
13 And the only way to get there is  
14 through supply.

15           Number two, I do want to  
16 touch on data centers a bit. I know  
17 that this is sort of like the -- I  
18 don't know, maybe the most  
19 hot-button of all of the topics  
20 we're discussing today. Just to  
21 provide -- maybe sort of taking a  
22 step back and provide a little bit  
23 of context around data centers.  
24 Like, as a place to start, like

1 where we're physically situated here  
2 right now is within like maybe eight  
3 to ten blocks of half a dozen data  
4 centers. Like, they're not new and  
5 they're already here. They look  
6 very different than the hyper-  
7 scalers that Emily is talking about.  
8 But data centers are why we can  
9 operate in an online way to the  
10 extent that we do. So if we were  
11 sort of just to think about this in  
12 terms of like points in time or  
13 eras, when the internet first came  
14 online and there were like things  
15 called websites and we sent things  
16 called email, there was an enormous  
17 boom at that point in the first  
18 iteration of data centers to make  
19 all of that possible. That's when  
20 -- in the U.S., at this point,  
21 there's somewhere around 5,400 data  
22 centers. The vast preponderance of  
23 the data centers in the U.S. were  
24 built in the late 90's and early

1 2000s, just to get us online, like  
2 as a starting point.

3           The most recent boom,  
4 during which it was actually like a  
5 more significant increase in the  
6 need for computing power, was, you  
7 know, much more recently in the  
8 2010s when things like streaming  
9 came online. Just like the total  
10 compute demand for the sorts of  
11 things that we're doing online now,  
12 as compared to what we were doing  
13 before when we were probably just  
14 shopping online, is so significant  
15 that I don't want it to kind of get  
16 lost in the weeds here. Like, we've  
17 already made these transformative  
18 transformational leaps in how much  
19 compute all of us as consumers are  
20 demanding every day. Obviously this  
21 third iteration, right, is the AI  
22 iteration, where we're talking about  
23 a different -- like a materially  
24 different type of data center.

1 These are going to get built.

2 And I think the question  
3 that we're sort of all grappling  
4 here with today to a large extent is  
5 where do they get built and under  
6 what conditions, right? Just to  
7 wrap up as we're thinking about  
8 things that we can do prospectively,  
9 I mean, the point of the hearing was  
10 to address this question of  
11 affordability and, you know, promote  
12 and presuppose that there are  
13 solutions on the table. The supply-  
14 side stuff ultimately, I think, is  
15 like the goal of all of what we're  
16 doing here that just sort of can't  
17 be avoided. I think that where I'm  
18 most interested and intrigued in  
19 thinking about how we get to a  
20 supply-side solution in Philly is  
21 thinking about like where all you  
22 would put that and what it would  
23 look like, even recognizing the fact  
24 that we're on a grid. I've talked

1 to many of you in this room before.  
2 You know, I'm evangelical about the  
3 possibilities of re-industrializing  
4 lower South Philadelphia. I think  
5 that maybe could be the topic of  
6 another subsequent hearing, talking  
7 about all of the opportunities that  
8 exist down in lower South.

9 To do my lower South pitch:  
10 lower South Philadelphia is the only  
11 place in the United States with a  
12 top-20 airport, top-20 marine port,  
13 interstate highway, rail, and  
14 extinct gas lines that also has a  
15 microgrid in institutions of  
16 national security importance. So  
17 there's just an almost unimaginable  
18 opportunity down there for doing a  
19 lot of the innovative energy work  
20 that is going to -- we're all  
21 nationally going to need to invest  
22 in to solve this problem. And also,  
23 from my perspective, maybe more  
24 interestingly, what if the power

1 generation that facilitated a  
2 massive redevelopment in lower South  
3 happened in lower South as part of  
4 this sort of like new way of  
5 thinking around what power can look  
6 like, what power generation can look  
7 like, I think especially in cities.  
8 So with that, welcome any questions  
9 and thanks.

10 MR. FREEH: Good afternoon.  
11 I'm going to go slower, I think,  
12 right? Can I do that? Just  
13 kidding. So good afternoon,  
14 everyone. My name is Rich Freeh. I  
15 serve as the executive director of  
16 Green Building United. We're a  
17 regional, right? It's what we're  
18 talking about today? Nonprofit  
19 based in Philadelphia, a block or  
20 two from here. We have a data  
21 center on our floor. I think  
22 Verizon is on our floor, 16th of  
23 Market. We are on a mission to  
24 advance an equitable transition to a

1 climate-friendly, healthy built  
2 environment. So grateful to  
3 Councilmember Thomas, Councilmember  
4 Landau, everybody who is here today  
5 for convening this conversation, for  
6 being here today. This is a great  
7 discussion. It's great to come sort  
8 of at the end because a lot of the  
9 things that I had written down have  
10 already been mentioned in various  
11 ways. But I am going to emphasize a  
12 couple of pieces, add a few things  
13 that have not been mentioned quite  
14 yet.

15 I wanted to go back to a  
16 couple of the things that were  
17 mentioned at the outset of this  
18 hearing. I think Director Lankenau  
19 mentioned the idea of energy burden.  
20 I just wanted to give that statistic  
21 one more time. Low-income  
22 Philadelphians spend almost 16  
23 percent of their household costs on  
24 energy, 16 percent. That is a

1 number from a couple years ago. As  
2 we've all heard, energy bills have  
3 gone up, wages have not. So we know  
4 that number is higher. 16-plus  
5 percent energy burden. And I really  
6 appreciated the way that the Mayor  
7 of Camden started this discussion,  
8 right? Energy affordability should  
9 not be a privilege. It should not  
10 be a luxury. It should be available  
11 to all Philadelphians. And we  
12 should particularly be prioritizing  
13 our lowest-income neighbors as we're  
14 thinking about these policies today.

15 To that -- and I'm really  
16 proud Green Building United is a  
17 part of the Here 4 Climate Justice  
18 Coalition who's here today, who  
19 spent all morning at the Gas  
20 Commission hearing, advocating for  
21 some changes to their budget. I'm  
22 not going to talk too much about  
23 that stuff today. But I know  
24 you-all are already hearing from

1 Here 4 CJ and are engaged in those  
2 Gas Commission hearings. And I  
3 think the speakers today did a  
4 really good job of laying out the  
5 challenges, laying out some of  
6 what's already working.

7 So I wanted to give a  
8 couple of really tangible  
9 opportunities that are, I think,  
10 available particularly more on the  
11 reducing-demand side. Because I  
12 hundred percent agree this is both a  
13 supply and demand challenge. And I  
14 think my job is to bring some of  
15 those tangible solutions and also  
16 recognize -- you know, I think the  
17 speaker from Penn, you know, talked  
18 about sort of, you know, the  
19 projection of higher electricity  
20 costs going up to 2050, right? And  
21 I'm here to say that's not  
22 inevitable. That is a choice,  
23 right? If we have higher  
24 electricity costs in the future,

1 that is because we have collectively  
2 decided not to take action to  
3 increase supply and to reduce  
4 demand. So we have an opportunity  
5 here today. I a hundred percent  
6 agree with Rep. Fiedler, right?  
7 That there's work that needs to  
8 happen at the federal level and the  
9 state level. But there's also  
10 opportunities right here at City  
11 Council today. So I'm going to talk  
12 about a couple of those. The first,  
13 one of the best ways to tackle  
14 energy affordability; ensuring that  
15 our homes are built to strong,  
16 durable energy codes. Emily already  
17 talked about some of this already,  
18 but this is a particular opportunity  
19 right now with Council and the  
20 administration's \$2 billion  
21 investment through H.O.M.E. We know  
22 that there are programs already,  
23 particularly Built to Last, that are  
24 doing a fantastic job of this. But

1 these are also -- these are big  
2 programs or expensive programs.

3 So what are our  
4 opportunities right now? All new  
5 construction and major renovations  
6 are governed by our Building Energy  
7 Code. There is a bill right now  
8 thanks to Councilmember Driscoll,  
9 who will be leading these hearings a  
10 little bit later this month on Bill  
11 644, to update Philadelphia's code  
12 to the 2021 International Energy  
13 Conservation Code. GBU strongly  
14 supports this bill. We've got to  
15 pass this. This is going to help  
16 reduce energy bills right away for  
17 everything that's built or renovated  
18 starting on July 1st, 2026, up to 10  
19 percent energy reductions after that  
20 bill has passed, which we hope that  
21 it will be. But it leaves out some  
22 key provisions, which you all have  
23 heard from us already. Particularly  
24 around continuous insulation. We'd

1 love to see Council take action to  
2 bring those requirements for  
3 insulation back in. You heard Rep  
4 Fiedler talk about this already.  
5 Every dollar that you spend on  
6 insulation, you see come right back.  
7 And to Emily's point, you know,  
8 those are dollars, that it is true a  
9 developer or a builder is putting  
10 those dollars out. The dollar saves  
11 are going to come back to residents,  
12 right? So that's a really -- that's  
13 a really key distinction. You get  
14 pushback on that. We understand the  
15 concept of first cost, but there are  
16 real savings there. So there's an  
17 opportunity to do further work as  
18 soon as this fall to bring those  
19 continuous insulation requirements  
20 back. Hopefully citywide for all  
21 residential, but certainly through  
22 all the programs that are happening  
23 through H.O.M.E. Also important to  
24 note, that's going to bring us back

1 in line with our peers. So in New  
2 Jersey, in Delaware and Maryland,  
3 they all already have the working-  
4 on-2021 or 2024 codes. They already  
5 have continuous insulation. This is  
6 not some crazy wide-eyed liberal  
7 whatever, right? This is -- we're  
8 seeing it right now in all of our  
9 neighbors. We are behind.

10 Council can bring us back  
11 to -- in line with our peers. So  
12 that's one big thing we can do right  
13 now tackling energy affordability,  
14 and that's going to help with our  
15 smaller residential buildings. We  
16 can also cut demand by setting  
17 standards for eliminating energy  
18 waste in bigger buildings. Council  
19 has been a leader on this for years,  
20 passing the building energy  
21 benchmarking and building  
22 performance programs, which require  
23 large buildings to report and  
24 disclose their energy use and for

1 commercial buildings to tune up  
2 existing systems. We can take action  
3 on this in the next year to lower  
4 the threshold square footage of  
5 buildings that are required to  
6 report and to do these existing  
7 tune-up measures, but also to  
8 transition that program towards a  
9 building performance standard, which  
10 is something that we see in, again,  
11 all of our peer cities; in New York,  
12 Boston, D.C., and others as well  
13 around the country. These programs  
14 will push building owners and  
15 operators to embrace already-  
16 existing technologies.

17 So you heard Director  
18 Lankenau talk about cool roofs, talk  
19 about heat pumps, talk about solar,  
20 again, weatherization. We can bring  
21 systems up to a good state of  
22 repair. We can make long-term  
23 investments in our buildings. These  
24 are going to have immediate and

1 long-term energy savings for  
2 tenants, whether those are small  
3 businesses, whether those are  
4 residents in these buildings. A  
5 well-designed building performance  
6 standard will reduce costs, can  
7 include metrics for reducing that  
8 energy burden that we mentioned, and  
9 could include funding, or if there's  
10 fines associated, those funds can go  
11 directly to programs that Council  
12 ties to energy affordability goals  
13 or that are outlined through the  
14 energy poverty alleviation strategy  
15 that Director Lankenau mentioned  
16 earlier.

17 And then lastly, just  
18 wanted to reiterate and emphasize  
19 what Emily mentioned about data  
20 center regulations. Data centers,  
21 these hyper-scalers, they are  
22 coming, right? They are already in  
23 our region. Green Building United  
24 is a membership organization. Our

1 members are designing, operating,  
2 building these buildings. And they  
3 are leaders on looking for, whether  
4 it's putting certifications in  
5 place, whether it's bringing your  
6 own energy. We can be a resource in  
7 helping to design what those  
8 standards should look like in  
9 Philadelphia to avoid having the  
10 status quo that we are unprepared  
11 for from an energy standpoint and an  
12 affordability standpoint. I will  
13 leave it there. Looking forward to  
14 the discussion. Thank you again for  
15 the opportunity to testify.

16 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
17 Thank you for your perspective. If  
18 you could state your name for the  
19 record, you may begin with your  
20 testimony.

21 MR. PATEL: Thank you  
22 everyone. I'm Vic Patel. I'm the  
23 managing attorney of the Energy &  
24 Utilities Unit, Community Legal

1 Services. Now, the Energy Unit at  
2 Community Legal Services, we're one  
3 of the --

4 CHAIR THOMAS: You've got  
5 to say your name. I know it, but --  
6 no, he said, I'm the managing -- say  
7 your name.

8 MR. PATEL: Oh, I didn't  
9 say my name. I'm Vic Patel.

10 CHAIR THOMAS: You good.  
11 Go ahead.

12 MR. PATEL: I'm Vic Patel,  
13 and I'm the managing attorney of the  
14 Energy Unit at Community Legal  
15 Services. And we provide free legal  
16 services to low-income  
17 Philadelphians who are facing  
18 utility shutoff or are having issues  
19 with accessing a -- you know, a  
20 utility affordability program. We  
21 also represent at the Public Utility  
22 Commission -- and that's going to be  
23 what I'm going to talk about a  
24 little bit later. We represent at

1 the Public Utility Commission on  
2 behalf of low and moderate-income  
3 Philadelphians because, you know,  
4 access to safe and affordable  
5 utilities are necessary for all  
6 Philadelphians. If you don't have  
7 safe and affordable utilities, then  
8 it undermines every other aspect of  
9 your life.

10 And we see that every day  
11 with the people that we work with.  
12 We see families that come in who get  
13 shut off, who then don't have the  
14 ability to refrigerate their  
15 medication. You know, we have  
16 elderly clients who then can't run  
17 their medical equipment. It's  
18 incredibly disruptive for -- you  
19 know, for our residents of  
20 Philadelphia when they don't have  
21 access to utilities. So when we  
22 think about what the city can do,  
23 it's good to understand how the  
24 Public Utility Commission works.

1 Because being -- before being in the  
2 Energy Unit, I had no idea. It  
3 looks opaque from the outside. But  
4 it's actually very similar to, you  
5 know, other large judicial  
6 proceedings.

7           So, first thing, when a  
8 utility that is regulated by the  
9 Public Utility Commission wants to  
10 raise rates, like PECO or PGW, they  
11 file a rate case. Basically, what  
12 they do is they file, you know, a  
13 request for a general rate increase,  
14 which will include something that  
15 justifies that rate increase. So  
16 that could be increases in, you  
17 know, their capital investments,  
18 increases in their operating costs,  
19 or for investor-owned utilities like  
20 PECO, that could be, you know, a  
21 requested rate of return for their  
22 investors. So then statutory  
23 advocates like the Office of  
24 Consumer Advocate, Office of Small

1 Business file complaints. And, you  
2 know, other parties can file  
3 complaints or petition to intervene.  
4 And this is usually where we get  
5 involved. You know, we file --  
6 either file a complaint or a  
7 petition to intervene on behalf of  
8 an organization that we've been  
9 working with for a long time; TURN,  
10 the Tenant Union Representative  
11 Network. This is also when the city  
12 has gotten involved in the past,  
13 this is where they get involved,  
14 right? They file a petition to  
15 intervene. Then the Commission has  
16 an order that -- to -- an order to  
17 investigate the justness and  
18 reasonableness of the rates. So  
19 that is -- that is the legal  
20 standard. You know, rates have to  
21 be just and reasonable. And then  
22 that gets assigned to an  
23 administrative law judge. And from  
24 there, it's, yeah, very much like a

1 judicial proceeding. There's  
2 discovery, there's cross-examination  
3 of witnesses, there's briefing, and  
4 potentially also, often, negotiated  
5 settlements. Then that goes to the  
6 ALJ, ALJ makes a recommended  
7 decision that then goes to the  
8 Commission, and then the Commission  
9 makes a decision. And if the  
10 parties aren't satisfied with the  
11 Commission's decision, then they can  
12 either ask the Commission to  
13 reconsider or appeal that to the  
14 Commonwealth Court.

15 Now, these cases are very,  
16 very complicated. You know, the  
17 written testimony is like hundreds  
18 of pages long. There's financial  
19 projections, tons of spreadsheets,  
20 but the impact is incredibly high,  
21 which is why we, even as a like  
22 small legal -- I mean, as a legal  
23 services-type organization, much  
24 smaller than the utilities that are

1 involved in this, with far fewer  
2 resources to put into it; that's why  
3 we get involved. These cases  
4 involve enormous amounts of money  
5 that will affect our clients. Like  
6 the case that was just withdrawn,  
7 PECO was requesting \$429 million  
8 annually to its increase. So  
9 hundreds of millions of dollars. So  
10 when we think about what the city  
11 can do, first, right, is challenge  
12 utility rate increases at the PUC.

13           The city, you know,  
14 sometimes does get involved -- Emily  
15 already brought this up -- get  
16 involved and intervene at the Public  
17 Utility Commission. But often when  
18 the city gets involved, it's, you  
19 know, as a large user -- large users  
20 get to intervene in these cases  
21 fairly often. Like, you'll see  
22 Walmart or the University of  
23 Pennsylvania. So the city is a  
24 large customer. So they often

1 intervene. Or they're also thinking  
2 about specific programs that are  
3 related to PECO's operations. Like,  
4 I remember Emily, PEA was working on  
5 interconnection and also  
6 coordination with weatherization  
7 programs during the last rate case  
8 in 2024. So investing in expert  
9 witness testimony, it's a small  
10 investment, but because these cases  
11 are so large, it can have a  
12 significant impact on reducing the  
13 rates that Philadelphians pay.

14 Real quick, I'm going to  
15 talk about -- Denise brought up, you  
16 know, the low-income programs like  
17 CAP and CRP that PECO and PGW have.  
18 You know, they are incredible  
19 programs. But as Councilmember  
20 Landau brought up, and also  
21 Councilmember Thomas brought up, you  
22 know, they aren't necessarily the  
23 easiest to get into. They are  
24 significantly undersubscribed,

1 meaning that there are many more  
2 people who qualify for these  
3 programs than are in them.

4 CHAIR THOMAS: So can you  
5 summarize, because we've got a  
6 couple questions for you, and I  
7 don't want to keep people too much  
8 longer. The stenographer is getting  
9 a little --

10 MR. PATEL: Yeah. Well --  
11 so -- well, I'll say -- the last  
12 thing I think I'll say then -- well,  
13 two quick things real quick. One,  
14 Councilmember Landau brought up  
15 LIHEAP data sharing. One point is  
16 that DHS actually redid their LIHEAP  
17 applications, and there is a  
18 checkbox; a checkbox on the  
19 application where you say, "I would  
20 like my data to be shared with the  
21 utility." So there doesn't need to  
22 be any extra steps. If there are  
23 extra steps, you know, it's on the  
24 -- it's on the utility side. So

1 then the last thing I'm going to  
2 bring up is that, in addition to  
3 being at CLS, I'm also on the Cost  
4 of Living Task Force. And the Cost  
5 of Living Task Force is going to be  
6 putting out a report including a  
7 section on utilities. So I suggest  
8 that everybody check that out when  
9 it comes out. Thank you.

10 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
11 We definitely will. Thank you all  
12 for your testimony. A couple quick  
13 questions. So we talked earlier  
14 about automatically enrolling  
15 people. Clearly you communicated  
16 your opinion on that. Councilmember  
17 Young earlier talked about  
18 eliminating late fees. Do you guys  
19 think that eliminating late fees  
20 will put people in a position where  
21 as though -- I mean, you deal with  
22 the clients. What would that look  
23 like? I mean, systemically, it  
24 would definitely create some hurdles

1 and some issues, but just give us  
2 like a quick 15, 30-second response.  
3 Anybody can answer. It doesn't  
4 matter.

5 MR. PATEL: I can talk.  
6 Oh, wait, does anybody else? Okay.  
7 I can talk about that real quick. I  
8 mean, when we look at our clients,  
9 you know, late fees, like the people  
10 that we see who are accumulating  
11 late fees are the ones who are least  
12 able to deal with them. And, you  
13 know, people don't pay their --  
14 people that we work with, they don't  
15 -- they don't pay their bills, not  
16 because of, you know, any choice,  
17 right? They have to make tough  
18 choices. And so essentially, you're  
19 just punishing people for being in a  
20 cycle of poverty.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: So when  
22 you're representing a client, and  
23 you negotiate on their behalf to get  
24 something turned back on or

1 something like that, do you find it  
2 often that the utility company  
3 waives the fee when you're  
4 representing them? Or do they tend  
5 to not waive the fee?

6 MR. PATEL: So --

7 CHAIR THOMAS: The late  
8 fee, I'm sorry. The late fee.

9 MR. PATEL: Yeah. So when  
10 -- they are required actually to  
11 waive them when they're under a  
12 certain income. But otherwise, not  
13 so much.

14 CHAIR THOMAS: So I see  
15 folks from PECO still here  
16 listening. Is anybody from PGW here  
17 still? Okay. Somebody from PGW is  
18 still here listening. So they hear  
19 your testimony. I want to say thank  
20 you. Before we let you guys go, I  
21 want to ask you the same question  
22 that we asked the other panels.

23 And I think this is what  
24 I'm really pushing for; a hundred

1 years ago, right, there was a  
2 regional approach to address this  
3 issue, and a hundred years later,  
4 right, we're really struggling as it  
5 relates to this issue. And you've  
6 listened to a lot of different  
7 reasons why, and you all have expert  
8 opinions on how we got to where we  
9 are.

10 Do you think that it's time  
11 for us to have a -- to revisit the  
12 regional conversation around PJM and  
13 look at what does it mean to -- what  
14 does the cost of energy mean, and  
15 revisit what it looks like for  
16 government to work together with  
17 some of these different partners and  
18 sectors to rethink how we imagine  
19 charging an average everyday person  
20 for an energy bill? If you don't  
21 want to answer it, you don't have  
22 to, but anybody who wants to, I  
23 would love to get your opinion  
24 before we let you go.

1 MS. SCHAPIRA: Sure. I'm  
2 happy to answer that question. The  
3 structure of PJM I think is not  
4 necessarily the problem. I think  
5 it's helpful to remember that this  
6 industry is cyclical and that it's  
7 not been sort of a then-and-now  
8 situation. Over the course of the  
9 last hundred years, there have been  
10 a lot of different kinds of supply  
11 and demand spikes. I thought Ali  
12 put it really well when she sort of  
13 explained that.

14 CHAIR THOMAS: It was a  
15 great lesson, the history lesson. I  
16 agree.

17 MS. SCHAPIRA: Yeah. And,  
18 you know, I think it requires active  
19 participation. And I think we're  
20 hearing this from CLS, we're hearing  
21 this from GBU, that we as a city are  
22 not just a large user, we're also  
23 the steward of all of our residents,  
24 all of our businesses.

1           And we've not always had  
2     the resources or been allocating the  
3     resources to take that seriously.  
4     And so I think what needs to happen  
5     is there are some PJM actions we can  
6     take. And I think PJM is receptive  
7     to that as we heard, and wants to be  
8     engaged. The city does participate  
9     in an advocacy group of other  
10    cities, particularly around large  
11    user issues, but not necessarily  
12    around other types of issues.

13           PJM has had a backlog in  
14    their queue for many years as  
15    they've been trying to figure out  
16    the right way to sort of get the  
17    right mix of things into the system.  
18    And so I think we have two options  
19    there. One is we can do some  
20    advocacy with PJM to figure out,  
21    here's the things we need. You saw  
22    Governor Shapiro trying to get at  
23    some of the capacity issues. These  
24    are highly technical, not easy-to-

1 solve problems.

2 And so I want us to stay  
3 really cognizant of what we actually  
4 can do and can influence and what is  
5 sort of out of our ability to  
6 influence. But there is a lot that  
7 we can do.

8 The second thing is to  
9 really invest in those distributed  
10 energy resources and really be  
11 thinking about -- and I think this  
12 is something that -- thank you --  
13 something that we should continue to  
14 talk with the sort of  
15 re-industrialization advocates  
16 about. Because we really did suffer  
17 150 years of having one of the  
18 highest asthma rates in the country,  
19 particularly in an inequitable  
20 fashion.

21 So among African American  
22 kids, you see a rate that is two to  
23 three times the asthma rate of white  
24 kids in this city. And we don't

1 need to replicate that. That has  
2 been done. And so we're on a  
3 trajectory that can do better than  
4 that. And we should, and we can.

5 And I think we have a  
6 municipally-owned utility, which  
7 most other folks don't, and we have  
8 an awfully big one that has a lot of  
9 opportunity and a lot of  
10 responsibility. So we should not  
11 let those resources go. And I think  
12 Ali also mentioned that lower South  
13 district that's got so many  
14 resources.

15 CHAIR THOMAS: Yeah, I  
16 heard lower South multiple times,  
17 and I think some of the context  
18 around the potential down there, I  
19 think that that was very intriguing.  
20 I didn't -- I didn't know all of  
21 that as it relates to that  
22 particular part of the city.

23 MS. PERELMAN: Yes to  
24 everything Emily said. And just to

1 sort of take maybe a little bit more  
2 of -- I don't know, opportunistic  
3 perspective, Pennsylvania is the  
4 second-largest energy exporter in  
5 the U.S. I don't know, speaking  
6 from my own perspective, sometimes I  
7 find it very difficult to be like  
8 bullish on the Commonwealth for any  
9 number of reasons.

10 But in terms of energy  
11 production, this is actually  
12 something we do pretty much better  
13 than anyone other than Texas. So I  
14 think it would be critically  
15 important for -- and this is sort of  
16 like an in-order-of-operations sort  
17 of way, number one, as part of this  
18 conversation, and the Governor has  
19 already made this very clear, that  
20 any discussions about sort of like  
21 reconceptualizing PJM, keep in mind  
22 the fact that there is like one  
23 state that's like -- basically has  
24 everyone else's back in the grid

1 when stuff goes wrong.

2 And No. 2, and I think this  
3 is the much heavier lift, all things  
4 considered, making sure that Philly  
5 specifically doesn't get left out of  
6 that conversation because we are not  
7 currently an energy producer, even  
8 though the Commonwealth is. So  
9 wanting to make sure that -- and I  
10 think this is to Emily's point, the  
11 most important factor, making sure  
12 the fact that our municipally owned  
13 utility is viewed as part of the  
14 Commonwealth's energy generation.

15 Even though it is a utility  
16 not generating any of its own power,  
17 it has a very high level of capacity  
18 that it's viewed as sort of like a  
19 net asset in this broader  
20 conversation. Pennsylvania really  
21 is -- we are so rarely like in the  
22 catbird seat for anything, but we  
23 really are in this context, and  
24 it'll be a tremendously missed

1 opportunity if we didn't figure out  
2 a way to capitalize on that.

3 CHAIR THOMAS: That's a  
4 great responsibility for us and a  
5 lot of homework. I want to say  
6 thank you to this panel.

7 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank  
8 you so much.

9 CHAIR THOMAS: We truly  
10 appreciate you. We want to allow  
11 for public comment, and I know folks  
12 are getting a little tired. There  
13 was a hearing earlier this morning.  
14 Did you want to add something?

15 MR. FREEH: Yeah, I'll just  
16 briefly say one piece to that  
17 question.

18 CHAIR THOMAS: Sure.

19 MR. FREEH: Because I  
20 really appreciate it as a regional  
21 nonprofit. And I think though the  
22 way that Ali put it was well put.  
23 Another way to think about that,  
24 from Pennsylvania's role as an

1 energy producer, if you look at a  
2 map of the Northeast, there are some  
3 maps with a big donut of  
4 Pennsylvania, and those are maps of  
5 the Regional Greenhouse Gas  
6 Initiative, which is our regional  
7 cap and trade effort here in the  
8 Northeast.

9           This is something that  
10 Pennsylvania for many years, folks  
11 in the Democratic legislature have  
12 been trying to get us to enter.  
13 Governor Shapiro withdrew us from  
14 that as part of the budget  
15 negotiations last fall. Pros and  
16 cons to that, but one of the big  
17 cons is that Regional Greenhouse Gas  
18 Initiative proceeds are a tremendous  
19 source of revenue that can help with  
20 all of the demand-side reductions  
21 that we've talked about this  
22 afternoon.

23           So if you're looking for --  
24 as Rep. Fiedler was talking about,

1 big chunks of funding, that can help  
2 prepare homes, weatherize, create  
3 clean generation and renewable  
4 energy in Philadelphia for our  
5 residents and across the state, RGGI  
6 is an opportunity to do that.  
7 Governor Shapiro took that off the  
8 menu.

9           So I think the question to  
10 Harrisburg is: What is next, right?  
11 Is there another opportunity to  
12 generate that revenue? Whether  
13 that's looking at RGGI differently  
14 next time around, whether that's  
15 through another program, and there  
16 are elements of the Governor's  
17 Lightning Plan that I think are  
18 important to look at.

19           But I would just say a  
20 hundred percent, I think your frame  
21 around, you know, we should be  
22 looking at this as a regional  
23 strategy going forward, we're very  
24 aligned with and happy to support

1 those conversations.

2 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you  
3 all. I can assure you that this is  
4 not the last conversation. Your  
5 perspective is very much  
6 appreciated. We'll definitely be  
7 following up as it relates to next  
8 steps that City Council will be  
9 doing as a collaborative approach to  
10 this regional problem.

11 With that being said, Madam  
12 Clerk is going to move into public  
13 comment. Everybody who's here for  
14 public comment, I want to first and  
15 foremost say thank you for your  
16 patience. We appreciate you  
17 waiting. I'm sure you were able to  
18 collect a lot of information just  
19 like we were, as well as the  
20 listening public, and we are excited  
21 to hear from you as well.

22 So, Madam Clerk, can you  
23 please start with our first person  
24 for public comment? When you're

1 called for public comment, please  
2 state your name for the record  
3 before you begin with your  
4 testimony.

5 THE CLERK: Will Asray  
6 Gray, Eric Stowers, and Linnea Bond  
7 please make their way to the table.  
8 Will Peter F. Please make their way  
9 to the table.

10 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: And we  
11 can get started if you just state  
12 your name for the record and please  
13 proceed with your testimony. Thank  
14 you.

15 MR. STOWERS: Hello. I'm  
16 Eric Stowers. I'm a resident of  
17 Port Richmond.

18 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Please  
19 proceed with your testimony. Thank  
20 you.

21 MR. STOWERS: Thank you.  
22 First, I wanted to thank Council  
23 members for doing this, specifically  
24 you, Councilmember Landau. This is

1 my first time engaging in something  
2 like this, and I was very inspired  
3 by your attentiveness, just seeing  
4 you engage and also press the  
5 Utilities for practical solutions.  
6 I'm a big fan of this, so thank you  
7 for your work.

8 Yeah. I specifically want  
9 to just call out from my perspective  
10 what I'm hearing from today. I  
11 really enjoyed just learning about  
12 what's going on and the different  
13 perspectives of the panels. I'm  
14 going to be commenting on the panel  
15 for -- with PGW specifically. I  
16 have been organizing with my  
17 community in Port Richmond to oppose  
18 the LNG plant investment replacement  
19 that the Gas Commission is currently  
20 deliberating on.

21 And I want to call out just  
22 one perspective from my perspective  
23 on what PGW was talking about. They  
24 talked about how over the lifetime

1 of the LNG plant in my community, it  
2 has saved \$4 billion over its  
3 lifetime, right? But yet they do  
4 not have the details on how much  
5 pollution they have put in my  
6 community.

7           There's never been a no X  
8 limit set in place, even though it's  
9 been operated over the last 20  
10 years. And in the LNG plant  
11 replacement budget, they have not  
12 addressed our community's health as  
13 well. They also don't have basic  
14 continuous monitoring to tell us  
15 what's going on.

16           So they can get us  
17 estimates on how much money they've  
18 saved, but they don't even have the  
19 details on how they're affecting our  
20 community. So they sacrifice our  
21 community and don't provide the  
22 details on how much they're doing.  
23 So there's a lot of details that  
24 they are not giving and they're

1 painting a rosy picture.

2 Also, when they talk about  
3 the lifetime savings, they're not  
4 talking about how much costs are  
5 going to be incurred to preserve and  
6 perpetuate the fossil fuel industry  
7 and the aging infrastructure that  
8 they're dealing with. Out of the  
9 3,000 miles of natural gas pipeline  
10 that they have in the city, how much  
11 does that risk? That's 1,500. Do  
12 you know how much PGW replaces on an  
13 annual basis? 30.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please  
15 be aware that you have 10 more  
16 seconds.

17 MR. STOWERS: Thank you.  
18 The aging infrastructure is  
19 estimated to be \$8 billion to  
20 replace. Just because it saves  
21 money doesn't mean it's going to  
22 cost us a lot of money as well. We  
23 have to take a holistic perspective  
24 and we have to factor in people's

1 health as well. Please do not just  
2 listen to one side of the story.  
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
5 And the reason we ask PGW to stay is  
6 because there's a representative  
7 right there. So if you could have a  
8 conversation with the person  
9 communicating to us now, we  
10 definitely appreciate it.

11 MR. STOWERS:  
12 Transparently, PGW has not addressed  
13 our concerns. They just keep on  
14 repeating the same talking points  
15 and not addressing what actually  
16 matters to us. Thank you.

17 CHAIR THOMAS: I'm glad you  
18 put that on the record, and clearly  
19 there's issues with that community,  
20 and I'm sure that's going to come  
21 before us. So thank you. Thank you  
22 for -- we're at-large, so don't  
23 assume we know. You didn't waste  
24 your time. I had no issue -- no

1 clue about those issues before you  
2 communicated this. So we appreciate  
3 you communicating to us. Thank you.

4 You can state your name for  
5 the record and you may begin with  
6 your testimony.

7 MS. BOND: Hey, I'm Linnea  
8 Bond. I am the director of  
9 Education for Physicians for Social  
10 Responsibility Pennsylvania. I sent  
11 a memo with six actions that I  
12 believe the city can take this  
13 morning -- or yesterday morning.  
14 But I'm going to focus on one  
15 primarily, which is -- and that's  
16 been talked about a lot, PGW's  
17 transition.

18 One of the things that we  
19 don't really talk about, within  
20 PGW's infrastructure, there's a leak  
21 for every quarter mile of pipeline.  
22 They talked about how gas bills have  
23 gone down from 2014 to 2025. That  
24 LNG facility that they attributed

1 that to, that was built in 2002.

2 So most of that reduction  
3 actually has to do with appliances  
4 being more and more energy efficient  
5 and people moving away from gas and  
6 switching to electric for -- heat  
7 pumps have actually surpassed gas  
8 infrastructure for heating needs  
9 because they also heat and cool.

10 So when we look at the need  
11 to transition our gas -- like,  
12 there's fewer customers paying for  
13 our gas system when we have this  
14 leaky system with a quarter mile --  
15 a leak every quarter mile of  
16 pipeline. And they're also not  
17 factoring in other externalities  
18 that the industry is famous for.

19 For example, 30 percent  
20 minimum, according to the EIA, of  
21 climate change is attributable to  
22 gas. And a study by the University  
23 of Pittsburgh showed that there are  
24 100,000 missing barrels of

1 radioactive waste between what the  
2 industry reported leaving facilities  
3 and what the waste acceptance at the  
4 landfills reported receiving:  
5 100,000 barrels of missing  
6 radioactive waste.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please  
8 wrap up your testimony.

9 MS. BOND: Yeah. There's  
10 350,000 to 700,000 orphaned and  
11 abandoned wells across Philadelphia  
12 from oil and gas production. And if  
13 we continue to invest in gas, that  
14 goes up every year, right? So there  
15 are a lot of costs associated with  
16 investment in gas that were not  
17 discussed today that we really need  
18 to factor in and make wise  
19 investments in our future. Thank  
20 you.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you.  
22 Can you make sure my team got that  
23 testimony that you were talking  
24 about?

1 MS. BOND: Yeah,  
2 absolutely.

3 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.  
4 Can you handle that for me, please?  
5 Thank you.

6 State your name for the  
7 record. You may begin with your  
8 testimony.

9 MR. FASCH: My name is  
10 Peter Fasch, and the first thing I  
11 wanted to say, we've sat here for  
12 over three hours and now we're being  
13 rushed to make our testimony within  
14 two minutes. I just feel like  
15 that's a little bit unfair to the  
16 public to --

17 CHAIR THOMAS: Do you have  
18 more than two minutes worth of  
19 things to say?

20 MR. FASCH: There are so  
21 many things that were said today  
22 that I would like to comment on.

23 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.  
24 So if you would like to take more

1 than two minutes --

2 MR. FASCH: Oh, yes.

3 CHAIR THOMAS: -- what I  
4 would ask you to do is allow the  
5 other people to testify, but before  
6 you, so that they can give --  
7 provide their testimony, and then  
8 towards the end, we'll try to give  
9 you a little more time if you need  
10 more time.

11 MR. FASCH: Fair enough.  
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIR THOMAS: Okay.

14 MR. CHANIN: Okay. I'm  
15 going to try -- I will keep mine to  
16 two minutes. Mitch Chanin. I'm a  
17 leader in Reclaim Philadelphia's  
18 Climate Justice Caucus. I work with  
19 a number of other organizations like  
20 Two and Five People's Alliance.  
21 Yeah, there's a lot to respond to  
22 after listening for hours.

23 I want to just name a few  
24 things that I think need

1 reinforcement. One is that CAP and  
2 CRP programs; less than one half of  
3 the eligible customers are enrolled.  
4 So to my mind, that is a serious  
5 crisis. That means tens of  
6 thousands of people in Philadelphia,  
7 the lowest income -- some of our  
8 lowest-income residents are  
9 overpaying their energy bills  
10 because these programs are broken,  
11 the enrollment processes do not  
12 work.

13           And to my mind, it's a huge  
14 scandal that less than half of the  
15 eligible customers are enrolled and  
16 are forced because of these  
17 administrative barriers and lack of  
18 information to overpay. That should  
19 not be happening.

20           I support the ideas that  
21 were put forward about automatic  
22 enrollment, and I think it's urgent  
23 that that be addressed. In  
24 addition, funding for the

1 neighborhood energy centers is  
2 really critical. I also want to say  
3 I really appreciated the testimony  
4 from Emily Schapira and PEA.

5 Every year they didn't  
6 advocate for their own budget in  
7 this testimony, but every year the  
8 mayor proposes to cut their funding,  
9 it's resetting to \$1.5 million  
10 instead of the \$4 million that PEA  
11 is asking for. And I cannot fathom  
12 why that is the case. I'm glad that  
13 Council keeps putting some of that  
14 funding back.

15 But I would like it to be  
16 just part of the five-year plan.  
17 And they need more than \$4 million.  
18 These programs, Built to Last and  
19 Solarize Philly, are doing  
20 incredible work; reducing pollution,  
21 lowering people's energy bills,  
22 creating green jobs. They should be  
23 expanded. We shouldn't be just  
24 fighting to get the crumbs that

1 they're given for this really  
2 critical work every year.

3           Maybe the last two things,  
4 I'll try to be really quick. This  
5 conversation about PGW's future is  
6 extremely important. Many of us  
7 were at the Gas Commission meeting  
8 at 9:00 in the morning -- well,  
9 10:00 in the morning. So we've been  
10 doing this all day, struggling over  
11 getting basic accountability and  
12 transparency.

13           As people were saying, PGW  
14 is on track to spend \$8 billion  
15 replacing gas infrastructure when we  
16 need to be phasing out the use of  
17 natural gas. And in fact, gas  
18 demand is declining year by year.  
19 We cannot saddle a shrinking  
20 customer base with paying these  
21 enormous costs. We have to have a  
22 real plan for PGW over the next 20  
23 years to guarantee affordability and  
24 meeting the city's 2050 carbon

1 neutrality goal.

2 Right now, we're asking for  
3 a study about what are the  
4 alternatives to spending \$182  
5 million on this proposed LNG  
6 replacement. And we'll be  
7 continuing that struggle over the  
8 summer. Today, the Gas Commission  
9 declined to authorize that spending.  
10 That was an unprecedented move as  
11 far as I can tell. Council will be  
12 reviewing PGW's capital budget and  
13 can keep pressing for accountability  
14 and transparency from PGW. The very  
15 last thing I want to say, I think  
16 I'm probably at my time.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please  
18 wrap up your testimony.

19 MR. CHANIN: Okay. Yeah.  
20 This data center question is also  
21 incredibly important. I know there  
22 is a vision for building out data  
23 centers at the Bellwether District.  
24 I've heard from Ryan Boyer that they

1 -- he would like to see a gas-fired  
2 power plant there to power these  
3 data centers.

4 To my mind, that is just a  
5 non-starter. The neighborhood has  
6 already experienced over a century  
7 of toxic pollution from the  
8 refinery. We do not want to restart  
9 that now by putting gas-fired power  
10 plants there to put in a data  
11 center. There's a lot of other  
12 conversation that needs to happen  
13 about the proposed data center, but  
14 we cannot -- you know, the fact that  
15 Pennsylvania is the largest energy  
16 exporter, good in some ways, but  
17 it's all fossil fuel energy.

18 We need to fundamentally  
19 transform what we're doing here. As  
20 you were saying, Councilmember  
21 Thomas, we cannot possibly allow new  
22 gas-fired power plants in  
23 Philadelphia. So that's the last  
24 thing that I'll say. Thank you so

1 much.

2 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank  
3 you so much. I wanted you to know  
4 that I introduced a resolution a few  
5 months ago to hold a hearing on data  
6 centers and that will happen in the  
7 fall. Thanks.

8 MR. CHANIN: Thank you.  
9 I've been meeting with your office  
10 consistently as well. Thank you.

11 CHAIR THOMAS: Please call  
12 the next people.

13 THE CLERK: Emily  
14 Abendroth, Mitch C. and Patrick  
15 Houston.

16 MR. CHANIN: Mitch C. just  
17 testified.

18 THE CLERK: Oh, okay. Can  
19 Juan Peralta please come to the  
20 table.

21 CHAIR THOMAS: Is that the  
22 last list?

23 THE CLERK: Yes.

24 CHAIR THOMAS: These are

1 the last three?

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yes.

3 CHAIR THOMAS: And then  
4 I'll let my man go through one more  
5 time.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Okay.

7 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.  
8 Please state your name for the  
9 record.

10 MS. ABENDROTH: Yeah. My  
11 name is Emily Abendroth. I'm a  
12 Philly resident and I'm a member of  
13 the Here 4 Climate Justice  
14 coalition. I live in Cobbs Creek,  
15 and I live on a block that I love  
16 and that my neighbors love, but also  
17 a block where the longstanding  
18 decline in investment in public  
19 infrastructure and the stress across  
20 time on that infrastructure that was  
21 built 50, 70, 100 years ago is  
22 everywhere evident in the form of  
23 water pipe breaks, sewage backup,  
24 gas leaks, flooding basements and

1 more. These are issues beyond the  
2 capacity of the block itself to  
3 handle or to address.

4 In fact, I've watched  
5 neighbors sometimes do one another a  
6 favor by not reporting problems like  
7 sewage that they know are absolutely  
8 beyond the capacity of that  
9 individual homeowner or tenant to  
10 fix on the basis of their own  
11 resources.

12 And even when people do  
13 that for one another, they do so  
14 knowing that this is by no means a  
15 true favor either for themselves or  
16 for that neighbor, and that it harms  
17 each and every one of us in the long  
18 term. In many ways, the city -- I  
19 just want to name, is also in a  
20 situation, not unlike my block, in  
21 the sense that there are conditions  
22 and situations that are of a scale  
23 that are larger than itself.

24 However, you have far more

1 leverage points and choices before  
2 you, and frankly, more power to  
3 change the landscape of the choices  
4 of others. And I think I just want  
5 to kind of name, like, we need you  
6 not to do us a favor that we can't  
7 afford, and that will cost us  
8 everything in terms of Philadelphia  
9 residents' long-term health,  
10 financial stability, access to  
11 housing and more.

12 I just want to name, like,  
13 I remember a year ago now when you,  
14 Councilmember Thomas -- and this all  
15 kind of closes here, so I realize  
16 it's time -- named your commitment  
17 to hold a hearing on PGW and  
18 utilities, and that Driscoll agreed  
19 to co-host, and I want to thank you  
20 actually for following through on  
21 that and for the breadth of the way  
22 that you're taking it on.

23 And I just want to  
24 appreciate how you expressed your

1 own sense of urgency at that time,  
2 that the goals using a number of  
3 2050 were themselves way too late,  
4 and that we should have benchmarks  
5 for 2030, for 2035 that are taken  
6 seriously and treated with urgency.

7 And I want to appreciate  
8 that emphasis and hope that the  
9 thrust of that feeling is not lost  
10 along the way. And we are currently  
11 in no way on track to meet the 2050  
12 goal, let alone like to the other;  
13 climate change, like data centers is  
14 moving exponentially, breaking new  
15 records every month, let alone every  
16 year --

17 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Please  
18 wrap up your testimony.

19 MS. ABENDROTH: -- and we  
20 are not. And the last thing I'll  
21 just say is like, echoing the kinds  
22 of costs where -- including when we  
23 think about these things.

24 Respectfully speaking, PECO

1 did not withdraw their most recent  
2 rate increase proposal out of a  
3 sudden spontaneous and magnanimous  
4 change of heart. They did so  
5 because of the direct expression of  
6 opposition by elected officials.  
7 And we really need your help. Thank  
8 you.

9 MR. HOUSTON: Hey, you-all.  
10 Good afternoon. Thanks for this  
11 opportunity to testify. And  
12 actually, I'm going to start with  
13 gratitude for this hearing as well,  
14 right off of Emily.

15 First off, my name is  
16 Patrick Houston. I'm with the Here  
17 4 Climate Justice coalition. I'm  
18 testifying on my own behalf today.  
19 First off, this hearing to me  
20 demonstrates that Council recognizes  
21 that energy costs aren't in a  
22 vacuum.

23 They are not separable from  
24 the cost of food, putting food on

1 the table, the cost of rent. This  
2 was the experience of my family  
3 growing up in Philadelphia. It was  
4 a zero-sum game. If you're paying  
5 more for energy, you're paying less  
6 for how much food is on the table.  
7 So I really appreciate this hearing.

8 I am looking through my  
9 scrambled notes because I just want  
10 to hit on some things from today  
11 that really -- that really stood out  
12 to me. And then I want to name one  
13 thing at the end. So one, really  
14 support this call, that Council look  
15 at these gaps between enrollment and  
16 eligibility in the universal  
17 programs, both with CAP and CRP,  
18 PECO and PGW. Second, that we keep  
19 on bolstering things that work.

20 Philadelphia Energy  
21 Authority with its Built to Last  
22 program and its Solarize Philly  
23 program, directing resources for  
24 renewable energy and energy

1 efficiency to the households that  
2 could least afford it and would  
3 otherwise be left behind in this  
4 urgent transition.

5 Third, yes, there's direct  
6 more resources to the other groups  
7 that are doing stuff that works, the  
8 neighborhood energy centers, the  
9 various legal services that  
10 intervene in the cases on the state  
11 level like the PUC, where they could  
12 use those resources to make sure  
13 their good work can extend all the  
14 way.

15 And four, to support that  
16 bill that Driscoll has, 644, for  
17 upgrading energy codes. And while  
18 we're at it, making sure we make  
19 that big change on that continuous  
20 insulation, which is a really,  
21 really big difference.

22 So those are the things  
23 that I wanted to share. Oh, my  
24 goodness. And then I'll just -- in

1 15 seconds, is that okay? I'll just  
2 name this other thing. People have  
3 named the \$8 billion for gas-to-gas  
4 replacement from PGW that's  
5 projected to be spent between now  
6 and 2058, \$8 billion with a B. And  
7 how at the same time, with the  
8 dwindling rate base, the  
9 inconsistencies there and the  
10 inconsistencies with our 2050  
11 climate goals.

12 I will just name this,  
13 charting a new path forward is not  
14 unprecedented. Unfortunately,  
15 Mr. Nostrand had to leave, but  
16 Massachusetts state, their DPU Order  
17 80-20 provides a chart on -- that --  
18 it aims to do two things for their  
19 gas transition. One is figure out  
20 how can we transition -- do a  
21 managed transition rather than an  
22 unplanned transition. And how can  
23 we require the gas utilities all  
24 across the state to -- all across

1 the state to have to first propose  
2 renewable, non-pipe, non-gas  
3 alternatives before they default to  
4 gas. Who can do that? In here in  
5 Philadelphia, City Council can.  
6 Thanks. That's all.

7 CHAIR THOMAS: Great  
8 advice. Thank you. State your name  
9 for the record.

10 MR. PERALTA: My name is  
11 Juan Peralta. I'm also a member --  
12 my name is Juan Peralta. I'm also a  
13 member of the Here 4 Climate Justice  
14 coalition, but I'm here speaking on  
15 my own behalf. I'm a Philly  
16 resident. I'm a father of three,  
17 including a one-year-old baby.

18 Before I get into it, I  
19 just want to just say, like, the  
20 word affordability being tossed  
21 around more and more often now kind  
22 of like upsets me because I feel  
23 like people have been struggling for  
24 such a long time. Like, I feel like

1 the word "affordability" now being  
2 used sometimes is -- like, I  
3 remember winters where I had two  
4 pairs of socks on, sweatpants and  
5 blankets on, because the gas was too  
6 expensive.

7 I know things are more  
8 expensive now, but it's just like  
9 the reality -- this is the reality  
10 that a lot of families have been  
11 living in for a long time.

12 This past winter was  
13 brutally cold. And me keeping my  
14 family warm, sorry -- me keeping my  
15 family warm, my babies warm, cost me  
16 \$3,000. And I don't keep my heat  
17 blasting on 80. And it just feels  
18 like -- it feels like the system is  
19 failing us. I've had this  
20 conversation with neighbors, with  
21 family members.

22 The rising cost of  
23 utilities, there's a lot of reasons.  
24 I've heard a lot of reasons, but I

1 didn't hear one said out loud. And  
2 that's greed. In the last year,  
3 PECO's profits skyrocketed by over  
4 50 percent. And this is why -- this  
5 is why -- sorry. And that profit is  
6 theft. That's profit that's being  
7 taken out of the pockets of  
8 families, out of my pocket, out of  
9 Philly residents. It feels more and  
10 more that we're in a losing battle.

11 And I come here, and I love  
12 -- I love what you said, like, some  
13 things are human rights.

14 Electricity, energy is a human  
15 right. There should not be a profit  
16 incentive when it means shutoffs,  
17 when it means being uncomfortable,  
18 when it means possibly homelessness.

19 So I don't know what the solution  
20 is, but there needs to be every  
21 solution. And we need to put our  
22 people first before we put the  
23 profit incentives of these  
24 corporations. And that's all I

1 really got to say. Thank you.

2 CHAIR THOMAS: Thank you  
3 for your testimony. That is the  
4 objective of the hearing today,  
5 right? Anybody who listened to that  
6 testimony right there, that is  
7 exactly why we're having this  
8 conversation, because we cannot put  
9 ourselves in a position where that's  
10 what constituents in our city are  
11 going through when they're trying to  
12 provide a basic living for  
13 themselves and their family.

14 So thank you for making  
15 yourself vulnerable, sir. We know  
16 it's not easy, especially when  
17 you're a father who's responsible  
18 for taking care of other people. We  
19 truly appreciate it and you didn't  
20 waste your time. This is the last  
21 testimony of today.

22 MR. FASCH: Thank you,  
23 first off, for letting me go last  
24 here and spend a little bit more

1 time, because I want to try to tie  
2 together a lot of what we heard  
3 today -- or what we didn't hear,  
4 because there were some important  
5 things that you didn't hear,  
6 especially from the industry  
7 representatives.

8 And I want to start -- I'll  
9 just focus on PECO. So PECO stated  
10 quite clearly and quite correctly  
11 that they don't make a penny for  
12 every electron that goes through  
13 their wires. The only place that  
14 they do make money is on spending on  
15 infrastructure, right? So both PECO  
16 and PJM today only talked about  
17 building big gas plants.

18 Why is that? Because if I  
19 build a gas plant out in Putnam  
20 County and then run wires all the  
21 way into Philadelphia, distributed  
22 all over the city, I get to spend  
23 lots of money on infrastructure,  
24 right? That's how PECO makes their

1 money. That's why -- as Juan was  
2 saying, they've made record profits,  
3 because they're building so much  
4 infrastructure. Do we have any say  
5 on that infrastructure? No. It's  
6 all done behind scenes.

7           They can do whatever they  
8 want by regulation of the PUC. They  
9 make -- they make a certain number  
10 of pennies for every dollar they  
11 spend on that infrastructure.

12           Did you hear PECO talk  
13 about distributed energy resources  
14 or community solar or solar for  
15 schools or VPPs? They didn't talk  
16 about doing that. The reason they  
17 didn't is because those resources  
18 produce power locally and get -- and  
19 get used locally.

20           PECO doesn't have to build  
21 long extension electrical lines.  
22 They don't have to put big  
23 transformers. And they don't have  
24 to spend money to support

1 distributed energy resources. It's  
2 batteries, it's solar panels right  
3 there in the neighborhood, being  
4 used right there in the  
5 neighborhood. They don't make their  
6 money. That money that they don't  
7 spend though, gets taken off of our  
8 -- that would then come off of our  
9 utility bills because that's the  
10 distribution part of our utility  
11 bills.

12           So they don't have to spend  
13 that money on distribution. Our  
14 utility bills go down because we're  
15 generating the power from our own  
16 solar panels, from our own  
17 batteries.

18           And the other thing that  
19 that does -- and this is towards  
20 your question about whether we  
21 should be talking to PJM. The grid  
22 has been built, what's called for  
23 peak load, right? So it's built to  
24 the peak. So most of the time, if

1 you look at how much energy is  
2 produced -- if you look at it over a  
3 24-hour period, we have plenty of  
4 power over a 24-hour period.

5           The problem is most of the  
6 demand is when it's, you know, early  
7 in the morning and it's cold, or  
8 it's late in the night -- or not  
9 late in the night, afternoons when  
10 it's hot. So we have -- we have  
11 this peak demand. And if that  
12 demand continues to grow, you have  
13 to -- you have to build more. If  
14 you can't match that demand to the  
15 supply, then you have to build  
16 bigger grids, spend more money.

17           What DERs allow you to do,  
18 batteries in particular, is to be  
19 able to shift when that demand is  
20 and better match the demand with  
21 supply, right? So instead of  
22 building a bigger grid, the  
23 technologies of today allows you to  
24 match and shift some of that demand

1 to later at night, turn your  
2 batteries on during the day when the  
3 power -- when more power is needed,  
4 charge those batteries at night when  
5 there's excess power.

6 That doesn't play well with  
7 PECO. It doesn't play well with  
8 PJM, because PJM -- when you go to  
9 -- when you go see PJM out in  
10 Audubon, ask them about what their  
11 board is made up of and how  
12 transparent their decisions are.  
13 Their board is made up of the  
14 executives of the power companies  
15 that feed the grid. And you don't  
16 hear them talking about solar power  
17 either. They've got years of  
18 backlog. They have -- there's  
19 hundreds of thousands of megawatts  
20 of solar and wind power that can't  
21 get onto the grid because PJM is  
22 slow-walking the approvals of those  
23 sources of energy.

24 CHAIR THOMAS: All right.

1 Sir, could we --

2 MR. FASCH: Thank you.

3 Thank you

4 CHAIR THOMAS: You good?

5 MR. FASCH: Yeah.

6 CHAIR THOMAS: You sure?

7 MR. FASCH: Yeah, I'm good  
8 actually. Much better.

9 CHAIR THOMAS: We're going  
10 to continue this conversation. So  
11 clearly you got folks from PJM back  
12 there. We want to have dialogue  
13 about their board and figure out how  
14 we can get to the bottom of some of  
15 the stuff that you're saying. So we  
16 definitely appreciate your  
17 testimony.

18 With that being said, are  
19 there any other questions or  
20 comments from members of the joint  
21 committees? Hearing none. There  
22 being no further questions from  
23 members of the committee and no  
24 other witnesses to testify, I will

1 ask that if there's anyone else  
2 present in this hearing whose name  
3 we failed to call, or that wishes to  
4 offer testimony in a resolution to  
5 be considered today. Hearing none.

6 I want to thank you all. I  
7 want to thank all of the panels and  
8 witnesses for their participation  
9 today. We definitely value your  
10 opinion. This was so informative.  
11 We appreciate your patience and we  
12 can assure you that this is not the  
13 last conversation. With that being  
14 said, this concludes the business of  
15 this committee. We are now in  
16 recess for the -- at this hearing,  
17 at the call of the Chairs. Have a  
18 good day everybody. Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank  
20 you.

21 (Committee on Legislative Oversight and the Committee on  
22 Transportation and Public Utilities meeting concluded at  
23 4:35 p.m.)  
24

## 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 J. Rios

Court Reporter  
Notary Public of PA & DE

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|                                            |                                                      |                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>\$</b>                                  | <b>\$800</b> 65:1 66:10                              | <b>18</b> 60:21 87:17 134:16                                 |
| <b>\$1,178</b> 110:10                      | <b>\$90</b> 110:24 113:19                            | <b>180</b> 56:3 149:24                                       |
| <b>\$1,257</b> 110:7                       | <b>\$909</b> 111:20                                  | <b>1834</b> 27:11 28:3                                       |
| <b>\$1.4</b> 72:6                          | -                                                    | <b>184th</b> 21:12                                           |
| <b>\$1.5</b> 236:9                         | --I 96:15                                            | <b>19</b> 83:3 115:12                                        |
| <b>\$100</b> 119:23                        | 1                                                    | <b>190</b> 114:23                                            |
| <b>\$11</b> 112:17                         | 1,000 61:13                                          | <b>1907</b> 73:13                                            |
| <b>\$15</b> 70:3                           | 1,300 64:23                                          | <b>1927</b> 52:23                                            |
| <b>\$156</b> 79:10                         | 1,500 228:11                                         | <b>1st</b> 7:4 79:2 197:18                                   |
| <b>\$182</b> 238:4                         | 1.5 153:12                                           | 2                                                            |
| <b>\$2</b> 154:1 196:20                    | 10 12:16 76:5 88:12<br>197:18 228:15                 | 2 220:2                                                      |
| <b>\$20</b> 124:13                         | 10-day 63:6                                          | 20 14:12 15:15 69:5 88:12<br>116:11 119:21 227:9<br>237:22   |
| <b>\$200</b> 122:13 163:15                 | 10-year 127:2                                        | 200 154:15                                                   |
| <b>\$22.6</b> 76:5                         | 100 52:22 53:4,16 54:9<br>57:2,5 100:9,17 241:21     | 2000s 189:1                                                  |
| <b>\$25</b> 33:15                          | 100,000 231:24 232:5                                 | 2002 231:1                                                   |
| <b>\$28</b> 119:10                         | 10:00 237:9                                          | 2008 82:8                                                    |
| <b>\$3,000</b> 250:16                      | 12 69:2 71:2 134:16                                  | 2010 117:9                                                   |
| <b>\$300</b> 64:1 143:7                    | 12.5 31:18                                           | 2010s 189:8                                                  |
| <b>\$31</b> 70:1                           | 120 73:14 74:14                                      | 2014 110:4,6 230:23                                          |
| <b>\$4</b> 111:4 113:21 227:2<br>236:10,17 | 13 130:16 136:2 139:11                               | 2017 30:21                                                   |
| <b>\$400</b> 64:3                          | 14 60:19                                             | 2019 60:22,23                                                |
| <b>\$429</b> 208:7                         | 1400 87:18                                           | 2021 70:7 83:17 197:12                                       |
| <b>\$5</b> 12:7                            | 15 26:22 75:13 77:10<br>120:16 154:19 212:2<br>248:1 | 2022 165:13                                                  |
| <b>\$500,000</b> 165:12                    | 150 169:1 184:13 217:17                              | 2023 70:24 71:12 83:23                                       |
| <b>\$60</b> 167:20                         | 16 60:10 85:4 99:6 193:22,<br>24                     | 2024 60:22 61:3 70:3,20<br>112:1 119:8 120:14 199:4<br>209:8 |
| <b>\$7</b> 79:6                            | 16-plus 194:4                                        | 2025 13:24 70:2 110:4,8<br>112:9 122:11 154:15<br>230:23     |
| <b>\$700</b> 61:11 63:10 66:14             | 165 79:13                                            | 2026 79:1 87:11 89:10<br>157:16 197:18                       |
| <b>\$750</b> 112:9                         | 16th 192:22                                          |                                                              |
| <b>\$77</b> 112:11                         |                                                      |                                                              |
| <b>\$8</b> 153:19 228:19 237:14<br>248:3,6 |                                                      |                                                              |
| <b>\$8.3</b> 76:4                          |                                                      |                                                              |

|                                                                         |                                               |                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2028</b> 71:3 79:2                                                   | <b>360</b> 56:3                               | <b>644</b> 197:11 247:16                                                           |
| <b>2030</b> 71:11 72:7 78:6<br>244:5                                    | <b>38</b> 116:6                               | <b>67</b> 130:15                                                                   |
| <b>2035</b> 244:5                                                       | <b>4</b>                                      | <b>7</b>                                                                           |
| <b>2050</b> 71:11 195:20 237:24<br>244:3,11 248:10                      | <b>4</b> 194:17 195:1 241:13<br>245:17 249:13 | <b>7-</b> 66:10                                                                    |
| <b>2058</b> 248:6                                                       | <b>4,400</b> 181:17                           | <b>70</b> 61:18 84:13 241:21                                                       |
| <b>2076</b> 30:11                                                       | <b>4.4</b> 70:23                              | <b>700,000</b> 232:10                                                              |
| <b>21</b> 72:8 75:16                                                    | <b>40</b> 11:18 70:6 81:2 151:18              | <b>78</b> 71:11                                                                    |
| <b>2131</b> 32:15                                                       | <b>400</b> 90:7                               | <b>8</b>                                                                           |
| <b>220</b> 149:18 150:4                                                 | <b>41</b> 69:15                               | <b>8</b> 28:14 64:12,19                                                            |
| <b>2223</b> 28:15                                                       | <b>42</b> 116:10                              | <b>80</b> 15:9 164:1 250:17                                                        |
| <b>2224</b> 32:2 72:23                                                  | <b>422</b> 129:22                             | <b>80-20</b> 248:17                                                                |
| <b>2264</b> 29:9                                                        | <b>430</b> 178:9                              | <b>81</b> 70:3                                                                     |
| <b>234,000</b> 111:12                                                   | <b>45</b> 13:17 68:11                         | <b>811</b> 149:18                                                                  |
| <b>24</b> 130:12                                                        | <b>4:35</b> 259:22                            | <b>9</b>                                                                           |
| <b>24-hour</b> 256:3,4                                                  | <b>4th</b> 79:1                               | <b>9,000</b> 78:5                                                                  |
| <b>25</b> 71:10                                                         | <b>5</b>                                      | <b>90's</b> 188:24                                                                 |
| <b>250896</b> 4:2,7 82:3 108:20                                         | <b>5,000</b> 62:10 66:13                      | <b>9:00</b> 237:8                                                                  |
| <b>28</b> 87:12 119:10                                                  | <b>5,400</b> 188:21                           | <b>A</b>                                                                           |
| <b>29th</b> 73:3                                                        | <b>5,600</b> 156:6                            | <b>abandoned</b> 232:11                                                            |
| <b>3</b>                                                                | <b>50</b> 110:16 241:21 251:4                 | <b>Abendroth</b> 240:14<br>241:10,11 244:19                                        |
| <b>3,000</b> 228:9                                                      | <b>500</b> 182:20                             | <b>ability</b> 34:10 36:18 86:20<br>92:2 114:9 148:17 161:18<br>166:8 204:14 217:5 |
| <b>30</b> 63:17 78:21 79:14<br>143:10,15 148:18 151:18<br>228:13 231:19 | <b>500,000</b> 109:19 111:11                  | <b>absence</b> 54:15,16                                                            |
| <b>30-second</b> 212:2                                                  | <b>55</b> 181:19                              | <b>absolute</b> 187:6                                                              |
| <b>300</b> 123:6 154:20                                                 | <b>5th</b> 66:15                              | <b>absolutely</b> 43:20 125:8,15<br>133:9 138:23 140:8<br>150:14 163:4 233:2 242:7 |
| <b>3000</b> 62:12                                                       | <b>6</b>                                      | <b>absorb</b> 88:4                                                                 |
| <b>33</b> 75:18                                                         | <b>6</b> 134:16                               |                                                                                    |
| <b>35</b> 117:12                                                        | <b>6.3</b> 110:2                              |                                                                                    |
| <b>35,000</b> 112:15                                                    | <b>6.7</b> 71:2                               |                                                                                    |
| <b>350,000</b> 232:10                                                   | <b>62</b> 87:16 89:2                          |                                                                                    |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>abundance</b> 114:8</p> <p><b>AC</b> 65:13 66:2</p> <p><b>acceptance</b> 232:3</p> <p><b>access</b> 13:22 14:7 16:7<br/>48:3,16 79:7 82:20 84:6,<br/>20 89:18 91:11 99:6<br/>204:4,21 243:10</p> <p><b>accessing</b> 203:19</p> <p><b>accomplishment</b> 87:22</p> <p><b>account</b> 62:14 63:4</p> <p><b>accountability</b> 237:11<br/>238:13</p> <p><b>accountable</b> 35:21</p> <p><b>accumulating</b> 212:10</p> <p><b>accurate</b> 136:15</p> <p><b>achieve</b> 124:15</p> <p><b>achievements</b> 85:20</p> <p><b>acknowledged</b> 11:16</p> <p><b>acquire</b> 39:8</p> <p><b>acronyms</b> 140:1</p> <p><b>act</b> 25:18 26:19 27:12<br/>37:3 51:7 78:23 131:1</p> <p><b>action</b> 77:11 92:24 182:18<br/>196:2 198:1 200:2</p> <p><b>actionable</b> 113:2</p> <p><b>actions</b> 77:5 78:7 80:5<br/>216:5 230:11</p> <p><b>active</b> 97:23 215:18</p> <p><b>actively</b> 16:5 120:3</p> <p><b>actual</b> 118:11 134:24<br/>180:11</p> <p><b>acutely</b> 9:23</p> <p><b>Adamucci</b> 107:19 108:7,<br/>11 145:2,6 153:5,10<br/>156:1,11,22 165:18<br/>166:20 172:24</p> | <p><b>add</b> 31:15 42:17 45:11<br/>56:23 58:3 193:12 221:14</p> <p><b>added</b> 10:11 41:1</p> <p><b>addition</b> 11:4 12:4 26:2<br/>47:16 89:20 92:9 102:9<br/>104:5 211:2 235:24</p> <p><b>additional</b> 11:13 12:19<br/>46:3 47:24 64:3 70:15<br/>111:1 154:11 185:21,24</p> <p><b>address</b> 4:14 7:19 10:17<br/>13:24 21:17 69:9 80:6<br/>83:16 85:2,19 86:5 89:22<br/>106:11 127:24 130:7<br/>137:13,14 190:10 214:2<br/>242:3</p> <p><b>addressed</b> 227:12 229:12<br/>235:23</p> <p><b>addresses</b> 137:1</p> <p><b>addressing</b> 92:22 229:15</p> <p><b>adequate</b> 104:9</p> <p><b>admin</b> 59:2 106:4</p> <p><b>administers</b> 90:1</p> <p><b>administration</b> 25:11 77:9<br/>78:1,13 79:5,12 97:20<br/>103:4 106:10 178:23</p> <p><b>administration's</b> 77:19<br/>78:7 196:20</p> <p><b>administrative</b> 155:23<br/>206:23 235:17</p> <p><b>administrator</b> 45:16</p> <p><b>adoption</b> 84:18</p> <p><b>adults</b> 87:17,18</p> <p><b>advance</b> 15:3 18:1 93:6<br/>151:14 192:24</p> <p><b>advanced</b> 26:22 28:12,21<br/>30:24 85:18 115:15</p> <p><b>advances</b> 96:20</p> <p><b>advancing</b> 45:22 82:14</p> | <p><b>advantage</b> 71:15 96:21<br/>114:11,12</p> <p><b>adversely</b> 102:8 103:8</p> <p><b>advertise</b> 154:22</p> <p><b>advice</b> 249:8</p> <p><b>advised</b> 105:4</p> <p><b>advocacy</b> 56:22 107:17<br/>115:10 216:9,20</p> <p><b>advocate</b> 11:22 18:2<br/>205:24 236:6</p> <p><b>advocates</b> 175:7 205:23<br/>217:15</p> <p><b>advocating</b> 194:20</p> <p><b>affairs</b> 107:18 108:13<br/>115:11 181:24</p> <p><b>affect</b> 208:5</p> <p><b>affected</b> 102:9 103:8</p> <p><b>affecting</b> 8:16 227:19</p> <p><b>affects</b> 83:13 180:11</p> <p><b>afford</b> 22:13 109:8 112:7<br/>163:2 243:7 247:2</p> <p><b>affordability</b> 4:23 5:16<br/>19:9 22:2 55:12,13 68:6,<br/>21 69:10,23 70:8 85:20<br/>91:3 106:12 108:15<br/>110:14 111:8 114:6<br/>115:16 116:2 120:11<br/>121:5,9 122:9,17 129:13<br/>137:3,14 140:15 141:2<br/>147:14 164:15 180:15,16<br/>181:22 185:13 190:11<br/>194:8 196:14 199:13<br/>201:12 202:12 203:20<br/>237:23 249:20 250:1</p> <p><b>affordable</b> 13:19 76:22<br/>82:20 84:19 92:17 97:13<br/>108:23 114:16 138:17<br/>142:17 204:4,7</p> <p><b>African</b> 217:21</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>afternoon</b> 2:3,5 8:4 21:2,7<br>45:13 59:13,18 67:17<br>68:7 81:18 108:8 175:2<br>185:4 192:10,13 222:22<br>245:10<br><b>afternoons</b> 256:9<br><b>age</b> 176:7<br><b>agency</b> 85:18 86:14 87:3,<br>15 88:1 98:19 99:12<br><b>aggressively</b> 34:18<br><b>aging</b> 83:6 228:7,18<br><b>agree</b> 47:16 52:7 125:15<br>127:23 140:3 149:2<br>195:12 196:6 215:16<br><b>agreed</b> 243:18<br><b>agreement</b> 155:4 174:17<br><b>Agreements</b> 125:19<br><b>ahead</b> 58:6 137:20 146:8<br>151:2 203:11<br><b>AI</b> 50:6 70:16 103:4<br>189:21<br><b>aims</b> 15:2 248:18<br><b>air</b> 35:4 61:19,24 66:3<br>88:9,11,21,24 97:13<br>101:2 131:11<br><b>airplane</b> 128:7<br><b>airport</b> 191:12<br><b>Ali</b> 173:4 185:6 215:11<br>218:12 221:22<br><b>aligned</b> 151:20 223:24<br><b>ALJ</b> 207:6<br><b>Allegheny</b> 30:10<br><b>alleviation</b> 84:1 85:16<br>89:7 201:14<br><b>Alliance</b> 234:20<br><b>allocated</b> 118:6 165:12<br><b>allocating</b> 216:2 | <b>allocation</b> 112:21<br><b>allowed</b> 177:7,10<br><b>allowing</b> 19:18 30:23<br>46:24<br><b>alluded</b> 185:17<br><b>already-</b> 200:15<br><b>alternatives</b> 238:4 249:3<br><b>amazing</b> 37:13 96:19<br><b>America</b> 41:4<br><b>American</b> 40:6 217:21<br><b>Americans</b> 70:4<br><b>amount</b> 38:5,6 123:12<br>126:11 149:12 167:1<br>182:24<br><b>amounts</b> 208:4<br><b>analyses</b> 177:3<br><b>annual</b> 110:3,6,8 111:19<br>228:13<br><b>annually</b> 208:8<br><b>answering</b> 93:18<br><b>answers</b> 97:4 165:9<br><b>anticipate</b> 187:1<br><b>anticipated</b> 70:17 71:19<br><b>anymore</b> 37:24<br><b>apartments</b> 15:5<br><b>apologize</b> 134:11<br><b>appeal</b> 207:13<br><b>appears</b> 120:2<br><b>appetite</b> 160:23 164:23<br>166:12<br><b>applause</b> 28:19 57:22<br><b>appliances</b> 231:3<br><b>application</b> 158:19 210:19<br><b>applications</b> 155:6 210:17<br><b>applied</b> 88:12 | <b>applies</b> 126:9<br><b>apply</b> 15:17 33:15 170:3<br><b>applying</b> 157:23 176:12<br><b>appreciated</b> 129:3 171:24<br>194:6 224:6 236:3<br><b>approach</b> 7:20 44:23<br>52:6,13 106:5 134:7<br>142:14 161:3 170:23<br>176:19 214:2 224:9<br><b>approaches</b> 8:17<br><b>approaching</b> 127:21<br><b>approvals</b> 257:22<br><b>approved</b> 117:1 131:6<br><b>approximately</b> 71:1 84:13<br>111:11<br><b>April</b> 73:2<br><b>arbitrary</b> 78:7<br><b>area</b> 47:6 49:14 50:17<br>60:4 83:2 97:24 106:8<br>148:15<br><b>areas</b> 87:1<br><b>argue</b> 151:6<br><b>arrangement</b> 60:14,16<br>62:22,23 63:2 65:17<br>66:21<br><b>arrays</b> 14:17 46:9<br><b>arrearage</b> 122:15 154:18<br>163:5 168:19,20 170:10<br><b>Arthur</b> 7:4,5<br><b>artificial</b> 23:20<br><b>Arvind</b> 30:9<br><b>Ashley</b> 58:14 59:5,7,14,24<br><b>asks</b> 113:1<br><b>aspect</b> 140:9 204:8<br><b>Asray</b> 225:5<br><b>asset</b> 36:16 113:18 182:2<br>220:19 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>assets</b> 76:3                                                                                                                       | <b>Authorizing</b> 4:7                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>bad</b> 7:5 25:16 95:10 126:3                                                                   |
| <b>assigned</b> 206:22                                                                                                                   | <b>automatic</b> 167:9 169:9<br>235:21                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>balance</b> 121:7 122:6                                                                         |
| <b>assist</b> 93:18 170:7                                                                                                                | <b>automatically</b> 155:12<br>156:9 157:23 158:4,12,<br>22,24 162:8,24 163:1<br>211:14                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Baltimore</b> 139:7                                                                             |
| <b>assistance</b> 9:13 11:6 16:2<br>27:22 84:7 85:12 87:5,13<br>90:2,11,14,16,17 92:6<br>112:6,18 122:13 153:8<br>154:16,20 157:5 166:22 | <b>average</b> 38:2 50:10 69:13<br>75:16,17 107:3 110:3,6,8<br>111:19 116:7 119:8<br>135:16 143:3,12,16<br>144:13,14,16 146:17<br>162:1 214:19                                                                                                   | <b>bank</b> 80:8 126:1 127:4                                                                       |
| <b>assisting</b> 120:20                                                                                                                  | <b>avoid</b> 29:4 71:17 92:8<br>126:17 202:9                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Barclay</b> 7:4,5                                                                               |
| <b>assume</b> 229:23                                                                                                                     | <b>avoided</b> 110:24 190:17                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>bargain</b> 144:4                                                                               |
| <b>assure</b> 148:15 224:3<br>259:12                                                                                                     | <b>awarded</b> 12:6                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>barrels</b> 231:24 232:5                                                                        |
| <b>asthma</b> 217:18,23                                                                                                                  | <b>awards</b> 12:14                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>barriers</b> 16:7,17 30:22<br>31:2 235:17                                                       |
| <b>astronomical</b> 182:24                                                                                                               | <b>aware</b> 80:24 82:22 170:4<br>228:15                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>base</b> 44:1 237:20 248:8                                                                      |
| <b>at-large</b> 229:22                                                                                                                   | <hr/> <b>B</b> <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>based</b> 11:7 50:12 79:15<br>122:16 129:20 164:20<br>192:19                                    |
| <b>Atlantic</b> 12:20                                                                                                                    | <b>babies</b> 250:15                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>baseline</b> 167:15                                                                             |
| <b>attack</b> 49:11 50:15 51:22                                                                                                          | <b>baby</b> 249:17                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>basements</b> 241:24                                                                            |
| <b>attention</b> 70:9 179:23                                                                                                             | <b>back</b> 26:1 39:14,17 45:2<br>60:16 63:2,4,12 64:2<br>66:12,15,18 103:23<br>109:18 121:13 125:23<br>153:2,3 164:4 165:22<br>168:15,22 170:2,19 174:9<br>177:15,16 187:22 193:15<br>198:3,6,11,20,24 199:10<br>212:24 219:24 236:14<br>258:11 | <b>basic</b> 9:17 19:11 90:23<br>91:5 175:21 227:13<br>237:11 252:12                               |
| <b>attentiveness</b> 226:3                                                                                                               | <b>backlog</b> 135:16 216:13<br>257:18                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>basically</b> 30:1 74:6 121:7<br>127:6 150:10 205:11<br>219:23                                  |
| <b>attest</b> 162:3                                                                                                                      | <b>backlogs</b> 135:8                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>basics</b> 176:4                                                                                |
| <b>attics</b> 176:12                                                                                                                     | <b>backstop</b> 152:2                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>basis</b> 119:2 228:13<br>242:10                                                                |
| <b>attorney</b> 202:23 203:13                                                                                                            | <b>backup</b> 241:23                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>batteries</b> 29:19 255:2,17<br>256:18 257:2,4                                                  |
| <b>attributable</b> 70:13 231:21                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>battery</b> 11:24 96:18                                                                         |
| <b>attributed</b> 230:24                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>battle</b> 16:22 251:10                                                                         |
| <b>ATTS</b> 28:13                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>bear</b> 24:16                                                                                  |
| <b>auction</b> 151:13                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>bearing</b> 24:19 79:20                                                                         |
| <b>audible</b> 132:2                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>begin</b> 7:24 21:5,19 48:22<br>49:9 78:24 81:12 129:1<br>174:21,24 202:19 225:3<br>230:5 233:7 |
| <b>audience</b> 34:24                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>beginning</b> 48:24                                                                             |
| <b>Audubon</b> 129:21 257:10                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>behalf</b> 105:2 146:23 204:2<br>206:7 212:23 245:18<br>249:15                                  |
| <b>August</b> 79:5                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                    |
| <b>authority</b> 27:16 34:7<br>35:12 36:15 80:9 86:10<br>175:5 246:21                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                    |
| <b>Authority's</b> 84:22 92:10                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                    |
| <b>authorize</b> 238:9                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                    |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bellwether</b> 238:23<br><b>benchmarking</b> 199:21<br><b>benchmarks</b> 117:9 244:4<br><b>bend</b> 161:19<br><b>benefit</b> 46:8 47:1,2 90:12<br>111:19 131:15 139:13<br>166:17 176:1 177:3<br>184:10<br><b>benefits</b> 13:19 14:8 88:19,<br>22 92:20 117:19<br><b>Benephilly</b> 90:8 160:19<br><b>Bennett</b> 107:20 129:4,18<br>141:19 148:24 150:13<br><b>Berkeley</b> 70:19<br><b>bet</b> 128:14<br><b>Beth</b> 93:15<br><b>BG&amp;E</b> 139:7<br><b>big</b> 26:8 32:7 49:3,8 50:1<br>78:19 96:10 164:11 179:6<br>180:6 182:15 197:1<br>199:12 218:8 222:3,16<br>223:1 226:6 247:19,21<br>253:17 254:22<br><b>bigger</b> 19:4 199:18<br>256:16,22<br><b>biggest</b> 106:19<br><b>bill</b> 15:16 27:10,11 28:3,<br>11,14,15 29:8 30:10,21<br>32:2,14,15 33:4 38:5 47:1<br>60:16,17 61:10 62:10,20,<br>24 63:2,5,9,11,12,13,20<br>64:5,21 65:1 66:5,9,12,<br>13,16,18,20,21 75:12,18<br>78:20 85:11 87:13 102:4<br>110:4,6,8 111:23 116:5,8<br>120:8 123:11,13 124:23<br>143:7,13,14,15 144:15,21<br>163:10,19 167:20,21<br>170:5 197:7,10,14,20<br>214:20 247:16 | <b>billing</b> 34:11 36:4<br><b>billion</b> 70:2,3 76:4,5 79:6<br>111:4 113:21 196:20<br>227:2 228:19 237:14<br>248:3,6<br><b>billions</b> 75:24 78:13<br><b>bills</b> 4:12,15 5:1 7:13<br>14:1,14 18:19 19:4 21:22<br>22:13 23:12 24:20 25:22<br>26:16,23 29:22 31:14<br>32:12 35:5,24 38:16 52:4<br>56:13 60:7 66:16 69:14,<br>18 75:1,4 80:1,14,18 82:4<br>91:23 97:12 111:18 112:7<br>114:21 119:9 122:14<br>123:22 124:1 145:8<br>148:16 154:18 166:19<br>167:4,24 168:1 194:2<br>197:16 212:15 230:22<br>235:9 236:21 255:9,11,14<br><b>BIPOC</b> 83:15<br><b>bit</b> 22:19 30:2,6 38:8 45:4<br>75:9 125:7 130:23 132:2,<br>5 139:7,23 161:20<br>162:10,15 178:4 179:17<br>187:16,22 197:10 203:24<br>219:1 233:15 252:24<br><b>blackouts</b> 133:16<br><b>blankets</b> 65:14 250:5<br><b>blasting</b> 250:17<br><b>blessing</b> 164:24<br><b>block</b> 96:2 98:24 192:19<br>241:15,17 242:2,20<br><b>blocks</b> 188:3<br><b>board</b> 12:5 15:12 45:24<br>46:21 135:24 257:11,13<br>258:13<br><b>board's</b> 15:7<br><b>body</b> 100:21 112:23 183:3<br><b>bolstering</b> 246:19 | <b>Bond</b> 225:6 230:7,8 232:9<br>233:1<br><b>Bonner</b> 107:19 115:5,9<br>125:5,8,13 126:4,8<br>127:11,22 128:22 143:18<br>144:10,22 150:24 151:3,<br>7,10 153:1 154:14 155:15<br>157:6 159:13 160:11<br>163:4 168:14 169:23<br>171:4 172:1 173:1<br><b>BONNNNER</b> 151:22<br><b>boom</b> 188:17 189:3<br><b>borne</b> 14:1<br><b>borrowing</b> 26:8<br><b>Boston</b> 68:16 200:12<br><b>bottom</b> 103:2 258:14<br><b>bound</b> 177:6,8<br><b>Boyd</b> 32:17<br><b>Boyer</b> 238:24<br><b>BPU</b> 18:23 47:12 74:4<br><b>breadth</b> 243:21<br><b>break</b> 130:22 133:15,22<br><b>breaking</b> 16:17 72:6<br>244:14<br><b>breaks</b> 241:23<br><b>bridge</b> 15:22 19:24 20:3<br><b>briefing</b> 207:3<br><b>briefly</b> 23:10 123:17<br>124:24 221:16<br><b>bring</b> 19:18 77:6 126:13<br>136:18,20,23 137:5 183:7<br>184:18 195:14 198:2,18,<br>24 199:10 200:20 211:2<br><b>bringing</b> 24:1 87:5 202:5<br><b>broad</b> 88:22<br><b>broader</b> 92:19 220:19<br><b>broken</b> 36:1 235:10 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Brooks</b> 3:13,14<br><b>brought</b> 52:18 95:23<br>208:15 209:15,20,21<br>210:14<br><b>brutally</b> 250:13<br><b>budget</b> 5:21 85:13 123:11<br>165:14 180:23 194:21<br>222:14 227:11 236:6<br>238:12<br><b>budgets</b> 10:2<br><b>build</b> 17:19 26:9 40:5<br>47:10 78:5 92:10 114:12<br>134:17 135:3 151:16<br>173:4 176:3 183:24 185:7<br>253:19 254:20 256:13,15<br><b>builder</b> 198:9<br><b>building</b> 17:19 18:8 35:12<br>41:5 45:18 83:9 89:14<br>120:18 126:17 134:4<br>151:20 176:5 181:16<br>192:16 194:16 197:6<br>199:20,21 200:9,14<br>201:5,23 202:2 238:22<br>253:17 254:3 256:22<br><b>buildings</b> 13:4 33:18 88:5<br>176:7 178:17,21 179:1,3,<br>6,7,9 199:15,18,23 200:1,<br>5,23 201:4 202:2<br><b>built</b> 30:24 40:11,15 54:17<br>97:1 103:6,18,20 132:18<br>141:1 152:3 178:10<br>188:24 190:1,5 193:1<br>196:15,23 197:17 231:1<br>236:18 241:21 246:21<br>255:22,23<br><b>bullish</b> 219:8<br><b>bunch</b> 156:16<br><b>burden</b> 10:11 19:16<br>83:11,18 93:7 113:6<br>155:23 169:18 193:19<br>194:5 201:8 | <b>burdens</b> 9:22 24:15 34:22<br>46:5<br><b>Burgos</b> 27:7 32:2<br><b>business</b> 27:19 73:9,23<br>74:6 144:18 206:1 259:14<br><b>businesses</b> 25:23 108:18<br>116:20 117:16 144:9<br>201:3 215:24<br><b>buy</b> 22:15 78:14 119:21<br>186:4,5<br><hr/> <b>C</b><br><hr/> <b>calculations</b> 177:2<br><b>calculator</b> 120:19<br><b>calendar</b> 90:7<br><b>California</b> 78:17<br><b>call</b> 2:17 6:11 20:5 55:12<br>57:24 58:6 62:19 64:7<br>78:20 107:15 125:18<br>146:21,22 172:16 226:9,<br>21 240:11 246:14 259:3,<br>17<br><b>called</b> 3:21 28:12,14<br>124:9 170:5 188:15,16<br>225:1 255:22<br><b>calling</b> 142:20 146:13<br><b>calls</b> 15:7 146:12<br><b>Camden</b> 6:14 7:2 8:4,16,<br>22 9:1 10:1,10 11:13,21<br>12:19 13:20 14:21 16:1<br>17:5 19:12 31:5 45:16<br>46:7,23 47:20 48:8 194:7<br><b>Canada</b> 40:15<br><b>canceled</b> 38:9,15 79:4<br><b>canopies</b> 17:16<br><b>canopy</b> 18:8<br><b>cap</b> 62:12,13 122:12,16<br>123:3 154:22 155:13<br>156:20 163:17,18 168:17,<br>24 170:4,8,9 209:17<br>222:7 235:1 246:17<br><b>capacity</b> 26:8 28:24 42:14<br>46:10 70:17 79:15 85:2<br>90:3 103:16 104:6 119:5,<br>11 122:3 136:20,24 137:5<br>149:19 151:11,20 216:23<br>220:17 242:2,8<br><b>Capex</b> 72:7<br><b>capital</b> 72:6,17 116:21<br>121:14 205:17 238:12<br><b>capitalize</b> 221:2<br><b>capped</b> 62:15<br><b>capture</b> 134:2<br><b>carbon</b> 82:16 237:24<br><b>care</b> 252:18<br><b>caring</b> 37:7<br><b>Carolina</b> 78:16<br><b>carry</b> 165:22<br><b>Carstarphen</b> 6:15,19 7:8,<br>22,23 8:2,3 20:7,14 41:19<br>45:18,20<br><b>case</b> 95:11 97:17,18 118:8<br>120:15,18,23 121:1<br>126:23 143:20 178:2<br>180:1 205:11 208:6 209:7<br>236:12<br><b>cases</b> 13:16 17:16 38:23<br>39:3,22 80:21 97:10<br>120:2 177:11 207:15<br>208:3,20 209:10 247:10<br><b>catbird</b> 220:22<br><b>catch</b> 167:4<br><b>category</b> 179:14<br><b>Caucus</b> 234:18<br><b>caused</b> 35:24 83:5 143:15<br><b>causing</b> 185:13<br><b>celebrate</b> 33:11 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**center** 26:24 27:12,18  
58:12 67:19,24 70:21  
85:22 86:16,19 87:4,11  
99:2 102:10 103:14  
125:14 126:9 127:7 130:9  
134:21 136:6,21 137:7,  
20,21 182:21 183:3,21  
189:24 192:21 201:20  
238:20 239:11,13

**centers** 23:24 27:17,20  
28:2 50:5 70:14,22 71:5  
85:5,7 86:23 98:10 100:1,  
3 102:2,12,19 103:5  
104:17 125:17 132:8,9,  
11,18,20 133:19 134:4  
135:18 136:18 149:6  
157:22 180:17 182:1,14,  
19 183:7,16 187:16,23  
188:4,8,18,22,23 201:20  
236:1 238:23 239:3 240:6  
244:13 247:8

**central** 61:20 66:2

**century** 54:8 239:6

**CEO** 90:8 93:17 175:4

**certification** 178:20

**certifications** 202:4

**certified** 17:20

**chain** 135:8

**Chair** 2:2,19,20,21 3:1,4,  
18 4:16 5:11 6:7,18 20:6,  
23 21:3 23:15 31:24 32:1  
37:11 41:12 44:5,8 45:6,9  
48:18,20 52:17 56:21  
58:2,9,15,21 67:4,12  
68:14 73:8 75:7 81:9  
93:20,21,22 94:5,9,21  
97:2,3,4 99:19 101:18  
102:1 103:23 104:14  
105:20 107:13,21 108:8  
119:17 120:9 123:23  
125:2,6,9 126:2,6 127:10,  
13 128:14,23 129:5,14  
134:10 138:22 140:4

141:6,7,15,20 142:21  
144:7,12 145:4,16 150:9,  
18 151:1,5,9,21 152:4,11,  
16 153:6 154:13,24  
156:8,14 157:15 158:6,8,  
17 159:10,23 160:8,12,  
18,20 162:19 164:6,9,10  
165:1,5,7,23 166:1,2,5  
167:6 170:13 171:5  
172:5,8 173:2,7,21,23  
184:22 202:16 203:4,10  
210:4 211:10 212:21  
213:7,14 215:14 218:15  
221:3,7,9,18 224:2  
225:10,18 229:4,17  
232:21 233:3,17,23  
234:3,13 240:2,11,21,24  
241:3,7 244:17 249:7  
252:2 257:24 258:4,6,9  
259:19

**chairing** 21:14

**Chairman** 5:6,12 6:6 27:7  
93:21 101:9 115:6 128:20  
141:13 142:12,18,22  
146:14 164:11 173:16  
185:4

**Chairperson** 81:19

**chairs** 21:7 45:13 173:8  
259:17

**challenge** 91:20 92:23  
129:15,17 135:6 137:22  
195:13 208:11

**challenged** 138:14

**challenges** 41:7 54:22  
79:23 128:1 129:13 130:5  
141:2 195:5

**challenging** 9:10 32:8  
40:2 100:22 134:8

**Chambers** 33:11

**champion** 33:10

**chance** 22:23

**change** 32:23 56:2 112:22

133:7 178:5 186:14  
231:21 243:3 244:13  
245:4 247:19

**changed** 54:9 139:17  
144:20 145:1 151:24

**changing** 140:11

**Chanin** 234:14,16 238:19  
240:8,16

**charge** 147:23 166:23  
257:4

**charges** 116:8,13 119:12

**charging** 120:22 214:19

**chart** 248:17

**charting** 248:13

**cheap** 43:4

**cheaper** 78:19

**cheapest** 77:14

**check** 211:8

**checkbox** 210:18

**Chick-fil-** 146:6

**children** 65:4 87:17,18  
117:17

**choice** 195:22 212:16

**choices** 22:8 24:23,24  
25:1 212:18 243:1,3

**choose** 9:15 65:1

**chunks** 223:1

**circumstances** 9:7

**circumvents** 91:19

**cities** 55:18 106:18 184:4  
192:7 200:11 216:10

**citizen** 143:3

**city** 2:6 4:14,20 5:17 7:15  
8:3,7 9:1 10:1,10,13 11:4,  
9,10,20 12:20,21 13:11  
14:1,3,7,21 17:17 19:20  
21:8 22:16 23:4 25:4

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>26:12 34:2,6,8 35:21<br/>36:2,16 45:15,16,22 46:8,<br/>13,23 47:3,20 49:5 50:14<br/>68:4 80:6,19 81:2 82:13<br/>85:17 87:22 89:11,20<br/>93:5 111:6 120:14,21<br/>145:24 153:13,14 155:8<br/>156:17,19 157:13 160:3,<br/>16 163:12 164:15 172:14<br/>175:12,18,20 176:23<br/>177:4,17 178:12 179:6,7,<br/>8 180:7,20 182:13,22,23<br/>184:8 196:10 204:22<br/>206:11 208:10,13,18,23<br/>215:21 216:8 217:24<br/>218:22 224:8 228:10<br/>230:12 242:18 249:5<br/>252:10 253:22</p> <p><b>city's</b> 80:4 82:9 84:9,14<br/>85:4,21 86:14,20 88:2<br/>90:3 97:8 134:15 237:24</p> <p><b>city-owned</b> 178:17</p> <p><b>citywide</b> 10:6 93:12<br/>198:20</p> <p><b>CJ</b> 195:1</p> <p><b>claimed</b> 79:16</p> <p><b>claims</b> 77:19</p> <p><b>clean</b> 13:19 14:19 25:21<br/>30:19 40:23 48:4 82:20<br/>86:2 89:8,16 97:13<br/>115:14 223:3</p> <p><b>clear</b> 8:19 35:11 64:5<br/>110:5 121:12 132:16<br/>159:16 181:3 219:19</p> <p><b>clerk</b> 2:19,21,24 3:4,8,12,<br/>16 4:6 6:13 57:23 58:4,8,<br/>17 67:8 107:14,16 173:2,<br/>3 224:12,22 225:5<br/>240:13,18,23</p> <p><b>client</b> 58:14 212:22</p> <p><b>clients</b> 204:16 208:5<br/>211:22 212:8</p> | <p><b>climate</b> 12:12 50:22 97:14<br/>147:22 194:17 231:21<br/>234:18 241:13 244:13<br/>245:17 248:11 249:13</p> <p><b>climate-friendly</b> 193:1</p> <p><b>close</b> 10:14 48:21 54:1<br/>60:5 87:4</p> <p><b>closed</b> 153:7 154:12</p> <p><b>closely</b> 27:1,6 98:18,21</p> <p><b>closes</b> 243:15</p> <p><b>closing</b> 114:14</p> <p><b>CLS</b> 58:14 62:8 123:18<br/>180:13 211:3 215:20</p> <p><b>clue</b> 230:1</p> <p><b>co-host</b> 243:19</p> <p><b>coalition</b> 49:20 194:18<br/>241:14 245:17 249:14</p> <p><b>coast</b> 78:15</p> <p><b>coatings</b> 176:13</p> <p><b>Cobbs</b> 241:14</p> <p><b>code</b> 17:17 176:5 197:7,<br/>11,13</p> <p><b>codes</b> 35:12 196:16 199:4<br/>247:17</p> <p><b>cognizant</b> 217:3</p> <p><b>cold</b> 44:2,7 94:14,23<br/>111:2 112:19 141:24<br/>145:7 185:22 250:13<br/>256:7</p> <p><b>Coles</b> 58:14 59:13,14,24</p> <p><b>collaboration</b> 160:14</p> <p><b>collaborations</b> 10:14</p> <p><b>collaborative</b> 148:12<br/>224:9</p> <p><b>colleague</b> 27:13 31:24<br/>32:16 49:1</p> <p><b>colleagues</b> 16:22 131:19<br/>152:7</p> | <p><b>collect</b> 109:18 224:18</p> <p><b>collections</b> 170:1</p> <p><b>collective</b> 55:5</p> <p><b>collectively</b> 20:2 196:1</p> <p><b>College</b> 89:12</p> <p><b>Columbia</b> 130:17 139:12</p> <p><b>combination</b> 103:21</p> <p><b>comfortably</b> 112:7</p> <p><b>comment</b> 64:14 172:18,20<br/>173:11,14 221:11 224:13,<br/>14,24 225:1 233:22</p> <p><b>commenting</b> 226:14</p> <p><b>comments</b> 38:4 45:19<br/>51:4 81:7 148:5 258:20</p> <p><b>commercial</b> 200:1</p> <p><b>Commission</b> 27:15<br/>122:19 131:4 179:22<br/>180:5 194:20 195:2<br/>203:22 204:1,24 205:9<br/>206:15 207:8,12 208:17<br/>226:19 237:7 238:8</p> <p><b>Commission's</b> 207:11</p> <p><b>commit</b> 125:20</p> <p><b>commitment</b> 80:15 116:2<br/>243:16</p> <p><b>commitments</b> 120:17</p> <p><b>commits</b> 140:7</p> <p><b>committed</b> 11:1 17:5 49:2<br/>93:5</p> <p><b>committee</b> 2:7,8 3:19,22,<br/>24 4:7,9 5:9 20:10 21:15<br/>26:22 27:3,4,5 32:1 40:23<br/>59:20 81:16 108:6,10<br/>115:7 148:21 155:2 165:8<br/>185:5 258:23 259:15,21</p> <p><b>committees</b> 27:9 68:7,10<br/>81:21 258:21</p> <p><b>Committing</b> 18:6</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>commodity</b> 76:21 95:13 118:11</p> <p><b>common</b> 23:13</p> <p><b>Commonwealth</b> 7:16 33:15 93:3 109:14 111:16 132:19 207:14 219:8 220:8</p> <p><b>Commonwealth's</b> 220:14</p> <p><b>commonwealths</b> 53:14</p> <p><b>communicate</b> 173:13</p> <p><b>communicated</b> 42:1 51:21 174:10,13 211:15 230:2</p> <p><b>communicating</b> 229:9 230:3</p> <p><b>communication</b> 42:16 161:19</p> <p><b>communications</b> 132:17</p> <p><b>communities</b> 9:1,24 12:13 16:6 19:8 79:9 83:20 86:24 88:23 89:2 92:21 120:5</p> <p><b>community</b> 9:2,24 13:6, 12,17 14:4 15:8,13,24 16:12,16 18:20 45:21 46:6,20 84:24 85:2,10,17, 24 86:7,11 87:23 88:13 90:9 113:18 124:19 142:5 180:13 202:24 203:2,14 226:17 227:1,6,20,21 229:19 254:14</p> <p><b>community's</b> 227:12</p> <p><b>community-based</b> 85:8</p> <p><b>companies</b> 24:18 68:23 131:21 257:14</p> <p><b>company</b> 118:8 213:2</p> <p><b>comparative</b> 187:5</p> <p><b>Compare</b> 128:5</p> <p><b>compared</b> 71:12 161:21 189:12</p> | <p><b>competed</b> 120:16</p> <p><b>competitive</b> 118:13,21 119:1</p> <p><b>complaint</b> 206:6</p> <p><b>complaints</b> 206:1,3</p> <p><b>complete</b> 91:7 178:10</p> <p><b>completed</b> 120:16 181:17</p> <p><b>completely</b> 39:1,24 66:18 96:12 179:10</p> <p><b>complex</b> 80:23 92:23 184:2</p> <p><b>complicated</b> 163:7 207:16</p> <p><b>component</b> 114:5</p> <p><b>components</b> 116:4</p> <p><b>compute</b> 189:10,19</p> <p><b>computing</b> 189:6</p> <p><b>concentrated</b> 12:18</p> <p><b>concept</b> 5:3 29:3,12 187:9 198:15</p> <p><b>concern</b> 64:10</p> <p><b>concerned</b> 4:22</p> <p><b>concerns</b> 106:20 121:5 229:13</p> <p><b>concluded</b> 259:21</p> <p><b>concludes</b> 259:14</p> <p><b>concrete</b> 117:18</p> <p><b>conditioning</b> 88:11</p> <p><b>conditions</b> 53:6 119:15 190:6 242:21</p> <p><b>conducted</b> 118:23</p> <p><b>conferencing</b> 23:21</p> <p><b>confess</b> 163:23</p> <p><b>confirm</b> 168:15</p> <p><b>confusing</b> 60:15</p> <p><b>confusion</b> 39:5</p> | <p><b>congratulate</b> 146:14,16</p> <p><b>congratulated</b> 146:15</p> <p><b>congressman</b> 10:20</p> <p><b>connected</b> 43:8 87:12</p> <p><b>Connecting</b> 87:7</p> <p><b>connection</b> 85:14</p> <p><b>cons</b> 222:16,17</p> <p><b>consensus</b> 74:9</p> <p><b>consent</b> 156:12 157:10</p> <p><b>consequential</b> 111:6</p> <p><b>Conservation</b> 98:24 197:13</p> <p><b>conservative</b> 133:13 134:7</p> <p><b>considered</b> 146:19 220:4 259:5</p> <p><b>consistently</b> 240:10</p> <p><b>constant</b> 30:19</p> <p><b>constantly</b> 63:8 65:23</p> <p><b>constituents</b> 4:19 33:7 47:15 49:4 52:1 166:15 171:23 172:14 252:10</p> <p><b>constraints</b> 148:23</p> <p><b>construct</b> 14:17</p> <p><b>constructed</b> 151:12</p> <p><b>construction</b> 29:5 31:2 35:15 47:4 79:1 176:3 178:19 197:5</p> <p><b>consume</b> 10:3 71:1</p> <p><b>consumed</b> 70:22</p> <p><b>consumer</b> 27:2 32:1 34:9 125:14 143:2 205:24</p> <p><b>consumers</b> 24:16 32:24 33:6 53:20 71:14,24 79:19 119:3 186:7 189:19</p> <p><b>consuming</b> 146:4</p> |
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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>contact</b> 65:16</p> <p><b>contacting</b> 66:22</p> <p><b>context</b> 187:23 218:17 220:23</p> <p><b>continually</b> 20:1</p> <p><b>continue</b> 19:23 33:12 57:10 76:11 92:12 113:22 121:16 170:21 171:8 176:8 217:13 232:13 258:10</p> <p><b>continued</b> 76:7 80:15 84:5 86:3 113:8 115:2</p> <p><b>continues</b> 19:13 256:12</p> <p><b>continuing</b> 25:3 93:6 171:17 238:7</p> <p><b>continuous</b> 197:24 198:19 199:5 227:14 247:19</p> <p><b>contract</b> 127:7</p> <p><b>contribute</b> 27:21 127:8</p> <p><b>contributes</b> 179:12</p> <p><b>contributing</b> 24:14</p> <p><b>control</b> 56:16 60:20 61:5, 6 62:4 80:5 164:16</p> <p><b>controller</b> 131:12</p> <p><b>convened</b> 74:4</p> <p><b>convening</b> 82:5 193:5</p> <p><b>conventional</b> 88:4</p> <p><b>conversating</b> 64:13</p> <p><b>conversation</b> 6:12 7:11 18:21,24 19:5 48:24 53:9, 11,18 54:24 55:8 57:2 100:17 101:10 106:2,7 107:10 130:3 141:13 148:1 150:11 164:8,12,21 170:21 193:5 214:12 219:18 220:6,20 224:4 229:8 237:5 239:12 250:20 252:8 258:10</p> | <p>259:13</p> <p><b>conversations</b> 56:9 97:23 109:2 157:12,17 185:20 224:1</p> <p><b>conversion</b> 13:3</p> <p><b>cool</b> 84:17 85:24 86:17 87:23 88:3 89:3 176:12 200:18 231:9</p> <p><b>cooler</b> 88:5,20</p> <p><b>cooling</b> 12:9 13:6,8 84:19 88:11</p> <p><b>cooperate</b> 139:5,14</p> <p><b>cooperation</b> 139:3,14 142:14 153:13</p> <p><b>coordinate</b> 156:19</p> <p><b>coordinating</b> 86:13 87:3, 15 88:1 97:19 98:19 99:12 160:21 161:24</p> <p><b>coordination</b> 209:6</p> <p><b>core</b> 123:19</p> <p><b>Corporation</b> 86:9 89:24</p> <p><b>corporations</b> 251:24</p> <p><b>correctly</b> 253:10</p> <p><b>correlation</b> 38:15</p> <p><b>corridors</b> 13:3</p> <p><b>cost</b> 4:12 7:13 8:18 9:20 12:3 19:14 24:15 33:3 49:22 50:4 72:10 76:20 80:3 100:12 106:21,23 113:5 116:17 118:1,9 119:1 134:24 154:10 169:17 178:7,11 183:16 185:21 198:15 211:3,4 214:14 228:22 243:7 245:24 246:1 250:15,22</p> <p><b>cost-</b> 177:2</p> <p><b>cost-effective</b> 76:14 108:24</p> | <p><b>cost-of-service</b> 74:16</p> <p><b>costly</b> 29:5</p> <p><b>costs</b> 5:1 10:2 11:2 13:9, 15 15:23 18:13 19:24 20:19 24:5,12 25:13 26:5 27:18 36:24 50:11 53:19 55:7 79:22 82:4,23 83:7, 12 84:16 85:3 86:5 87:9 88:20 89:17,23 92:4,13, 23 93:1 94:16 110:4 111:1 113:15 116:20 118:5 119:4,5,11,12 162:22 166:9,14 167:18, 19 168:2,4,7 169:11,14 177:23 178:14 179:13 193:23 195:20,24 201:6 205:18 228:4 232:15 237:21 244:22 245:21</p> <p><b>council</b> 2:6 7:3 8:7 13:12 21:8 22:17 33:11 45:14 50:15 81:8 106:14 129:6, 24 145:24 175:12 178:15, 22 184:8,20 196:11,19 198:1 199:10,18 201:11 224:8 225:22 236:13 238:11 245:20 246:14 249:5</p> <p><b>Council's</b> 182:13</p> <p><b>Councilman</b> 7:5 8:5 20:4 42:21 59:18,19</p> <p><b>Councilmember</b> 2:22 3:2, 5,6,8,10,12,13,14,17 35:9 36:8,12 97:5,6 98:3,8 99:7,15 106:13,16 152:13 160:14 162:16 163:22 164:10 165:3 166:3,4,7 167:7 168:23 171:2 172:3,6 193:3 197:8 209:19,21 210:14 211:16 225:24 239:20 243:14</p> <p><b>COUNCILMEMBERS</b> 20:22</p> <p><b>councilmen's</b> 47:15</p> |
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Councilwoman</b> 158:14<br>160:23 161:14 162:3<br><b>counseling</b> 85:13<br><b>count</b> 9:12 27:23 126:14<br><b>counterparts</b> 25:4 54:20<br>55:3,17<br><b>countries</b> 40:10,15<br><b>country</b> 23:5 70:5 73:20<br>82:24 200:13 217:18<br><b>county</b> 11:5,11 30:10<br>253:20<br><b>couple</b> 51:24 73:3 136:4<br>142:24 149:14 152:18<br>167:4 193:12,16 194:1<br>195:8 196:12 210:6<br>211:12<br><b>court</b> 184:1 207:14<br><b>courts</b> 78:9<br><b>craft</b> 184:19<br><b>crazy</b> 199:6<br><b>create</b> 12:3 30:11 31:12<br>49:20 72:13 80:10 177:18<br>183:3 184:10 211:24<br>223:2<br><b>created</b> 53:4 82:7 100:14<br>107:2<br><b>creating</b> 137:21 236:22<br><b>creation</b> 80:7 113:3<br><b>credit</b> 14:12 40:24 41:2<br>127:2,5<br><b>credited</b> 14:20 47:14<br><b>credits</b> 39:13 55:23 78:18,<br>22<br><b>Creek</b> 241:14<br><b>crew</b> 173:8<br><b>crime</b> 106:22<br><b>crippling</b> 77:13 | <b>crisis</b> 4:23 10:5 26:17<br>55:13,14,24 83:4 106:12<br>107:1 114:23 147:14,15<br>164:15 185:14 235:5<br><b>critical</b> 18:2 80:16 86:23<br>89:16 90:21 110:12 236:2<br>237:2<br><b>critically</b> 219:14<br><b>cross-examination</b> 207:2<br><b>CRP</b> 155:14 156:21<br>166:22 209:17 235:2<br>246:17<br><b>crumbs</b> 236:24<br><b>Cruz-</b> 10:23<br><b>cry</b> 50:1<br><b>Cunningham</b> 45:8,12,15<br><b>curb</b> 33:4<br><b>current</b> 58:11 60:17 63:5,<br>8,13 75:5 163:9,19<br><b>curtail</b> 137:19<br><b>curtailed</b> 78:21 137:8<br><b>customer</b> 90:17 108:12<br>110:2,7,9 111:17 112:9<br>113:15,23 115:16 116:7<br>118:10 119:20 121:4<br>122:12,19 123:10,11,19<br>125:15 126:13,21 137:18,<br>19 145:21 146:17 147:6<br>154:16 157:9 158:11<br>163:5,6,8,9,10 166:21,24<br>168:17 170:3,8 208:24<br>237:20<br><b>customer's</b> 15:18 116:4<br><b>customers</b> 27:20 28:5<br>75:16,19 76:16 80:14,17<br>102:8 103:7 109:20<br>110:24 111:4,10,11<br>113:6,19 114:20 116:24<br>117:2 118:7,17 119:8,16,<br>20 120:20 121:11 122:11,<br>16 125:16 145:7 153:9,20 | 155:13 156:6,10 157:3<br>163:17,18 166:21 169:5<br>231:12 235:3,15<br><b>customers'</b> 154:9<br><b>cut</b> 35:18 62:1 64:2<br>199:16 236:8<br><b>cycle</b> 149:16 212:20<br><b>cyclical</b> 215:6<br><hr/> <b>D</b><br><hr/> <b>D.C.</b> 37:23 50:21 51:6,8,<br>18,19 52:8 55:20 56:7<br>200:12<br><b>daily</b> 108:15<br><b>dampened</b> 78:10<br><b>data</b> 23:23 26:24 27:12,<br>16,18,20 28:2 50:5 70:13,<br>21,22 71:4 84:12 100:1,3<br>102:2,9,12,19 103:5,14<br>104:17 125:13,17 126:9<br>127:7 132:8,9,11,18,19<br>133:19 134:4,21 135:18<br>136:6,18,21 137:7,20<br>149:6 155:3 158:1 178:8,<br>11 180:17 181:24 182:5,<br>14,19,20 183:3,7,16,21<br>184:18 187:16,23 188:3,<br>8,18,21,23 189:24 192:20<br>201:19,20 210:15,20<br>238:20,22 239:3,10,13<br>240:5 244:13<br><b>date</b> 89:2<br><b>dates</b> 39:16<br><b>Dave</b> 67:11<br><b>Davidson</b> 29:9<br><b>day</b> 9:8 25:8 78:1 122:5<br>139:18 189:20 204:10<br>237:10 257:2 259:18<br><b>days</b> 13:9 63:17 77:22<br>117:17 140:7 |
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|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>deal</b> 147:19 182:15<br>211:21 212:12         | <b>delivering</b> 92:19 99:3<br>115:3                                                                                                                                                              | <b>designed</b> 13:7 103:17<br>121:2                                                       |
| <b>dealing</b> 8:17 20:18 53:21<br>147:5 228:8     | <b>delivers</b> 116:19 118:3                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>designing</b> 134:7 202:1                                                               |
| <b>debt</b> 111:18                                 | <b>delivery</b> 75:11 116:8                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>detail</b> 98:17                                                                        |
| <b>decade</b> 69:17 110:1                          | <b>demand</b> 12:10 23:17 24:6<br>29:20 42:10,12,15 71:8<br>77:2,3,8 79:18 88:11 89:9<br>110:18 114:19 119:14<br>153:24 189:10 195:13<br>196:4 199:16 215:11<br>237:18 256:6,11,12,14,<br>19,20,24 | <b>details</b> 163:24 227:4,19,<br>22,23                                                   |
| <b>decades</b> 71:6                                | <b>demand-side</b> 222:20                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>determine</b> 100:11                                                                    |
| <b>December</b> 61:3                               | <b>demanding</b> 189:20                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>determining</b> 32:4                                                                    |
| <b>decide</b> 147:18                               | <b>Democratic</b> 222:11                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>develop</b> 157:13                                                                      |
| <b>decided</b> 14:3 147:16<br>196:2                | <b>demonstrably</b> 139:18                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>developer</b> 39:6 198:9                                                                |
| <b>decision</b> 93:3 96:8 207:7,<br>9,11           | <b>demonstrated</b> 36:18                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>developers</b> 14:16 47:10<br>134:21 183:21                                             |
| <b>decisions</b> 25:10 32:13<br>51:5 121:23 257:12 | <b>demonstrates</b> 245:20                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>developing</b> 134:24                                                                   |
| <b>decisive</b> 13:23                              | <b>Denise</b> 107:19 108:11<br>209:15                                                                                                                                                              | <b>development</b> 30:13 41:10<br>77:13 78:11 83:24 86:7,8<br>89:24 115:13 132:12<br>134:3 |
| <b>decline</b> 76:11 241:18                        | <b>department</b> 34:5 58:10<br>68:15 155:9,19 156:24                                                                                                                                              | <b>developments</b> 17:14                                                                  |
| <b>declined</b> 62:9 238:9                         | <b>departments</b> 93:5 105:1,6                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>DHCD</b> 92:5                                                                           |
| <b>declining</b> 237:18                            | <b>depend</b> 112:14                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>DHS</b> 156:5 210:16                                                                    |
| <b>decrease</b> 18:17 110:3                        | <b>dependence</b> 12:2                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>diagnosed</b> 60:24                                                                     |
| <b>deep</b> 171:13                                 | <b>dependent</b> 47:18 95:11                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>dialogue</b> 42:18 52:11<br>57:11 172:12 258:12                                         |
| <b>deeper</b> 31:23 48:22                          | <b>depends</b> 11:17                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>diametrically</b> 133:24                                                                |
| <b>deeply</b> 79:20                                | <b>deploy</b> 114:9                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>dictate</b> 131:6                                                                       |
| <b>default</b> 118:14,20,22<br>120:1 249:3         | <b>deployed</b> 110:18                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>difference</b> 117:24 247:21                                                            |
| <b>deferred</b> 121:21                             | <b>depth</b> 105:12                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>differently</b> 223:13                                                                  |
| <b>defines</b> 109:21                              | <b>Deputy</b> 93:16 98:15                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>difficult</b> 23:3 24:15,21<br>32:13 121:22 219:7                                       |
| <b>degrees</b> 44:21 88:10                         | <b>deregulated</b> 118:16                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>digital</b> 16:7                                                                        |
| <b>Delaware</b> 199:2                              | <b>DERS</b> 182:7 256:17                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>direct</b> 4:17,18 38:15 47:2<br>91:16 132:16 245:5 247:5                               |
| <b>delay</b> 183:17,23                             | <b>describe</b> 115:24                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>directed</b> 112:12                                                                     |
| <b>delays</b> 24:5,13                              | <b>design</b> 175:18 176:21<br>178:16 202:7                                                                                                                                                        | <b>directing</b> 246:23                                                                    |
| <b>deliberate</b> 134:6                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>direction</b> 6:3                                                                       |
| <b>deliberating</b> 226:20                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>directly</b> 87:6 116:19 126:1                                                          |
| <b>deliver</b> 71:23 88:22 90:4                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                            |
| <b>delivered</b> 75:21                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                            |

|                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 147:5 201:11                                                                                                               | <b>distribution</b> 68:23 71:22<br>76:8 92:6 116:5,10,16,22<br>118:5,8 122:3 143:23<br>255:10,13 | 21:7 59:19 67:4,12 81:20<br>93:21,22 94:5,9,21 97:2<br>108:9 115:6 129:5<br>141:14,15,20 142:21<br>164:11 197:8 243:18<br>247:16 |
| <b>director</b> 58:18 68:18<br>81:24 93:12,14,16 97:7<br>98:16 107:17 115:10<br>185:6 192:15 193:18<br>200:17 201:15 230:8 | <b>district</b> 10:23 21:13 22:24<br>25:7 32:10 33:13 130:17<br>139:11 218:13 238:23             | <b>Driscoll's</b> 103:23                                                                                                         |
| <b>disability</b> 61:8 64:23                                                                                               | <b>districts</b> 23:2 33:14,20                                                                   | <b>driven</b> 76:18 119:10                                                                                                       |
| <b>disadvantaged</b> 79:8                                                                                                  | <b>dive</b> 48:23 171:13                                                                         | <b>driver</b> 110:13                                                                                                             |
| <b>disagreements</b> 59:16                                                                                                 | <b>diverse</b> 44:12 46:12 96:15                                                                 | <b>drivers</b> 93:1                                                                                                              |
| <b>disciplined</b> 110:11                                                                                                  | <b>diversify</b> 109:5                                                                           | <b>driving</b> 4:13 71:5 80:3                                                                                                    |
| <b>disclose</b> 199:24                                                                                                     | <b>Diversion</b> 91:24                                                                           | <b>dropped</b> 97:22 114:19                                                                                                      |
| <b>disconnect</b> 134:19                                                                                                   | <b>diversity</b> 139:16                                                                          | <b>dropping</b> 134:14                                                                                                           |
| <b>discount</b> 15:15                                                                                                      | <b>dividends</b> 109:16                                                                          | <b>due</b> 23:18 70:11 71:12<br>76:11                                                                                            |
| <b>discounted</b> 122:14                                                                                                   | <b>division</b> 86:6                                                                             | <b>durable</b> 196:16                                                                                                            |
| <b>discovery</b> 207:2                                                                                                     | <b>doctor</b> 63:15                                                                              | <b>duration</b> 15:17                                                                                                            |
| <b>discrepancy</b> 15:22                                                                                                   | <b>documents</b> 131:5                                                                           | <b>duty</b> 68:24                                                                                                                |
| <b>discuss</b> 5:5 57:10 116:1<br>123:17 127:18                                                                            | <b>dollar</b> 35:3 109:17 175:20<br>198:5,10 254:10                                              | <b>dwelling</b> 15:6 84:14                                                                                                       |
| <b>discussed</b> 105:11 232:17                                                                                             | <b>dollars</b> 17:9 124:20<br>167:22 176:17 198:8,10<br>208:9                                    | <b>dwindling</b> 248:8                                                                                                           |
| <b>discussing</b> 187:20                                                                                                   | <b>Donald</b> 10:20                                                                              |                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>discussion</b> 95:22 108:22<br>180:11 193:7 194:7<br>202:14                                                             | <b>donut</b> 222:3                                                                               | <b>E</b>                                                                                                                         |
| <b>discussions</b> 19:2 219:20                                                                                             | <b>door</b> 32:22 91:10                                                                          | <b>eager</b> 184:3                                                                                                               |
| <b>disincentivize</b> 91:21                                                                                                | <b>doorways</b> 61:23                                                                            | <b>Eagles</b> 94:1,3                                                                                                             |
| <b>disparagement</b> 133:10                                                                                                | <b>double</b> 70:2                                                                               | <b>earlier</b> 8:11 122:24 201:16<br>211:13,17 221:13                                                                            |
| <b>disposal</b> 184:17                                                                                                     | <b>doubled</b> 75:12 158:21                                                                      | <b>early</b> 142:1 188:24 256:6                                                                                                  |
| <b>disproportionately</b> 83:13                                                                                            | <b>dozen</b> 12:8 188:3                                                                          | <b>earn</b> 24:12 29:23 32:5<br>72:16 76:4                                                                                       |
| <b>disruptive</b> 47:22 204:18                                                                                             | <b>dozens</b> 23:16                                                                              | <b>earned</b> 109:16                                                                                                             |
| <b>distant</b> 44:3                                                                                                        | <b>DPU</b> 248:16                                                                                | <b>earning</b> 112:4                                                                                                             |
| <b>distilled</b> 185:14                                                                                                    | <b>drafty</b> 36:1 65:11                                                                         | <b>ease</b> 91:11                                                                                                                |
| <b>distinction</b> 198:13                                                                                                  | <b>drastically</b> 78:21                                                                         | <b>easier</b> 124:14 165:10<br>182:10 184:7                                                                                      |
| <b>distributed</b> 11:22 31:3<br>36:19 181:13 183:15<br>217:9 253:21 254:13<br>255:1                                       | <b>draw</b> 127:5                                                                                | <b>easiest</b> 209:23                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                            | <b>Drawing</b> 83:22                                                                             | <b>easily</b> 185:14                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                            | <b>Driscoll</b> 2:21,22 5:7,11                                                                   |                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>easy</b> 123:8 163:10 165:9 252:16</p> <p><b>easy-to-</b> 216:24</p> <p><b>echoing</b> 244:21</p> <p><b>economic</b> 19:6 89:19 114:11 132:12 134:3</p> <p><b>economics</b> 79:17 171:21, 23</p> <p><b>economy</b> 147:19</p> <p><b>edge</b> 41:1</p> <p><b>education</b> 85:24 86:16 87:6,16 230:9</p> <p><b>effect</b> 88:16</p> <p><b>effective</b> 34:21 68:22 69:22 145:23</p> <p><b>effectively</b> 157:3</p> <p><b>efficiencies</b> 182:9</p> <p><b>efficiency</b> 26:24 35:14 36:20 45:3 80:16 84:10 90:4 91:15 98:23 116:15 124:4 175:18 179:5 247:1</p> <p><b>efficient</b> 18:4 35:4 48:14 71:15 76:14 91:1,18 154:4 157:14 161:18 231:4</p> <p><b>effort</b> 18:13 148:13 222:7</p> <p><b>efforts</b> 18:16 112:24 120:6</p> <p><b>Egg</b> 12:21</p> <p><b>EIA</b> 231:20</p> <p><b>elaborate</b> 38:7 41:22</p> <p><b>elderly</b> 204:16</p> <p><b>elect</b> 119:21</p> <p><b>elected</b> 25:2 34:15 41:15 51:9 55:19 56:6 57:14 245:6</p> <p><b>election</b> 52:3 56:6</p> | <p><b>electric</b> 14:13 47:7 50:11 69:14 71:7,15,16,19 75:2 76:13,19 116:4 117:7 118:7,10 119:20 121:16 123:9 128:12 129:10 231:6</p> <p><b>electrical</b> 17:8 254:21</p> <p><b>electricity</b> 11:17 23:11 26:6 32:19 33:1 69:18 70:5,24 71:3,8 72:15 95:16 96:6 116:19 118:4, 16 195:19,24 251:14</p> <p><b>electrification</b> 23:20 71:14</p> <p><b>electron</b> 253:12</p> <p><b>electrons</b> 71:23 118:11 186:3 187:3,5</p> <p><b>elements</b> 17:15 223:16</p> <p><b>elevated</b> 108:21</p> <p><b>eligibility</b> 246:16</p> <p><b>eligible</b> 160:1,3 162:6,9 169:7 235:3,15</p> <p><b>eliminate</b> 168:6 169:19</p> <p><b>eliminated</b> 39:24</p> <p><b>eliminating</b> 199:17 211:18,19</p> <p><b>Elizabeth</b> 12:21 21:11 58:20 81:23</p> <p><b>else's</b> 159:19 175:15 179:12 219:24</p> <p><b>email</b> 188:16</p> <p><b>embedded</b> 180:23</p> <p><b>embrace</b> 200:15</p> <p><b>Emily</b> 173:6 175:3 188:7 196:16 201:19 208:14 209:4 218:24 236:4 240:13 241:11 245:14</p> <p><b>Emily's</b> 198:7 220:10</p> | <p><b>emissions</b> 82:16 113:14</p> <p><b>emphasis</b> 244:8</p> <p><b>emphasize</b> 22:21 24:20 193:11 201:18</p> <p><b>emphasizes</b> 28:7</p> <p><b>Employment</b> 89:12</p> <p><b>empowering</b> 87:18</p> <p><b>Empowerment</b> 86:11</p> <p><b>enables</b> 30:18</p> <p><b>encourage</b> 27:23 34:16 115:14 184:8</p> <p><b>encouraging</b> 84:5 123:6</p> <p><b>end</b> 46:5 61:2 82:11 109:20 114:22 120:7 146:6 163:3 181:23 193:8 234:8 246:13</p> <p><b>ends</b> 161:12</p> <p><b>energy</b> 4:12,15 9:20 10:2 11:23 12:10 13:20,24 14:8,19 19:9 20:19 21:15, 22 23:15 24:2,3 25:13,21 26:10,17,22,23 27:6 28:1 29:6,7 30:7,15 31:11 34:21 35:18 36:15,20,24 41:17,23 42:5,9 43:3,9,12 44:1,13 45:3,4 46:5 47:19 49:7,9 50:3 52:6 53:1,19, 22 54:11 55:14,24 56:12 58:12 61:15 63:22 67:20 68:6,12,21 69:2,10,21 70:8 76:21,22,23 77:12, 14,17 79:21,22 80:9,11, 14,15,18 82:4,20,23 83:4, 7,9,11,12,18,24 84:4,7,9, 15,16,22 85:2,5,6,16,19, 22,23 86:2,5,9,13,16,19, 21,22 87:2,4,5,9,11,12, 14,16,19 88:1,20 89:6,8, 10,16,17,21,23 90:4,13, 15 91:1,3,9,15,17 92:4,9, 13,17,22 93:7,12 94:16 95:9 96:22 97:12 98:10,</p> |
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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>19,23 99:2,12 100:12,19,<br/>24 104:23 108:15 111:7<br/>114:6,17 116:8,14,15<br/>119:6,22 124:3 126:22<br/>131:3,16 133:2 138:8<br/>142:16 165:17 175:4,17<br/>176:5 177:20 179:5,11<br/>181:6,13 186:12 191:19<br/>193:19,24 194:2,5,8<br/>196:14,16 197:6,12,16,19<br/>199:13,17,20,24 201:1,8,<br/>12,14 202:6,11,23 203:1,<br/>14 205:2 214:14,20<br/>217:10 219:4,10 220:7,14<br/>222:1 223:4 231:4 235:9<br/>236:1,21 239:15,17<br/>245:21 246:5,20,24<br/>247:8,17 251:14 254:13<br/>255:1 256:1 257:23</p> <p><b>energy-burdened</b> 83:20</p> <p><b>energy-efficient</b> 178:16</p> <p><b>engage</b> 180:19 226:4</p> <p><b>engaged</b> 195:1 216:8</p> <p><b>engagement</b> 179:16<br/>180:21 183:11</p> <p><b>engaging</b> 226:1</p> <p><b>England</b> 94:13 95:9,17,24<br/>96:5,9 104:1,7</p> <p><b>England's</b> 78:4</p> <p><b>enhancing</b> 18:5</p> <p><b>enjoyed</b> 226:11</p> <p><b>enormous</b> 188:16 208:4<br/>237:21</p> <p><b>enroll</b> 153:21 158:24<br/>162:24</p> <p><b>enrolled</b> 156:13 158:4,12,<br/>22 235:3,15</p> <p><b>enrolling</b> 16:9 90:12<br/>155:12 156:10 211:14</p> <p><b>enrollment</b> 155:10 156:4,<br/>7,20 158:21 163:24</p> | <p>167:10 169:9 235:11,22<br/>246:15</p> <p><b>ensure</b> 19:14 36:3 98:11<br/>119:13 122:19 127:8</p> <p><b>ensured</b> 15:12</p> <p><b>ensuring</b> 32:5 34:12<br/>35:23 115:3 196:14</p> <p><b>enter</b> 222:12</p> <p><b>entire</b> 4:21 49:10,13,23<br/>50:17 106:19 171:15<br/>174:22</p> <p><b>entities</b> 104:21</p> <p><b>entity</b> 130:21 137:8<br/>169:22 175:6</p> <p><b>environment</b> 193:2</p> <p><b>environmental</b> 18:9 69:3,<br/>4 82:15 184:12</p> <p><b>EPA</b> 88:8</p> <p><b>EPA's</b> 79:3</p> <p><b>epilepsy</b> 60:24 61:4</p> <p><b>episode</b> 31:22</p> <p><b>equally</b> 117:3</p> <p><b>equipment</b> 29:24 204:17</p> <p><b>equitable</b> 192:24</p> <p><b>equity</b> 15:3</p> <p><b>equivalent</b> 134:14</p> <p><b>eras</b> 188:13</p> <p><b>Eric</b> 225:6,16</p> <p><b>erode</b> 114:13</p> <p><b>escorted</b> 130:8</p> <p><b>essential</b> 91:8 98:12<br/>114:5 145:9 166:23</p> <p><b>essentially</b> 41:16 50:17<br/>114:8 169:5 212:18</p> <p><b>establish</b> 29:10 32:3</p> <p><b>established</b> 85:7</p> | <p><b>estimate</b> 74:22 110:23</p> <p><b>estimated</b> 228:19</p> <p><b>estimates</b> 88:8 227:17</p> <p><b>ethical</b> 101:7</p> <p><b>ethnicity</b> 46:14</p> <p><b>EV</b> 120:22</p> <p><b>evaluating</b> 120:21</p> <p><b>evangelical</b> 191:2</p> <p><b>event</b> 8:15 111:2 113:20<br/>137:9,10</p> <p><b>events</b> 72:2 117:21 123:6<br/>154:21</p> <p><b>everybody's</b> 165:10</p> <p><b>everyday</b> 18:18 38:2<br/>107:3 167:18 214:19</p> <p><b>Eviction</b> 91:23</p> <p><b>evident</b> 241:22</p> <p><b>evidently</b> 62:5</p> <p><b>evolved</b> 139:23</p> <p><b>examine</b> 171:8</p> <p><b>examples</b> 41:19,20</p> <p><b>excavate</b> 76:1</p> <p><b>Excellent</b> 185:2</p> <p><b>excess</b> 257:5</p> <p><b>excessive</b> 32:6</p> <p><b>excited</b> 155:21 224:20</p> <p><b>excluded</b> 77:21</p> <p><b>executive</b> 78:2 93:16<br/>185:6 192:15</p> <p><b>executives</b> 257:14</p> <p><b>exist</b> 183:1 191:8</p> <p><b>existing</b> 17:13 29:1,16<br/>41:1 102:8 103:7 179:3<br/>200:2,6,16</p> <p><b>exists</b> 54:10 114:14 162:8</p> |
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| <b>expand</b> 12:9 36:23 79:7<br><b>expanded</b> 25:21 77:7 84:6<br>89:21 91:4 236:23<br><b>expanding</b> 84:9,20 89:18<br>122:7<br><b>expands</b> 86:20<br><b>expansion</b> 71:13<br><b>expect</b> 44:18 52:9 183:22<br>184:1<br><b>expectation</b> 19:11<br><b>expectations</b> 50:20<br><b>expected</b> 11:20 28:9 71:1<br>77:3<br><b>expects</b> 44:19 90:6<br><b>expedite</b> 173:18,20<br><b>expedited</b> 156:4,7 185:8<br><b>expenditures</b> 72:7<br><b>expenses</b> 116:22<br><b>expensive</b> 29:21 109:6<br>124:8 134:9 163:8 186:3<br>187:4,7,11,12 197:2<br>250:6,8<br><b>experience</b> 68:11 95:2<br>146:24 246:2<br><b>experienced</b> 239:6<br><b>experiences</b> 147:2<br><b>experiencing</b> 71:9<br><b>expert</b> 38:12,13 53:1<br>209:8 214:7<br><b>expertise</b> 105:13,14<br><b>experts</b> 35:2 42:24 164:5<br>184:18<br><b>explain</b> 60:1 66:4,8 126:7<br><b>explained</b> 215:13<br><b>explanation</b> 63:19<br><b>explanations</b> 64:7 | <b>exploit</b> 36:5<br><b>explore</b> 171:20<br><b>exploring</b> 109:4<br><b>exponentially</b> 244:14<br><b>exporter</b> 219:4 239:16<br><b>express</b> 67:21<br><b>expressed</b> 243:24<br><b>expression</b> 245:5<br><b>extend</b> 247:13<br><b>extended</b> 130:3<br><b>extending</b> 88:6<br><b>extends</b> 69:11<br><b>extension</b> 254:21<br><b>extent</b> 102:15 188:10<br>190:4<br><b>external</b> 107:18 115:11<br>154:21<br><b>externalities</b> 231:17<br><b>extinct</b> 191:14<br><b>extra</b> 210:22,23<br><b>extraordinarily</b> 48:17<br><b>extreme</b> 23:19 72:2<br>117:21 119:14 187:2<br><b>extremely</b> 61:10 132:11<br>145:23 237:6 | <b>facing</b> 4:24 21:20 53:6<br>106:13 130:5 147:13<br>203:17<br><b>fact</b> 44:1 46:4 50:14 53:4<br>58:4 131:18 134:20<br>157:18 159:24 190:23<br>219:22 220:12 237:17<br>239:14 242:4<br><b>factor</b> 119:15 220:11<br>228:24 232:18<br><b>factoring</b> 231:17<br><b>factors</b> 83:5<br><b>failed</b> 259:3<br><b>failing</b> 250:19<br><b>fair</b> 32:5 36:4 77:8 171:3<br>234:11<br><b>fairly</b> 103:11 208:21<br><b>fairness</b> 19:5<br><b>Fairview</b> 48:7<br><b>fall</b> 198:18 222:15 240:7<br><b>familiar</b> 32:20 77:23 95:7<br><b>families</b> 25:22 108:17<br>131:19 204:12 250:10<br>251:8<br><b>family</b> 19:12 246:2<br>250:14,15,21 252:13<br><b>famous</b> 231:18<br><b>fan</b> 94:3,8 226:6<br><b>fans</b> 62:3<br><b>fantastic</b> 159:17 196:24<br><b>Fasch</b> 233:9,10,20 234:2,<br>11 252:22 258:2,5,7<br><b>fashion</b> 55:5 186:16<br>217:20<br><b>fast</b> 43:7 133:14,22<br>134:13,20 148:8<br><b>fast-</b> 133:11 |
| <b>F</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>face</b> 9:22 82:22<br><b>faced</b> 25:7<br><b>faces</b> 24:4<br><b>facilitated</b> 192:1<br><b>facilitating</b> 91:11<br><b>facilities</b> 232:2<br><b>facility</b> 134:16 135:1<br>230:24                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>faster</b> 21:23 24:6 135:3,5, 12,22 148:9</p> <p><b>father</b> 249:16 252:17</p> <p><b>fathom</b> 236:11</p> <p><b>favor</b> 75:8 242:6,15 243:6</p> <p><b>favorite</b> 68:3</p> <p><b>feasibility</b> 165:13</p> <p><b>features</b> 13:5</p> <p><b>February</b> 141:23 145:3,7 185:23 186:23</p> <p><b>federal</b> 25:9 38:22 39:20 43:17 55:19 56:4 77:5 93:4 98:21 112:20 113:11 131:1,3 196:8</p> <p><b>federally</b> 118:6 130:20</p> <p><b>fee</b> 169:24 213:3,5,8</p> <p><b>feed</b> 257:15</p> <p><b>feedback</b> 83:23 105:1 158:16</p> <p><b>feel</b> 13:17 18:11 41:24 56:15 167:11 233:14 249:22,24</p> <p><b>feeling</b> 24:8 244:9</p> <p><b>feels</b> 43:19 44:3 56:13 250:17,18 251:9</p> <p><b>fees</b> 166:11,16,19,23 168:6,21 169:19 170:16 211:18,19 212:9,11</p> <p><b>feet</b> 128:8,9,11</p> <p><b>fellow</b> 58:11 67:19</p> <p><b>felt</b> 9:23</p> <p><b>FERC</b> 102:24 131:4,6</p> <p><b>fern</b> 94:22</p> <p><b>fewer</b> 29:21 117:13,16 208:1 231:12</p> <p><b>Fiedler</b> 6:16,22 20:11 21:1,6,11 38:19 41:18 42:20 44:6,9 52:12 54:2</p> | <p>72:20 74:21 102:4 119:17 120:9 123:23 196:6 198:4 222:24</p> <p><b>field</b> 43:1</p> <p><b>Fielder</b> 51:1,3</p> <p><b>fighting</b> 236:24</p> <p><b>figure</b> 11:19 49:21 65:2 74:15 106:8,10 107:6 150:11 166:8 167:16 184:9 216:15,20 221:1 248:19 258:13</p> <p><b>file</b> 205:11,12 206:1,2,5,6, 14</p> <p><b>filing</b> 102:23</p> <p><b>final</b> 127:19 155:18</p> <p><b>finalized</b> 14:11</p> <p><b>finally</b> 35:8 36:14 80:19</p> <p><b>finance</b> 27:4 40:23</p> <p><b>financial</b> 9:21 26:7 92:6 110:11 131:20 207:18 243:10</p> <p><b>financially</b> 111:14</p> <p><b>financing</b> 80:11</p> <p><b>find</b> 122:6 138:15 213:1 219:7</p> <p><b>fine</b> 60:8,13 74:10</p> <p><b>fined</b> 124:12,15</p> <p><b>fines</b> 201:10</p> <p><b>firmly</b> 10:24</p> <p><b>fit</b> 138:9</p> <p><b>fits</b> 57:8</p> <p><b>five-year</b> 236:16</p> <p><b>fix</b> 242:10</p> <p><b>fixed</b> 22:6 122:20 182:2</p> <p><b>fixing</b> 149:15</p> <p><b>flag</b> 182:16</p> | <p><b>flat</b> 71:6 123:12</p> <p><b>flawed</b> 79:21</p> <p><b>fleet</b> 120:22</p> <p><b>flexibility</b> 102:12</p> <p><b>flooding</b> 241:24</p> <p><b>floor</b> 192:21,22</p> <p><b>flow</b> 118:12</p> <p><b>focus</b> 37:6 68:22 75:4 83:18 84:10 124:14 132:8 133:12 230:14 253:9</p> <p><b>focused</b> 115:12 180:21</p> <p><b>focusing</b> 69:21</p> <p><b>folks</b> 4:21 5:15,23 23:8 25:6 28:7 32:21 34:23 38:17 41:14 42:17,23 49:16 50:6 52:15 56:15 115:19 142:2 146:20 147:15 155:16 169:6 172:19 173:12 174:3 213:15 218:7 221:11 222:10 258:11</p> <p><b>follow</b> 152:12</p> <p><b>food</b> 245:24 246:6</p> <p><b>footage</b> 200:4</p> <p><b>footprint</b> 130:16 131:17 139:20 141:3</p> <p><b>Force</b> 211:4,5</p> <p><b>forced</b> 9:15 235:16</p> <p><b>forces</b> 80:2</p> <p><b>forecast</b> 136:10 140:20</p> <p><b>forecasted</b> 70:12 129:12</p> <p><b>forecasting</b> 136:8</p> <p><b>forecasts</b> 136:14</p> <p><b>foremost</b> 143:2 224:15</p> <p><b>forever</b> 105:10</p> <p><b>forget</b> 176:24</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>forgiveness</b> 111:18<br>122:15 154:18 168:19,20<br>170:11<br><b>form</b> 186:15 241:22<br><b>formal</b> 74:17<br><b>formed</b> 138:24 139:1<br><b>formula</b> 98:22<br><b>fortunate</b> 10:13<br><b>Fortunately</b> 10:18<br><b>forums</b> 19:3<br><b>forward</b> 5:4 6:3 25:2 52:9<br>72:15 111:23 121:15<br>134:1 138:8,22 141:4<br>142:15 165:6,24 187:2<br>202:13 223:23 235:21<br>248:13<br><b>fossil</b> 228:6 239:17<br><b>found</b> 9:19 36:9 70:22<br><b>foundation</b> 101:8<br><b>foundational</b> 91:2 187:9<br><b>founded</b> 52:22 100:8<br><b>four-kv</b> 122:4<br><b>fourth</b> 114:3<br><b>fraction</b> 150:8<br><b>frame</b> 223:20<br><b>framework</b> 30:12<br><b>frankly</b> 243:2<br><b>free</b> 64:19 90:11 154:8<br>203:15<br><b>Freeh</b> 173:5,19 192:10,14<br>221:15,19<br><b>freeze</b> 11:2<br><b>frequency</b> 72:1<br><b>frequent</b> 117:22<br><b>Friday</b> 74:3<br><b>friend</b> 120:12 | <b>friends</b> 123:18 157:12<br><b>Front</b> 91:10<br><b>fuel</b> 26:4 108:24 228:6<br>239:17<br><b>fulfill</b> 124:5<br><b>full</b> 108:19 163:19<br><b>function</b> 76:23<br><b>fund</b> 12:7 91:13,19 112:2<br>153:11 175:22<br><b>fundamentally</b> 239:18<br><b>funding</b> 16:24 18:3 36:22<br>91:17 98:22 99:1 112:14<br>133:18 153:15 176:23<br>201:9 223:1 235:24<br>236:8,14<br><b>funds</b> 201:10<br><b>future</b> 19:7 41:8 68:19<br>75:5 76:10 77:2 82:17<br>91:9 140:17 165:17<br>195:24 232:19 237:5<br><b>Futures</b> 89:14<br><b>FY27</b> 180:23 | 191:14 194:19 195:2<br>222:5,17 226:19 228:9<br>230:22 231:5,7,11,13,22<br>232:12,13,16 237:7,15,17<br>238:8 241:24 248:19,23<br>249:4 250:5 253:17,19<br><b>gas-fired</b> 239:1,9,22<br><b>gas-free</b> 165:16<br><b>gas-to-gas</b> 248:3<br><b>gave</b> 41:18,20 65:14<br><b>GBU</b> 197:13 215:21<br><b>GEM</b> 36:17<br><b>general</b> 5:2 205:13<br><b>generate</b> 14:19 223:12<br><b>generated</b> 131:16<br><b>generating</b> 43:9 79:15<br>182:3 220:16 255:15<br><b>generation</b> 26:23 28:1<br>36:20 46:4 47:14 48:19<br>77:6 116:6,11 128:1,5,12<br>135:3,21 136:19 149:10,<br>12 150:5 152:2 192:1,6<br>220:14 223:3<br><b>generational</b> 177:13,18,<br>19<br><b>generator</b> 149:17<br><b>generators</b> 118:4 135:19<br><b>geographic</b> 47:6 139:15<br><b>geothermal</b> 30:12,14<br>43:13 165:13,19 183:14<br><b>gesture</b> 171:12<br><b>gigawatts</b> 79:14 149:18,<br>24 150:5<br><b>Giral's</b> 30:21<br><b>give</b> 8:15 27:14 62:21<br>80:17 98:17 152:18 157:9<br>159:11 170:13,14,18,24<br>175:10 193:20 195:7<br>212:1 234:6,8 |
| <b>G</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>gained</b> 134:6<br><b>game</b> 164:19 246:4<br><b>gamut</b> 171:15<br><b>gap</b> 15:22 19:24 87:4<br><b>gaps</b> 246:15<br><b>gardens</b> 13:6<br><b>gas</b> 17:12,13 23:11 24:3<br>34:3 47:8,21,23 48:5,11<br>68:23 71:17 75:4,12,17,<br>18,19,21,23 76:3,8,19<br>94:19 95:17,23 96:4<br>108:23 109:12 110:15,17<br>111:1 114:4,7 121:17<br>135:10 167:20 183:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>giving</b> 57:21 63:18 64:6 65:23 227:24</p> <p><b>glad</b> 8:14 37:9 49:16 173:19 229:17 236:12</p> <p><b>global</b> 7:17 26:3 95:13 129:16 138:11,12 181:24</p> <p><b>goal</b> 33:19 190:15 238:1 244:12</p> <p><b>goals</b> 82:10 201:12 244:2 248:11</p> <p><b>Gold</b> 178:20</p> <p><b>good</b> 2:2,5,12 8:4 21:1,6 31:12 35:22 39:10 45:5,12 54:4 55:1 59:13,17 62:21 67:17 81:18 94:10 96:11 108:7 123:15 124:1 149:21 152:5,6 173:9 175:2 183:18 185:4 192:10,13 195:4 200:21 203:10 204:23 239:16 245:10 247:13 258:4,7 259:18</p> <p><b>goodness</b> 247:24</p> <p><b>goods</b> 40:9</p> <p><b>gouging</b> 33:7</p> <p><b>governed</b> 197:6</p> <p><b>governing</b> 131:5 183:2</p> <p><b>government</b> 10:17 18:1 37:16 77:5 107:2,6 116:12 148:14 164:17 175:6 214:16</p> <p><b>governmental</b> 129:19</p> <p><b>governments</b> 183:19</p> <p><b>governor</b> 10:21 31:19 46:2 54:19 73:1 74:1,18 96:1 132:15 216:22 219:18 222:13 223:7</p> <p><b>Governor's</b> 223:16</p> <p><b>governors</b> 102:20 136:2</p> | <p><b>grade</b> 129:10</p> <p><b>graduate</b> 115:21</p> <p><b>grant</b> 98:24 113:11 153:8,16</p> <p><b>grants</b> 12:7 112:8</p> <p><b>grappling</b> 190:3</p> <p><b>grateful</b> 22:16 23:5 37:5 56:18 193:2</p> <p><b>gratitude</b> 245:13</p> <p><b>Gray</b> 225:6</p> <p><b>great</b> 6:21 8:7 37:4,14 42:20 81:17 95:18 96:23 97:3,4 103:9 104:15,16 128:17 141:11,19 162:5 172:13 173:7 175:24 176:1 181:11 193:6,7 215:15 221:4 249:7</p> <p><b>greater</b> 23:19 70:9 122:7</p> <p><b>greatest</b> 122:24</p> <p><b>greed</b> 31:20 251:2</p> <p><b>green</b> 17:18 80:8 89:14 192:16 194:16 201:23 236:22</p> <p><b>Greenhouse</b> 222:5,17</p> <p><b>grid</b> 12:2 23:18 25:14 30:3 43:8 71:24 116:18 117:23 118:3 130:13 131:8 134:8 135:13,17 136:24 137:11 181:7 182:5,9 190:24 219:24 255:21 256:22 257:15,21</p> <p><b>grids</b> 256:16</p> <p><b>groceries</b> 22:15</p> <p><b>ground-mount</b> 15:1</p> <p><b>grounds</b> 33:19</p> <p><b>group</b> 161:1 216:9</p> <p><b>groups</b> 83:19 247:6</p> <p><b>grow</b> 11:20 19:13 71:10 256:12</p> | <p><b>growing</b> 69:18 89:9 246:3</p> <p><b>growth</b> 19:14 23:23 31:6 70:13,17 71:5,19 74:12 103:12,15 104:13 129:12 149:7</p> <p><b>guarantee</b> 140:15 237:23</p> <p><b>guaranteed</b> 15:14 24:12</p> <p><b>guarantees</b> 128:4</p> <p><b>guess</b> 4:18 53:22 94:23 95:12 166:12,17</p> <p><b>guests</b> 108:10</p> <p><b>guidance</b> 142:5</p> <p><b>guided</b> 32:9</p> <p><b>guidelines</b> 157:19</p> <p><b>guys</b> 2:12 56:23 59:4 142:9 150:20 159:10 168:12 175:10 178:9 211:18 213:20</p> |
| <b>H</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>H.O.M.E.</b> 196:21 198:23</p> <p><b>half</b> 9:19 16:21 73:19 153:15 188:3 235:2,14</p> <p><b>halted</b> 25:18</p> <p><b>hand</b> 161:8</p> <p><b>handful</b> 175:11</p> <p><b>handle</b> 233:4 242:3</p> <p><b>hang</b> 64:8 65:6</p> <p><b>happen</b> 137:7 176:2 196:8 216:4 239:12 240:6</p> <p><b>happened</b> 38:22 102:19 143:21 144:22 192:3</p> <p><b>happening</b> 19:19 148:8 198:22 235:19</p> <p><b>happy</b> 68:5 175:6 178:8 183:17 184:17 215:2 223:24</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Harbor</b> 12:21                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 259:2,5,16                                                                                                                           | 217:18                                                                                                             |
| <b>hard</b> 17:7 21:16 28:20<br>31:16 39:18 60:1 61:1<br>127:20 152:8 160:10                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>hearings</b> 4:11 17:23 23:15<br>195:2 197:9                                                                                      | <b>highlight</b> 182:12 185:10                                                                                     |
| <b>harden</b> 71:24                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>heart</b> 245:4                                                                                                                   | <b>highlighted</b> 31:22 142:13<br>186:19                                                                          |
| <b>harder</b> 22:5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>heat</b> 12:15 22:9 30:1 41:4<br>44:20 61:18 67:1 68:19<br>71:16 75:5 76:13 84:18<br>88:4,15,23 186:2,11<br>200:19 231:6,9 250:16 | <b>highly</b> 216:24                                                                                               |
| <b>hardship</b> 112:2 153:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>heat-vulnerable</b> 12:13                                                                                                         | <b>highway</b> 191:13                                                                                              |
| <b>hardware</b> 28:23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>heater</b> 154:3,5                                                                                                                | <b>historic</b> 90:19                                                                                              |
| <b>harms</b> 242:16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Heather</b> 32:17                                                                                                                 | <b>historically</b> 151:16                                                                                         |
| <b>Harrisburg</b> 37:3 54:6<br>155:20 223:10                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>heating</b> 26:5 35:4 36:1<br>76:15 90:15 94:23,24<br>108:24 123:9 176:9,10<br>231:8                                              | <b>history</b> 215:15                                                                                              |
| <b>HB</b> 72:23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>heavier</b> 220:3                                                                                                                 | <b>hit</b> 62:14,16 124:12<br>246:10                                                                               |
| <b>head</b> 155:2 174:12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>heavily</b> 112:14                                                                                                                | <b>hits</b> 10:5                                                                                                   |
| <b>health</b> 12:11 19:7 34:13<br>227:12 229:1 243:9                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>heavy</b> 129:12                                                                                                                  | <b>hitting</b> 15:23 55:15                                                                                         |
| <b>healthier</b> 89:2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>hectic</b> 66:3,4                                                                                                                 | <b>hold</b> 4:10 35:21 63:16<br>123:5 154:20 240:5<br>243:17                                                       |
| <b>healthy</b> 193:1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>held</b> 23:15 83:17 87:15                                                                                                        | <b>holding</b> 22:17 115:7                                                                                         |
| <b>hear</b> 18:14 35:2 37:14<br>42:22 52:2,15 53:24 58:9<br>104:18,20 145:5 147:11<br>158:15 173:4 177:24<br>183:18 213:18 224:21<br>251:1 253:3,5 254:12<br>257:16                                                                                             | <b>helped</b> 62:8 155:10                                                                                                            | <b>holds</b> 37:4                                                                                                  |
| <b>heard</b> 4:5 42:6 50:4,6<br>51:20 119:16 121:10<br>148:4 167:21 174:6,18<br>176:15 179:17,19 181:4<br>194:2 197:23 198:3<br>200:17 216:7 218:16<br>238:24 250:24 253:2                                                                                      | <b>helpful</b> 34:2 142:19<br>150:19 215:5                                                                                           | <b>holistic</b> 228:23                                                                                             |
| <b>hearing</b> 2:15 3:20,22 4:4,<br>17 21:18 22:17 23:6,7<br>31:4 38:3 53:2 58:18 81:1<br>115:8,20 128:19 129:8<br>142:18 143:6 164:21<br>169:12 186:20 190:9<br>191:6 193:18 194:20,24<br>215:20 221:13 226:10<br>240:5 243:17 245:13,19<br>246:7 252:4 258:21 | <b>helping</b> 88:5 91:6 124:21<br>202:7                                                                                             | <b>home</b> 29:14,18 84:11<br>85:12 90:20 117:14<br>123:21 124:8                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>helps</b> 18:10 87:4 91:24<br>137:2                                                                                               | <b>homelessness</b> 251:18                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Hey</b> 230:7 245:9                                                                                                               | <b>homeowner</b> 177:12 242:9                                                                                      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>high</b> 4:15 24:5 61:11<br>71:17 83:11,12 94:16<br>118:2 123:20 207:20<br>220:17                                                 | <b>homeowners</b> 15:4                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>high-</b> 33:2                                                                                                                    | <b>homes</b> 14:9,23 46:18<br>48:6,10,16 90:7,22 91:9<br>116:20 154:9 178:10,12<br>181:20 186:2,11 196:15<br>223:2 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>high-order</b> 185:12                                                                                                             | <b>homes'</b> 14:13                                                                                                |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>higher</b> 35:16 119:5,11<br>123:13 194:4 195:19,23                                                                               | <b>homework</b> 221:5                                                                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>highest</b> 82:23 111:13                                                                                                          | <b>honest</b> 105:12                                                                                               |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                      | <b>honesty</b> 166:2                                                                                               |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                      | <b>hope</b> 5:24 33:24 34:1<br>56:16 132:21,22 159:16<br>197:20 244:8                                              |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>hoping</b> 20:16</p> <p><b>horizon</b> 42:3</p> <p><b>hot</b> 62:1 256:10</p> <p><b>hot-button</b> 187:19</p> <p><b>hotter</b> 82:17</p> <p><b>hottest</b> 13:9</p> <p><b>hour</b> 2:10 57:17</p> <p><b>hours</b> 117:13,15 186:1 233:12 234:22</p> <p><b>house</b> 16:19 21:15 26:21 27:4,11 28:3,13,14,15 29:8 30:10,21 32:2,15 60:5 61:19 65:11 66:2 102:5,21 124:2,16 136:2 153:22 181:16</p> <p><b>housed</b> 92:1</p> <p><b>household</b> 10:1 21:23 69:17 109:1 193:23</p> <p><b>households</b> 83:2,15 87:8 91:7 112:4,16 247:1</p> <p><b>housing</b> 34:19 83:6 86:4, 6,8 89:21,24 91:2 92:7 159:3 243:11</p> <p><b>Houston</b> 240:15 245:9,16</p> <p><b>hubs</b> 13:4</p> <p><b>huge</b> 15:21 182:8 235:13</p> <p><b>human</b> 155:19 251:13,14</p> <p><b>hundred</b> 100:15 128:8,9, 11 138:24 147:12 148:2 150:13 161:21 164:4 167:22 195:12 196:5 213:24 214:3 215:9 223:20</p> <p><b>hundreds</b> 23:16 108:16 207:17 208:9 257:19</p> <p><b>hurdle</b> 159:21</p> <p><b>hurdles</b> 211:24</p> <p><b>hurt</b> 161:13</p> | <p><b>Hurts</b> 132:2</p> <p><b>HVAC</b> 35:16</p> <p><b>hybrid</b> 104:8</p> <p><b>hydro</b> 43:14</p> <p><b>hyper-</b> 188:6</p> <p><b>hyper-scalers</b> 201:21</p> <p><b>hypothetical</b> 54:16</p> <hr/> <p><b>I</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>i.e.</b> 160:16</p> <p><b>idea</b> 29:15 41:22 42:7 45:2 49:6,20 54:4 55:1 57:5 100:10,23 101:2 123:15 139:13 149:3 170:14 193:19 205:2</p> <p><b>ideal</b> 40:8 151:14 158:10</p> <p><b>ideally</b> 31:13 151:12</p> <p><b>ideas</b> 23:8 26:20 42:2 235:20</p> <p><b>identified</b> 89:6 161:15</p> <p><b>identify</b> 9:20 14:16</p> <p><b>illegal</b> 77:11</p> <p><b>imagine</b> 158:2 214:18</p> <p><b>immediately</b> 62:15 153:4</p> <p><b>impact</b> 70:16 81:3 100:12 132:9 169:21 171:20,22 207:20 209:12</p> <p><b>impacting</b> 8:23 70:3</p> <p><b>impacts</b> 10:6 49:10 79:20 121:24</p> <p><b>implement</b> 165:16 178:6</p> <p><b>implementation</b> 155:18</p> <p><b>implemented</b> 17:14 156:2</p> <p><b>implementer</b> 180:7</p> <p><b>implementing</b> 86:14 88:2</p> <p><b>importance</b> 41:17 81:5</p> | <p>134:23 191:16</p> <p><b>important</b> 5:13 8:9 26:13, 14 28:11 34:14 47:19 48:17 56:14 92:16 93:24 103:3 109:1 115:8 132:12,20,23 141:12 142:10 145:13 146:11 158:7 171:10,14,16 172:11 198:23 219:15 220:11 223:18 237:6 238:21 253:4</p> <p><b>importantly</b> 24:9</p> <p><b>imported</b> 11:17 94:18</p> <p><b>impose</b> 79:23</p> <p><b>impossible</b> 22:8 64:24</p> <p><b>improve</b> 12:10 82:13,19 113:13 136:7</p> <p><b>improved</b> 25:20 117:11</p> <p><b>Improvement</b> 91:13,19 175:22</p> <p><b>improvements</b> 90:5 124:8</p> <p><b>improving</b> 34:11 88:24</p> <p><b>in-order-of-operations</b> 219:16</p> <p><b>incentive</b> 91:20 154:4 251:16</p> <p><b>incentives</b> 43:18 251:23</p> <p><b>incentivize</b> 41:3</p> <p><b>include</b> 84:3,17 85:21 116:21 168:20 201:7,9 205:14</p> <p><b>includes</b> 13:1</p> <p><b>including</b> 28:5 48:5 68:12 90:13 113:10 116:13 120:18 211:6 244:22 249:17</p> <p><b>income</b> 9:6 10:4 11:7 22:6 46:15 79:8 82:24 83:4,12 111:12 120:4 122:21 153:17 157:18 159:15,19</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>160:1 213:12 235:7</p> <p><b>income-</b> 160:2</p> <p><b>income-based</b> 156:18</p> <p><b>incomes</b> 21:24</p> <p><b>inconsistencies</b> 248:9,10</p> <p><b>incorporate</b> 6:2</p> <p><b>increase</b> 4:24 7:13 28:24 31:18 38:16 50:9 72:8 106:21,23 189:5 196:3 205:13,15 208:8 245:2</p> <p><b>increased</b> 17:15 42:12,14 71:13 72:13 85:23 114:21 119:9 144:24 186:21</p> <p><b>increases</b> 4:13 19:15 69:24 76:10,18 80:3 84:16 205:16,18 208:12</p> <p><b>increasing</b> 13:24 72:1 75:3,13 84:18 90:3 104:12</p> <p><b>incredible</b> 209:18 236:20</p> <p><b>incredibly</b> 26:14 56:14 204:18 207:20 238:21</p> <p><b>incurred</b> 228:5</p> <p><b>independent</b> 60:12</p> <p><b>index</b> 122:17</p> <p><b>indirect</b> 132:17</p> <p><b>individual</b> 53:13 242:9</p> <p><b>individually</b> 157:23 179:19</p> <p><b>individuals</b> 18:18 88:19 92:20 99:5</p> <p><b>indoor</b> 88:9,20</p> <p><b>industrial</b> 28:6</p> <p><b>industries</b> 134:1</p> <p><b>industry</b> 31:7 68:12 115:24 132:10 133:5,8, 12,17,18 215:6 228:6 231:18 232:2 253:6</p> | <p><b>inefficiencies</b> 24:14</p> <p><b>inefficient</b> 176:9,10</p> <p><b>inequitable</b> 217:19</p> <p><b>inevitable</b> 24:22 76:12 195:22</p> <p><b>inflated</b> 35:24</p> <p><b>inflation</b> 25:17 69:15,19 75:15 78:23</p> <p><b>inflationary</b> 109:24</p> <p><b>influence</b> 217:4,6</p> <p><b>information</b> 16:11,20 98:12 99:4 106:17 128:17,21 155:5 157:9 159:20 160:2 161:6 170:19 172:13 174:8,10, 12 224:18 235:18</p> <p><b>informative</b> 141:8 184:23 259:10</p> <p><b>informed</b> 136:15</p> <p><b>infrastructure</b> 16:3 17:6,9 18:4 24:4 26:10 71:22 72:10 76:2,18 110:15 113:9,16,17 114:24 131:13 135:14,17 138:17 140:24 228:7,18 230:20 231:8 237:15 241:19,20 253:15,23 254:4,5,11</p> <p><b>infrastructures</b> 12:9</p> <p><b>initiated</b> 83:23</p> <p><b>initiative</b> 13:13 68:19 75:6 90:20 222:6,18</p> <p><b>initiatives</b> 18:12 84:10 85:19 93:15 109:3 113:13</p> <p><b>innovative</b> 191:19</p> <p><b>inside</b> 131:13</p> <p><b>insights</b> 6:1</p> <p><b>insisting</b> 177:14</p> <p><b>inspired</b> 101:9 226:2</p> | <p><b>instability</b> 26:3 137:12</p> <p><b>install</b> 14:23 76:2 154:7</p> <p><b>installations</b> 11:24</p> <p><b>installed</b> 89:3</p> <p><b>installing</b> 14:9</p> <p><b>institutional</b> 67:23</p> <p><b>institutions</b> 191:15</p> <p><b>insufficient</b> 83:8</p> <p><b>insulated</b> 24:18</p> <p><b>insulating</b> 176:12</p> <p><b>insulation</b> 35:3,15 197:24 198:3,6,19 199:5 247:20</p> <p><b>intake</b> 159:14</p> <p><b>intel</b> 128:17</p> <p><b>intelligence</b> 23:21</p> <p><b>intelligent</b> 174:3</p> <p><b>intended</b> 180:2</p> <p><b>interconnect</b> 135:18 136:22 149:10</p> <p><b>interconnected</b> 126:10</p> <p><b>interconnection</b> 129:20 149:17,20 209:5</p> <p><b>interest</b> 131:21 150:6</p> <p><b>interested</b> 190:18</p> <p><b>interesting</b> 186:13</p> <p><b>interestingly</b> 191:24</p> <p><b>interests</b> 79:16</p> <p><b>International</b> 197:12</p> <p><b>internet</b> 157:21 188:13</p> <p><b>interrelated</b> 83:5</p> <p><b>intersection</b> 180:14</p> <p><b>interstate</b> 191:13</p> <p><b>intervene</b> 97:21 206:3,7, 15 208:16,20 209:1 247:10</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>intervening</b> 97:9,16</p> <p><b>intervention</b> 88:18 179:24</p> <p><b>interventions</b> 84:17 180:1</p> <p><b>intrigued</b> 190:18</p> <p><b>intriguing</b> 218:19</p> <p><b>introduced</b> 240:4</p> <p><b>invades</b> 95:14</p> <p><b>invest</b> 34:17 111:22<br/>121:16 191:21 217:9<br/>232:13</p> <p><b>invested</b> 17:10 83:8</p> <p><b>investible</b> 140:23</p> <p><b>investigate</b> 4:11 206:17</p> <p><b>investing</b> 75:24 133:19<br/>150:7 209:8</p> <p><b>investment</b> 27:24 72:13<br/>84:5 85:23 86:4 90:20<br/>110:12 113:9 114:2 115:1<br/>117:22 126:12,15,19<br/>151:17 177:2 196:21<br/>209:10 226:18 232:16<br/>241:18</p> <p><b>investments</b> 12:18 18:3<br/>25:12 71:21 72:9 92:15<br/>111:6 116:21 117:10,18<br/>121:4,14,19 122:1 125:23<br/>200:23 205:17 232:19</p> <p><b>investor-owned</b> 69:6 72:4<br/>73:11 109:10 205:19</p> <p><b>investors</b> 32:5 205:22</p> <p><b>invitation</b> 8:6 129:7</p> <p><b>invite</b> 129:24 141:16</p> <p><b>inviting</b> 22:18</p> <p><b>involve</b> 208:4</p> <p><b>involved</b> 80:21 102:20,21,<br/>24 105:18 206:5,12,13<br/>208:1,3,14,16,18</p> <p><b>involves</b> 168:18</p> | <p><b>island</b> 12:15 88:16 95:10</p> <p><b>ISO</b> 104:6 139:24</p> <p><b>isolated</b> 7:14</p> <p><b>issue</b> 7:19 8:13,23 35:11<br/>47:9 48:23 49:2 69:11<br/>77:1 80:7 82:6 127:18<br/>138:11,12,13 171:14<br/>178:1 185:15,23 214:3,5<br/>229:24</p> <p><b>issued</b> 12:14 14:15 69:13<br/>73:2 78:2 152:22</p> <p><b>issues</b> 9:15 10:17 21:17<br/>37:6 47:3 50:2 68:21 81:4<br/>107:5 176:6 180:4 184:2,<br/>12 203:18 212:1 216:11,<br/>12,23 229:19 230:1 242:1</p> <p><b>issuing</b> 47:2</p> <p><b>items</b> 40:3</p> <p><b>iteration</b> 188:18 189:21,<br/>22</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>J</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Jalen</b> 132:2</p> <p><b>James</b> 67:16</p> <p><b>Jamie</b> 6:17 67:8,18 93:22</p> <p><b>January</b> 79:2 141:23<br/>145:2,6 185:23 186:23</p> <p><b>Jersey</b> 6:22 8:4,22 11:3,<br/>16 12:5 19:21 37:20<br/>45:23 46:2,21 47:9 48:12<br/>49:16,18 74:2 78:16<br/>139:9 199:2</p> <p><b>job</b> 195:4,14 196:24</p> <p><b>jobs</b> 12:3 31:12 89:18<br/>236:22</p> <p><b>join</b> 8:14</p> <p><b>joined</b> 139:8</p> <p><b>joint</b> 4:10 59:20 108:9<br/>156:15 158:18 258:20</p> | <p><b>jointly</b> 5:20</p> <p><b>Jones</b> 2:16 3:17 4:3 6:10</p> <p><b>Jose</b> 30:21</p> <p><b>Juan</b> 240:19 249:11,12<br/>254:1</p> <p><b>judge</b> 206:23</p> <p><b>judicial</b> 205:5 207:1</p> <p><b>July</b> 78:21 79:1 197:18</p> <p><b>jump</b> 127:16</p> <p><b>jurisdictions</b> 138:7</p> <p><b>justice</b> 82:15 184:12<br/>194:17 234:18 241:13<br/>245:17 249:13</p> <p><b>justifies</b> 205:15</p> <p><b>justness</b> 206:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>K</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>keeping</b> 25:5 35:22<br/>166:18 250:13,14</p> <p><b>key</b> 25:16,17 43:2 82:18<br/>84:1 85:20 197:22 198:13</p> <p><b>kidding</b> 192:13</p> <p><b>kids</b> 22:14 217:22,24</p> <p><b>kilowatt</b> 186:1</p> <p><b>kind</b> 55:8,20 86:18 102:17<br/>103:1 125:6 150:6,16<br/>163:14 166:14 174:13<br/>177:6 189:15 243:5,15<br/>249:21</p> <p><b>kinds</b> 99:4 105:8 183:10,<br/>13 215:10 244:21</p> <p><b>Kleinman</b> 58:12 67:19,24</p> <p><b>knocking</b> 32:22</p> <p><b>knowing</b> 242:14</p> <p><b>knowledge</b> 163:23</p> <p><b>Krishen</b> 93:11 98:16</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| L                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                        |                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Laboratory</b> 70:20                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>latest</b> 180:2                                                    | <b>legislation</b> 18:1 27:14                                                                                   |
| <b>lack</b> 16:7 235:17                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>launch</b> 85:15,21 86:2<br>87:10                                   | 30:17 31:1 32:8,18 33:9<br>36:9 42:1 45:1 59:21<br>74:20 184:19                                                 |
| <b>Lakewood</b> 12:22                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>launched</b> 87:23 112:1                                            | <b>legislative</b> 2:7 3:23 4:8<br>21:12 38:13 68:8 81:21<br>100:21 259:21                                      |
| <b>Landau</b> 3:1,2 97:5,6 98:3,<br>8 99:7,15 152:11,16<br>153:6 154:13,24 156:8,14<br>157:15 158:17 159:23<br>160:15,18 162:19 164:10<br>165:1,5,23 193:4 209:20<br>210:14 221:7 225:10,18,<br>24 240:2 244:17 259:19 | <b>law</b> 35:13 69:3 95:5<br>124:16 166:10 168:10<br>206:23           | <b>legislators</b> 19:22                                                                                        |
| <b>landfills</b> 232:4                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Lawrence</b> 70:19                                                  | <b>legislature</b> 72:22 222:11                                                                                 |
| <b>landlord</b> 35:13                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>laws</b> 128:3 151:24                                               | <b>lens</b> 49:13                                                                                               |
| <b>landlords</b> 35:21 91:14,21                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>laying</b> 195:4,5                                                  | <b>lesson</b> 215:15                                                                                            |
| <b>landscape</b> 243:3                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>lead</b> 76:9                                                       | <b>lessons</b> 103:22,24                                                                                        |
| <b>language</b> 16:6,17 32:21                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>leader</b> 199:19 234:17                                            | <b>let alone</b> 244:12,15                                                                                      |
| <b>Lankenau</b> 58:20 81:17,24<br>97:8,15 98:5,14 99:9,17<br>101:15,22 104:16 107:12<br>120:13 193:18 200:18<br>201:15                                                                                                 | <b>leaders</b> 106:10 202:3                                            | <b>letter</b> 73:2 74:19 127:2,5                                                                                |
| <b>large</b> 9:4 10:3 18:16 28:5<br>47:8 70:12 109:6 117:6,7<br>190:4 199:23 205:5<br>208:19,24 209:11 215:22<br>216:10                                                                                                | <b>leadership</b> 142:23                                               | <b>letting</b> 252:23                                                                                           |
| <b>large-</b> 181:5                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>leading</b> 89:1 197:9                                              | <b>level</b> 22:20 25:9 33:24<br>38:22 39:4 52:7 55:3,20<br>56:4 74:24 147:3 181:12<br>196:8,9 220:17 247:11    |
| <b>largely</b> 76:22 77:1 80:4<br>133:18                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>leak</b> 84:14 230:20 231:15                                        | <b>levels</b> 10:16 17:24 32:4<br>92:24 93:4 138:1 148:13                                                       |
| <b>larger</b> 18:12 145:8 242:23                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>leaks</b> 241:24                                                    | <b>leverage</b> 243:1                                                                                           |
| <b>largest</b> 106:18 239:15                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>leaky</b> 231:14                                                    | <b>liberal</b> 199:6                                                                                            |
| <b>lastly</b> 201:17                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>leaps</b> 189:18                                                    | <b>liberty</b> 58:1                                                                                             |
| <b>late</b> 132:5 142:1 166:11,<br>15,18,23 168:6,21<br>169:19,24 170:16 188:24<br>211:18,19 212:9,11<br>213:7,8 244:3 256:8,9                                                                                         | <b>learn</b> 85:11 95:1                                                | <b>life</b> 82:13 92:19 111:3<br>144:20 204:9                                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>learned</b> 95:4,8 103:23,24<br>160:9                               | <b>lifespan</b> 88:6                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>learning</b> 102:11,16 226:11                                       | <b>lifetime</b> 113:21 226:24<br>227:3 228:3                                                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>leases</b> 78:14                                                    | <b>lift</b> 169:19 220:3                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>leave</b> 182:16 184:14<br>202:13 248:15                            | <b>light</b> 67:1                                                                                               |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>leaves</b> 197:21                                                   | <b>Lightning</b> 223:17                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>leaving</b> 232:2                                                   | <b>lights</b> 9:16                                                                                              |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>LED</b> 17:11                                                       | <b>LIHEAP</b> 16:4 27:21 62:7,8<br>90:16 112:14,17,21 113:4<br>123:5,7 153:7 154:12,19,<br>23 155:4,6 210:15,16 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>LEED</b> 178:19                                                     |                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>LEED-</b> 17:19                                                     |                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>left</b> 113:6 220:5 247:3                                          |                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>legacy</b> 113:16                                                   |                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>legal</b> 77:11 180:13 202:24<br>203:2,14,15 206:19<br>207:22 247:9 |                                                                                                                 |

|                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>liken</b> 131:10                                                                                                                      | 118:4 138:7 164:16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 251:11,12                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>limit</b> 62:17 227:8                                                                                                                 | 181:16 183:2,18 184:10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>low</b> 9:6 70:17 74:12 79:8<br>109:24 111:12 153:17<br>181:19 204:2                                                                                       |
| <b>limitation</b> 161:5                                                                                                                  | <b>locally</b> 110:17 114:10<br>254:18,19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>low-</b> 15:10                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>limitations</b> 51:11 160:9                                                                                                           | <b>located</b> 70:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>low-cost</b> 80:11 88:17                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>limited</b> 167:1                                                                                                                     | <b>locations</b> 120:22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>low-income</b> 83:1,14 90:15<br>92:7 111:21 120:19<br>122:11,15 124:18 154:7,8<br>155:16 159:3 169:1<br>193:21 203:16 209:16                               |
| <b>limits</b> 161:17                                                                                                                     | <b>lock</b> 11:1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>low-polluting</b> 183:9                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>lines</b> 17:12 29:2 47:24<br>55:10 191:14 254:21                                                                                     | <b>long</b> 24:5 27:5 36:6 40:18<br>73:22 122:21 128:9,11<br>176:19 206:9 207:18<br>242:17 249:24 250:11<br>254:21                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>lower</b> 12:3 13:7 26:16<br>29:21 49:22 56:12 80:14<br>88:20 91:22 92:12 96:7<br>113:14 166:9,14 167:18<br>169:14 191:4,8,9,10<br>192:2,3 200:3 218:12,16 |
| <b>Linnea</b> 225:6 230:7                                                                                                                | <b>long-</b> 113:14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>lowered</b> 25:12                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>liquid</b> 94:18                                                                                                                      | <b>long-term</b> 35:18 121:3<br>180:16 181:22 200:22<br>201:1 243:9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>lowering</b> 88:23 169:11<br>236:21                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Liquified</b> 110:14                                                                                                                  | <b>longer</b> 178:1 210:8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>lowers</b> 19:14 35:5 111:22                                                                                                                               |
| <b>list</b> 175:13 240:22                                                                                                                | <b>longstanding</b> 241:17                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>lowest</b> 120:4 122:2 235:7                                                                                                                               |
| <b>listen</b> 172:19 229:2                                                                                                               | <b>lookout</b> 57:1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>lowest-income</b> 194:13<br>235:8                                                                                                                          |
| <b>listened</b> 214:6 252:5                                                                                                              | <b>losing</b> 56:16 251:10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Lozada</b> 3:5,6                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>listening</b> 7:10 49:7<br>213:16,18 224:20 234:22                                                                                    | <b>lost</b> 25:24 29:7 117:13,15,<br>16 189:16 244:9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>lucky</b> 46:1                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>lists</b> 175:16                                                                                                                      | <b>lot</b> 5:13 9:3 22:3,22 29:4<br>30:13 38:3 40:19 41:10<br>44:24 50:24 54:6 56:14<br>95:5,21 99:11,13 102:16,<br>17 104:20 133:2 136:8,9<br>140:1,12 144:3 146:3<br>155:22 159:17 160:4<br>162:5 163:16 174:8<br>178:20 191:19 193:8<br>214:6 215:10 217:6<br>218:8,9 221:5 224:18<br>227:23 228:22 230:16<br>232:15 234:21 239:11<br>250:10,23,24 253:2 | <b>luxury</b> 194:10                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>livable</b> 97:14                                                                                                                     | <b>lots</b> 253:23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>live</b> 5:17 15:5 28:7 60:3<br>87:1 139:19 141:3<br>241:14,15                                                                        | <b>loud</b> 121:12 251:1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <hr/> <b>M</b> <hr/>                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>lives</b> 165:10                                                                                                                      | <b>love</b> 52:20 53:24 94:4<br>101:11 147:10 158:15<br>198:1 214:23 241:15,16                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>mad</b> 64:10                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>living</b> 5:2 9:11 34:19 60:5<br>211:4,5 250:11 252:12                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Madam</b> 58:4 107:14<br>224:11,22                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Liz</b> 120:12                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>made</b> 25:15 40:1 63:1<br>64:13 78:18 96:8 111:7<br>117:10,23 119:1 120:17<br>132:15 178:19 189:17<br>219:19 254:2 257:11,13                             |
| <b>LNG</b> 95:12,15 110:15<br>111:3 113:10,15 114:10<br>226:18 227:1,10 230:24<br>238:5                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>load</b> 44:1 70:12 71:5,19<br>74:12 103:12,14,15<br>104:13 129:12 134:12,15<br>136:7,9,10,12 137:11<br>140:20 149:7 182:20<br>255:23 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>loads</b> 28:6 71:7 102:10                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>local</b> 11:22 12:3 37:15<br>51:9 93:6 111:3 116:18                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>made-up</b> 5:16,19<br><b>magnanimous</b> 245:3<br><b>magnitude</b> 149:7<br><b>main</b> 62:24 65:22 116:3<br><b>mains</b> 47:23<br><b>maintain</b> 48:3 76:8 121:17 179:9<br><b>maintained</b> 110:22<br><b>maintaining</b> 115:16 116:18 118:2 132:23 134:5 140:14<br><b>major</b> 12:17 13:2 197:5<br><b>majority</b> 163:20<br><b>make</b> 2:17 5:22 30:3 40:10 41:5 44:13 48:2,13, 14,15 55:23 59:1 97:12 98:24 103:7 104:8,10 110:5 123:8 126:19 128:3 130:12 135:2 136:4,14 140:21 145:14 156:19 157:1 165:10 173:11 178:6 187:11 188:18 200:22 212:17 220:9 225:7,8 232:18,22 233:13 247:12,18 253:11,14 254:9 255:5<br><b>maker</b> 138:4 167:14<br><b>makers</b> 138:1<br><b>makes</b> 25:23 39:18 50:3 54:14 182:9 184:6 207:6, 9 253:24<br><b>making</b> 18:3 22:9 32:12 91:1,15 92:16 102:7 117:23 220:4,11 247:18 252:14<br><b>mama</b> 60:3<br><b>man</b> 143:7 241:4<br><b>manage</b> 62:24 80:18 87:19 | <b>managed</b> 248:21<br><b>management</b> 110:11 133:13 154:1<br><b>manager</b> 129:19<br><b>managers</b> 135:24<br><b>managing</b> 148:16 202:23 203:6,13<br><b>mandate</b> 124:10<br><b>mandated</b> 116:13<br><b>mandates</b> 124:6,12<br><b>mandatory</b> 101:1<br><b>Mansion</b> 86:1 87:24 88:14 89:4<br><b>mantras</b> 133:21<br><b>manufacturing</b> 40:6,24 71:13<br><b>map</b> 222:2<br><b>maps</b> 48:11 222:3,4<br><b>Marcellus</b> 96:4<br><b>March</b> 87:11 99:11,13<br><b>margin</b> 170:15<br><b>margins</b> 53:21<br><b>marine</b> 191:12<br><b>market</b> 25:1 32:19 70:18 95:20 104:6 110:19 114:22 118:16 134:22 140:18,24 150:1 151:12 186:12 192:23<br><b>market's</b> 103:16<br><b>marketing</b> 120:5<br><b>markets</b> 80:13 93:2 119:6 131:7 150:7<br><b>marking</b> 72:8<br><b>markup</b> 119:3<br><b>marry</b> 133:24<br><b>Maryland</b> 139:10 199:2 | <b>Massachusetts</b> 58:10 68:14 69:1 77:23 248:16<br><b>massive</b> 39:4 71:20 103:15 192:2<br><b>match</b> 42:9 256:14,20,24<br><b>matches</b> 138:18<br><b>materialize</b> 136:13<br><b>materially</b> 189:23<br><b>materials</b> 39:9<br><b>math</b> 162:21<br><b>matter</b> 58:4 143:9 212:4<br><b>matters</b> 229:16<br><b>Matzie</b> 27:14<br><b>maxed</b> 62:12<br><b>mayor</b> 6:14,18 7:8,22 8:3 20:7,14 31:5 41:19 45:18, 20 46:7 47:14,20 48:7 74:1 90:19 105:3 194:6 236:8<br><b>Mcconnell</b> 93:16<br><b>meaning</b> 210:1<br><b>means</b> 29:20 44:15 103:5 109:15 117:13 133:15 181:14 235:5 242:14 251:16,17,18<br><b>measures</b> 176:18 177:7,9 200:7<br><b>media</b> 16:20 143:5<br><b>medical</b> 133:1 204:17<br><b>medication</b> 204:15<br><b>medicine</b> 22:10<br><b>meet</b> 17:2 70:15 77:7 82:9 89:9 117:8 119:13 125:21 136:5 148:22 184:5 244:11<br><b>meeting</b> 5:13 9:16 237:7, 24 240:9 259:21 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>meetings</b> 23:17<br><b>meets</b> 176:3<br><b>megawatts</b> 78:5 182:20 257:19<br><b>member</b> 241:12 249:11,13<br><b>members</b> 2:18 5:9 6:8 8:7 20:9,15,16 21:8 45:13 59:19 81:15,20 85:10 106:14 108:6,9 115:7 127:17 128:15 129:6 130:1 131:9 148:20 185:5 202:1 225:23 250:21 258:20,23<br><b>membership</b> 54:23 201:24<br><b>memo</b> 230:11<br><b>memory</b> 44:4<br><b>mention</b> 32:15 124:1 181:2<br><b>mentioned</b> 8:10 37:21 39:12 43:13 120:13 181:7 193:10,13,17,19 201:8, 15,19 218:12<br><b>mentioning</b> 15:20<br><b>menu</b> 223:8<br><b>message</b> 121:10<br><b>messaging</b> 16:12<br><b>met</b> 44:14<br><b>meters</b> 17:13<br><b>method</b> 94:24<br><b>metrics</b> 201:7<br><b>metro</b> 83:2<br><b>mic</b> 75:9<br><b>microgrid</b> 191:15<br><b>Mid-atlantic</b> 70:10<br><b>midst</b> 49:24 51:3 145:17 146:9 171:17 | <b>Mikie</b> 10:22<br><b>mile</b> 230:21 231:14,15<br><b>miles</b> 228:9<br><b>military</b> 130:10<br><b>million</b> 12:7 33:16 70:4 79:10 110:24 112:11,17 113:19 119:23 122:14 124:13 130:15 153:12,19 154:2,16,19 163:16 208:7 236:9,10,17 238:5<br><b>millions</b> 17:9 176:16 208:9<br><b>mind</b> 25:5 56:8 152:8 173:17 219:21 235:4,13 239:4<br><b>minds</b> 23:7<br><b>mine</b> 234:15<br><b>minimize</b> 121:24<br><b>minimized</b> 178:7<br><b>minimizing</b> 141:1<br><b>minimum</b> 15:9,14 64:1 231:20<br><b>minute</b> 29:13<br><b>minutes</b> 233:14,18 234:1, 16<br><b>mirrored</b> 11:8,9<br><b>missed</b> 220:24<br><b>missing</b> 177:17 180:8 231:24 232:5<br><b>mission</b> 82:18 130:19 131:24 192:23<br><b>mission-driven</b> 130:18<br><b>Mitch</b> 234:16 240:14,16<br><b>Mitigation</b> 12:15<br><b>mix</b> 44:17 96:18 216:17<br><b>mobile</b> 85:22 86:15,19 87:3,11 99:2 | <b>model</b> 73:9,24 74:6 104:8<br><b>Modeled</b> 84:12<br><b>models</b> 105:8<br><b>moderate-income</b> 15:10 181:20 204:2<br><b>modern</b> 28:22 35:16<br><b>modernization</b> 113:12<br><b>modernize</b> 17:6<br><b>modest</b> 123:24<br><b>modify</b> 58:2<br><b>mom</b> 61:20<br><b>moment</b> 22:21 23:4 37:16 133:7 136:6 138:19 140:11 158:7,8 186:9<br><b>moments</b> 187:3<br><b>money</b> 22:1 29:4,23 33:21 63:3 124:7 125:20,24 162:2,11 163:2,16 167:2 179:11 182:4 208:4 227:17 228:21,22 253:14, 23 254:1,24 255:6,13 256:16<br><b>monitoring</b> 227:14<br><b>month</b> 60:9,12 61:12 62:7 63:6,10 64:24 66:10 120:24 123:12 162:11 167:2,21,22 197:10 244:15<br><b>month-to-month</b> 154:17<br><b>monthly</b> 10:4 35:5 64:5 66:16,20,21<br><b>months</b> 77:10 134:16 144:5 240:5<br><b>moral</b> 101:7<br><b>morning</b> 194:19 221:13 230:13 237:8,9 256:7<br><b>move</b> 75:8 101:13 127:18 133:14,22 134:1 138:8 142:3,15 144:18 148:21 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 151:19 152:15 165:3<br>224:12 238:10<br><b>moved</b> 66:1 68:4<br><b>moving</b> 5:4 52:9 102:18<br>103:1 121:15 133:12<br>148:9 181:11 187:2 231:5<br>244:14<br><b>Mulbry</b> 93:13<br><b>multi-unit</b> 15:6<br><b>multiple</b> 92:24 157:4<br>218:16<br><b>municipal</b> 15:8 33:24<br>89:12<br><b>municipalities</b> 11:10<br>12:16,23<br><b>municipality</b> 167:17<br><b>municipally</b> 109:11<br>220:12<br><b>municipally-owned</b> 218:6<br><b>mutual</b> 139:14<br><b>myriad</b> 145:12 | 135:9 228:9 237:17<br><b>nature</b> 149:5 186:11<br><b>necessarily</b> 37:23 209:22<br>215:4 216:11<br><b>NECS</b> 98:20<br><b>needed</b> 44:11 46:4 152:3<br>184:20 257:3<br><b>negotiate</b> 212:23<br><b>negotiated</b> 207:4<br><b>negotiations</b> 222:15<br><b>neighbor</b> 28:10 242:16<br><b>neighborhood</b> 85:4,6<br>86:22 98:10 144:19 236:1<br>239:5 247:8 255:3,5<br><b>neighborhoods</b> 99:5<br><b>neighbors</b> 23:9 24:8<br>26:15 27:22 33:6 37:8<br>55:6 194:13 199:9 241:16<br>242:5 250:20<br><b>nervous</b> 60:23<br><b>net</b> 220:19<br><b>network</b> 85:4,8 206:11<br><b>neutrality</b> 238:1<br><b>Newark</b> 12:18<br><b>NGO</b> 69:4<br><b>Nidhi</b> 93:11 98:16<br><b>night</b> 132:5 256:8,9 257:1,<br>4<br><b>NJBPU</b> 12:6,15 14:6<br><b>nodding</b> 36:9 174:9<br><b>non-gas</b> 249:2<br><b>non-pipe</b> 249:2<br><b>non-profit</b> 109:12<br><b>non-starter</b> 239:5<br><b>non-utility</b> 118:19<br><b>nonprofit</b> 68:20 69:21 | 192:18 221:21<br><b>Norcross</b> 10:21<br><b>North</b> 60:4 78:15 129:22<br><b>Northeast</b> 222:2,8<br><b>Northwest</b> 69:8<br><b>Nostrand</b> 6:17 67:9,10,15,<br>16,18 75:10 94:2,7,20<br>95:3 101:24 248:15<br><b>not-for-profit</b> 130:22<br>131:14,23<br><b>notch</b> 142:3<br><b>note</b> 2:10 72:18 198:24<br><b>noted</b> 77:2 143:19 185:11<br><b>notes</b> 168:2 246:9<br><b>notice</b> 63:7<br><b>notices</b> 152:21<br><b>Notwithstanding</b> 77:18<br><b>November</b> 68:17 142:1<br><b>nuclear</b> 24:3 30:23<br><b>number</b> 50:4 151:4,10<br>154:11 169:24 186:19<br>187:15 194:1,4 219:9,17<br>234:19 244:2 254:9<br><b>numbers</b> 154:15 170:24<br>171:6,19 172:2 |
| <hr/> <b>N</b> <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>N-O-S-T-R-A-N-D</b> 67:17<br><b>named</b> 243:16 248:3<br><b>names</b> 27:5 58:5<br><b>national</b> 7:18 8:12,22 26:9<br>68:20 69:10,20 70:20<br>76:23 79:16,21 129:16<br>132:20 134:2 138:13<br>191:16<br><b>nationally</b> 69:24 75:11<br>86:19 191:21<br><b>nationwide</b> 71:7<br><b>native</b> 115:20<br><b>natural</b> 68:23 71:17 75:3,<br>18 94:19 95:17,23 108:22<br>110:15 114:4,7 121:17                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <hr/> <b>O</b> <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>O&amp;m</b> 116:22<br><b>O'ROURKE</b> 35:9 36:12<br>106:13,16<br><b>O'Rourke's</b> 36:8<br><b>objective</b> 252:4<br><b>objectively</b> 104:22<br><b>obligation</b> 28:4 186:6<br><b>obstacles</b> 135:20<br><b>occur</b> 47:5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|                                   |                                 |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>occurs</b> 145:10              | 81:14 108:5 129:2 138:1         | 248:16                          |
| <b>October</b> 142:1              | 142:23 148:19 150:11            | <b>ordinance</b> 178:18         |
| <b>offer</b> 48:18 90:10 171:9,16 | 152:6 172:11 174:23             | <b>Ordinary</b> 9:7             |
| 174:16 259:4                      | <b>operate</b> 133:19 182:10    | <b>organization</b> 130:19      |
| <b>offering</b> 11:5              | 188:9                           | 131:23 140:3 201:24             |
| <b>offerings</b> 109:5 154:12     | <b>operated</b> 87:2 227:9      | 206:8 207:23                    |
| <b>office</b> 22:6,24 32:11 58:19 | <b>operates</b> 90:8            | <b>organizations</b> 18:22 85:9 |
| 82:1,7,11 86:10 105:17            | <b>operating</b> 116:17 117:15  | 90:10 234:19                    |
| 179:18 205:23,24 240:9            | 118:2 165:14 202:1              | <b>organizing</b> 226:16        |
| <b>office's</b> 82:18             | 205:18                          | <b>original</b> 160:24          |
| <b>offices</b> 25:7 146:21        | <b>operation</b> 130:9          | <b>Originally</b> 73:17         |
| <b>official</b> 25:2 56:7         | <b>operations</b> 113:11 131:9  | <b>orphaned</b> 232:10          |
| <b>officials</b> 34:15 41:15      | 169:21 209:3                    | <b>outcome</b> 149:21           |
| 51:10 55:19 57:14 245:6           | <b>operator</b> 139:22          | <b>outcomes</b> 81:3            |
| <b>offshore</b> 77:24 78:3,5,8,   | <b>operators</b> 200:15         | <b>outcry</b> 53:5              |
| 14 96:10 104:3                    | <b>opinion</b> 38:10 211:16     | <b>outdated</b> 176:4           |
| <b>oil</b> 94:23 232:12           | 214:23 259:10                   | <b>outlined</b> 201:13          |
| <b>older</b> 34:19 47:23 48:6     | <b>opinions</b> 214:8           | <b>outpaced</b> 69:15           |
| <b>oldest</b> 48:11 122:2         | <b>opportunistic</b> 219:2      | <b>outset</b> 193:17            |
| <b>on-2021</b> 199:4              | <b>opportunities</b> 48:1 80:10 | <b>outstripped</b> 79:18        |
| <b>one-on-one</b> 90:11           | 130:6 135:11 180:8 191:7        | <b>overcharges</b> 119:18       |
| <b>one-stop</b> 85:10             | 195:9 196:10 197:4              | <b>overdue</b> 55:9 73:22       |
| <b>one-time</b> 112:8             | <b>opportunity</b> 19:3,6 21:9  | <b>overlook</b> 43:24 44:15     |
| <b>one-year</b> 151:13            | 31:10 81:6 86:12 89:5,19        | <b>overlooked</b> 110:13        |
| <b>one-year-old</b> 249:17        | 93:10 108:14 132:6,13           | <b>overpay</b> 235:18           |
| <b>online</b> 24:2 30:8 31:11     | 173:13 174:14 177:17            | <b>overpaying</b> 235:9         |
| 40:20 43:5 48:2 77:7              | 191:18 196:4,18 198:17          | <b>overseen</b> 14:5            |
| 104:10 126:14 133:3               | 202:15 218:9 221:1              | <b>oversees</b> 98:20           |
| 150:3 154:10 188:9,14             | 223:6,11 245:11                 | <b>oversight</b> 2:8 3:23 4:8   |
| 189:1,9,11,14                     | <b>oppose</b> 226:17            | 26:24 36:3 59:21 68:8           |
| <b>onshore</b> 79:11,13           | <b>opposed</b> 134:1 137:17     | 81:21 118:24 131:2              |
| <b>onsite</b> 28:1                | <b>opposition</b> 245:6         | 259:21                          |
| <b>OOS</b> 83:17,23 89:11 93:4    | <b>opt</b> 13:12 128:10 146:2   | <b>overturned</b> 78:9          |
| <b>OOS's</b> 93:11                | 157:24 159:1 162:12             | <b>owned</b> 109:11 220:12      |
| <b>opaque</b> 205:3               | <b>opting</b> 158:2             | <b>owners</b> 83:14 200:14      |
| <b>open</b> 18:5 23:7 59:10       | <b>option</b> 37:24 118:17      |                                 |
|                                   | <b>options</b> 43:15 216:18     |                                 |
|                                   | <b>order</b> 2:17 3:21 78:2     |                                 |
|                                   | 97:12 152:2 156:2 206:16        |                                 |

|                                 |                                  |                                 |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>ownership</b> 34:5           | 135:13 137:21 147:17             | <b>patience</b> 59:3 224:16     |
| <b>owning</b> 116:17            | 156:7 164:11 170:9,11            | 259:11                          |
| <b>owns</b> 34:3                | 192:3 194:17 218:22              | <b>Patrick</b> 240:14 245:16    |
|                                 | 219:17 220:13 222:14             | <b>Patriots</b> 93:24 94:3,8    |
|                                 | 236:16 255:10                    |                                 |
| <b>P</b>                        | <b>participant</b> 46:23 47:12   | <b>pay</b> 22:1,9,10,13 28:9    |
|                                 | 111:20                           | 60:13 61:15 63:22 64:1          |
| <b>p.m.</b> 259:22              | <b>participants</b> 29:22 155:5  | 66:11 75:19 79:24 92:2          |
| <b>Pacific</b> 69:8             | <b>participate</b> 14:4 129:8    | 109:16 119:13 123:12            |
| <b>pages</b> 207:18             | 131:10,22 216:8                  | 125:23 127:6 159:6              |
| <b>paid</b> 63:9 64:4,15,17,21  | <b>participated</b> 179:24       | 167:24 177:15,16 186:8,         |
| 66:17,18 119:23 162:10          | <b>participating</b> 6:5         | 10 209:13 212:13,15             |
| <b>pain</b> 22:22               | <b>participation</b> 215:19      | <b>payback</b> 177:11,12        |
| <b>painful</b> 24:21            | 259:8                            | <b>paycheck</b> 9:11,12         |
| <b>painting</b> 228:1           | <b>parties</b> 154:21 206:2      | <b>payer</b> 112:11             |
| <b>pairs</b> 250:4              | 207:10                           | <b>payers</b> 111:15 113:8      |
| <b>panel</b> 5:10 6:11 20:21    | <b>partner</b> 7:21 86:15 88:2   | <b>paying</b> 18:18 31:12 32:11 |
| 41:13 54:1 57:13,24 58:2,       | <b>partnering</b> 84:4           | 35:24 66:14 78:13 91:21         |
| 5,7,22 59:8 81:13 100:8         | <b>partners</b> 10:16 27:1 82:12 | 231:12 237:20 246:4,5           |
| 101:13 107:15 125:10,11         | 85:18 214:17                     | <b>payment</b> 60:14,15 62:22,  |
| 127:19 148:22 152:14,15         | <b>partnership</b> 89:11 90:9    | 23 63:1 66:20                   |
| 162:18 165:4 172:16             | 93:4                             | <b>pays</b> 118:10 122:20       |
| 174:22 221:6 226:14             | <b>partnerships</b> 18:9 84:23   | 167:24                          |
| <b>panelist</b> 127:16          | 85:1                             | <b>PEA</b> 36:17,23 157:13      |
| <b>panels</b> 14:9,23 33:18     | <b>party</b> 157:11 160:15,21    | 179:20 180:7,23 184:16          |
| 39:21 40:14 107:24 147:9        | <b>pass</b> 165:2 197:15         | 209:4 236:4,10                  |
| 213:22 226:13 255:2,16          | <b>passed</b> 28:15 73:10,13,17  | <b>peak</b> 29:20 30:2 119:13   |
| 259:7                           | 102:4 119:2 124:2,16             | 255:23,24 256:11                |
| <b>paper</b> 63:16 140:6 150:16 | 197:20                           | <b>peaks</b> 110:19             |
| <b>paradigm</b> 133:7 140:11    | <b>passing</b> 199:20            | <b>PECO</b> 59:17 60:7 61:10    |
| <b>paradigm-</b> 149:4          | <b>past</b> 69:16 75:13 77:9     | 62:19 64:11 65:9,14,21,         |
| <b>paraphrase</b> 174:4         | 110:20 114:18 123:4              | 22 66:23 67:1 90:17 97:9,       |
| <b>pardon</b> 90:22             | 140:13,16 206:12 250:12          | 17 107:18 115:11,12             |
| <b>Parents</b> 22:11            | <b>Patel</b> 173:6 202:21,22     | 117:5 118:9 119:19              |
| <b>Parker's</b> 90:19           | 203:8,9,12 210:10 212:5          | 120:24 124:5 139:4              |
| <b>parking</b> 17:16            | 213:6,9                          | 141:22 143:19 144:14            |
| <b>part</b> 18:12 43:16 49:8    | <b>Paterson</b> 12:20            | 152:19 157:1 166:13             |
| 70:12 73:13 82:18 95:19         | <b>path</b> 248:13               | 186:5 205:10,20 208:7           |
| 96:18 107:9 128:18              |                                  | 209:17 213:15 244:24            |
|                                 |                                  | 246:18 253:9,15,24              |
|                                 |                                  | 254:12,20 257:7                 |
|                                 |                                  | <b>PECO's</b> 31:17 180:2       |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>209:3 251:3</p> <p><b>peer</b> 200:11</p> <p><b>peers</b> 199:1,11</p> <p><b>Penn</b> 195:17</p> <p><b>pennies</b> 254:10</p> <p><b>Pennsauken</b> 12:22</p> <p><b>Pennsylvania</b> 7:16 8:21<br/>27:24 30:16,18 31:8<br/>58:13 67:21 68:1 72:21<br/>75:23 79:9 109:14 111:16<br/>112:18 113:3 115:22<br/>122:18 129:21 132:14<br/>139:9 208:23 219:3<br/>220:20 222:4,10 230:10<br/>239:15</p> <p><b>Pennsylvania's</b> 24:10<br/>32:18 114:7 117:6 118:15<br/>124:3 221:24</p> <p><b>penny</b> 253:11</p> <p><b>people</b> 17:2 21:24 22:4,<br/>22,24 25:20 30:13 32:10<br/>44:24 46:15 50:5,9 56:5<br/>57:16 100:13,23 101:3,4<br/>115:18 123:6 130:16<br/>139:19 141:3 147:2,23<br/>155:24 156:3 157:20<br/>158:23,24 159:8 162:6,<br/>13,24 167:11,19 172:17<br/>173:10 180:11,12 204:11<br/>210:2,7 211:15,20 212:9,<br/>13,14,19 231:5 234:5<br/>235:6 237:13 240:12<br/>242:12 248:2 249:23<br/>251:22 252:18</p> <p><b>people's</b> 31:14 56:12<br/>148:16 161:10,17 186:2<br/>228:24 234:20 236:21</p> <p><b>Peralta</b> 240:19 249:10,11,<br/>12</p> <p><b>percent</b> 11:18 13:17 14:13<br/>15:9,15 31:18 70:6,23<br/>71:2,10,11 72:8 75:17,19</p> | <p>78:22 83:3 84:13 88:12<br/>110:3 116:6,10,12 117:12<br/>119:10,21 150:14 164:1<br/>169:2 181:19 193:23,24<br/>194:5 195:12 196:5<br/>197:19 223:20 231:19<br/>251:4</p> <p><b>percentage</b> 119:19<br/>122:20 170:15</p> <p><b>Perelman</b> 173:4,16,22<br/>185:2,6 218:23</p> <p><b>Perez</b> 10:24</p> <p><b>performance</b> 35:17<br/>199:22 200:9 201:5</p> <p><b>period</b> 74:11 129:11<br/>256:3,4</p> <p><b>periods</b> 137:11</p> <p><b>permanent</b> 16:2</p> <p><b>permitted</b> 131:20</p> <p><b>perpetuate</b> 228:6</p> <p><b>persistent</b> 9:21</p> <p><b>person</b> 7:3 38:2 107:3<br/>122:23 143:12,16 144:1,3<br/>146:1,5 147:4 161:13<br/>162:1 165:20 214:19<br/>224:23 229:8</p> <p><b>person's</b> 50:10,11</p> <p><b>perspective</b> 8:15 37:15<br/>53:12 100:3,19 101:11<br/>105:5 129:9 137:3,23<br/>149:23 158:13,15 174:5,<br/>16 180:6 186:18 191:23<br/>202:17 219:3,6 224:5<br/>226:9,22 228:23</p> <p><b>perspectives</b> 82:6 226:13</p> <p><b>Peter</b> 225:8 233:10</p> <p><b>petition</b> 206:3,7,14</p> <p><b>PGM</b> 96:22</p> <p><b>PGW</b> 108:13,18 109:3,9<br/>110:2,9,21 113:22 114:14</p> | <p>141:22 144:15 152:19<br/>153:10 165:11,15 166:13<br/>205:10 209:17 213:16,17<br/>226:15,23 228:12 229:5,<br/>12 237:13,22 238:14<br/>243:17 246:18 248:4</p> <p><b>PGW's</b> 90:17 230:16,20<br/>237:5 238:12</p> <p><b>phases</b> 13:7</p> <p><b>phasing</b> 237:16</p> <p><b>PHDC</b> 90:6 93:15</p> <p><b>Philadelphia</b> 2:6 4:20<br/>5:18 7:15 8:8,12,20 9:3<br/>11:9 20:20 21:13 22:7<br/>31:9,13 33:13 34:3,4<br/>35:11 36:15 37:4,8 38:17<br/>43:22 49:5,15 50:14 52:1<br/>58:19 60:4 68:4 69:12<br/>70:11 80:9 83:16,21<br/>84:21 86:8,9 89:23 90:21,<br/>22 92:9 94:11 106:1<br/>108:17 112:16 113:10,19<br/>153:14 160:4,17 163:13<br/>172:15 175:4 178:14<br/>181:18 182:22,23 191:4,<br/>10 192:19 202:9 204:20<br/>223:4 232:11 235:6<br/>239:23 243:8 246:3,20<br/>249:5 253:21</p> <p><b>Philadelphia's</b> 89:8,15<br/>109:7 112:12 113:7 114:6<br/>197:11 234:17</p> <p><b>Philadelphian</b> 114:18<br/>115:21</p> <p><b>Philadelphians</b> 21:21<br/>37:1 79:24 82:14,22<br/>86:21 92:1,18 93:8<br/>152:23 168:4,8 193:22<br/>194:11 203:17 204:3,6<br/>209:13</p> <p><b>Philadelphians'</b> 82:19</p> <p><b>Phillips</b> 3:9,10</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><b>Philly</b> 91:10 92:11 173:5<br/>185:7 190:20 220:4<br/>236:19 241:12 246:22<br/>249:15 251:9</p> <p><b>phone</b> 20:5 106:15</p> <p><b>phrase</b> 53:23</p> <p><b>physically</b> 61:4 188:1</p> <p><b>Physicians</b> 230:9</p> <p><b>picture</b> 228:1</p> <p><b>piece</b> 32:8 33:9 221:16</p> <p><b>pieces</b> 193:12</p> <p><b>PII</b> 159:20</p> <p><b>pilot</b> 86:1 88:14 112:2<br/>165:16</p> <p><b>pipe</b> 241:23</p> <p><b>pipeline</b> 228:9 230:21<br/>231:16</p> <p><b>pipelines</b> 96:3</p> <p><b>pipes</b> 76:1</p> <p><b>pitch</b> 191:9</p> <p><b>Pittsburgh</b> 231:23</p> <p><b>PJM</b> 52:14,19,21 53:4,11<br/>54:15,23 70:18 95:7<br/>97:10 98:4,5 100:8,14,18<br/>102:22 103:9 105:7,19<br/>129:20 130:2,15,20,23<br/>131:7,10,13,22 132:16<br/>133:10 136:3,22 138:3<br/>139:9 140:7,12 147:11<br/>148:3 150:1,10 151:11<br/>181:4,9 186:14 214:12<br/>215:3 216:5,6,13,20<br/>219:21 253:16 255:21<br/>257:8,9,21 258:11</p> <p><b>PJM's</b> 129:9 135:24</p> <p><b>place</b> 40:3,17 43:19 54:7<br/>57:4 72:11 74:14 128:4<br/>143:21 148:7 152:20<br/>175:19 183:24 187:24<br/>191:11 202:5 227:8</p> | <p>253:13</p> <p><b>places</b> 38:18 164:17<br/>175:23</p> <p><b>plan</b> 78:4 131:7 136:3<br/>223:17 236:16 237:22</p> <p><b>planned</b> 72:9</p> <p><b>planning</b> 71:20 72:5<br/>140:21 165:15</p> <p><b>plannings</b> 18:7</p> <p><b>plans</b> 33:3</p> <p><b>plant</b> 29:11,14 134:17<br/>226:18 227:1,10 239:2<br/>253:19</p> <p><b>planting</b> 13:2</p> <p><b>plants</b> 12:1 151:15<br/>239:10,22 253:17</p> <p><b>platform</b> 138:5</p> <p><b>play</b> 43:2,3 92:16 257:6,7</p> <p><b>pleased</b> 117:4</p> <p><b>pleasure</b> 21:14 115:17</p> <p><b>plenty</b> 256:3</p> <p><b>plug</b> 79:13 96:13 145:17</p> <p><b>pocket</b> 251:8</p> <p><b>pockets</b> 251:7</p> <p><b>point</b> 48:9 63:24 76:24<br/>94:17 129:14 162:21<br/>169:12 188:17,20 189:2<br/>190:9 198:7 210:15<br/>220:10</p> <p><b>points</b> 185:16 188:12<br/>229:14 243:1</p> <p><b>policies</b> 5:20 34:12 76:24<br/>82:8 194:14</p> <p><b>policy</b> 6:3 24:23 58:12<br/>67:20 68:18 79:22 93:14,<br/>17 107:17 114:11 115:10,<br/>13 137:24 138:3,4,6,9<br/>167:14</p> | <p><b>politics</b> 181:24</p> <p><b>pollution</b> 227:5 236:20<br/>239:7</p> <p><b>poor</b> 111:13 112:3</p> <p><b>pop-up</b> 13:6</p> <p><b>population</b> 9:4 46:14<br/>109:8 112:4</p> <p><b>port</b> 191:12 225:17 226:17</p> <p><b>portfolio</b> 44:13</p> <p><b>portion</b> 47:13 75:11</p> <p><b>portions</b> 109:7</p> <p><b>position</b> 23:14 42:4 50:9<br/>51:7 67:23 132:24 150:22<br/>162:1 211:20 252:9</p> <p><b>positioned</b> 11:21</p> <p><b>possibilities</b> 191:3</p> <p><b>possibility</b> 36:22</p> <p><b>possibly</b> 186:4 239:21<br/>251:18</p> <p><b>posted</b> 143:4</p> <p><b>potential</b> 54:22 120:21<br/>149:19 218:18</p> <p><b>potentially</b> 109:4 140:9<br/>207:4</p> <p><b>poverty</b> 83:6,24 85:16<br/>89:6 163:13 169:2 201:14<br/>212:20</p> <p><b>power</b> 12:1 16:10,11 26:8<br/>29:11,13 37:5 48:4,5<br/>131:1 134:17 151:15<br/>182:4,24 183:5,7,9<br/>185:21 187:11 189:6<br/>191:24 192:5,6 220:16<br/>239:2,9,22 243:2 254:18<br/>255:15 256:4 257:3,5,14,<br/>16,20</p> <p><b>powerful</b> 36:16</p> <p><b>powerhouses</b> 104:23</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Powerlines</b> 69:20 72:4</p> <p><b>practical</b> 186:17 226:5</p> <p><b>practices</b> 17:19 33:5 34:11</p> <p><b>pre-purchase</b> 110:17</p> <p><b>precedent</b> 133:6</p> <p><b>precisely</b> 110:18</p> <p><b>predatory</b> 33:5</p> <p><b>predicted</b> 71:10</p> <p><b>premium</b> 178:4</p> <p><b>prepare</b> 223:2</p> <p><b>prepared</b> 53:1</p> <p><b>preparing</b> 82:16 91:8</p> <p><b>preponderance</b> 188:22</p> <p><b>present</b> 2:18,20,23 3:3,7, 11,15,20 98:1 259:2</p> <p><b>presented</b> 54:23</p> <p><b>presents</b> 31:9</p> <p><b>preserve</b> 228:5</p> <p><b>preserving</b> 122:8 129:10</p> <p><b>president</b> 7:3 108:12 175:3</p> <p><b>press</b> 226:4</p> <p><b>pressing</b> 238:13</p> <p><b>pressure</b> 10:10,11 31:21 72:14 119:7</p> <p><b>pressures</b> 109:24</p> <p><b>presuppose</b> 190:12</p> <p><b>pretty</b> 39:17 44:23 60:21 64:18 65:4,20 96:11 126:11 127:21 144:19 219:12</p> <p><b>prevent</b> 16:8 27:17</p> <p><b>prevents</b> 31:9</p> <p><b>previewed</b> 104:19</p> | <p><b>previously</b> 170:3</p> <p><b>price</b> 33:7 104:11</p> <p><b>prices</b> 24:7 26:5 56:15 70:18 71:17 79:19 95:15, 16,17 96:6 110:19</p> <p><b>pricing</b> 103:19</p> <p><b>primarily</b> 70:14 119:10 230:15</p> <p><b>primary</b> 108:24 153:24</p> <p><b>prior</b> 68:24 97:18</p> <p><b>priorities</b> 134:3 138:6</p> <p><b>prioritize</b> 34:13</p> <p><b>prioritizing</b> 194:12</p> <p><b>privacy</b> 158:1 161:10,11, 17</p> <p><b>private</b> 10:16</p> <p><b>privilege</b> 19:10 45:17 158:8 194:9</p> <p><b>proactive</b> 121:20</p> <p><b>problem</b> 7:14,17,18 8:20, 21 25:15 49:4,15,18 50:16 51:13,14,23 65:10 123:19 126:5 191:22 215:4 224:10 256:5</p> <p><b>problems</b> 65:24 217:1 242:6</p> <p><b>proceed</b> 67:13 225:13,19</p> <p><b>proceeding</b> 207:1</p> <p><b>proceedings</b> 69:7 80:23 97:10,11 205:6</p> <p><b>proceeds</b> 222:18</p> <p><b>process</b> 29:7 40:5 47:23 162:23 163:7 181:9</p> <p><b>processes</b> 235:11</p> <p><b>procured</b> 40:4</p> <p><b>procurement</b> 104:2</p> <p><b>procurements</b> 118:23</p> | <p><b>procuring</b> 104:3</p> <p><b>produce</b> 49:9 80:13 254:18</p> <p><b>produced</b> 256:2</p> <p><b>producer</b> 220:7 222:1</p> <p><b>producing</b> 41:17,23 49:6 50:2 52:6</p> <p><b>production</b> 41:3 219:11 232:12</p> <p><b>professionals</b> 130:11</p> <p><b>professor</b> 69:3</p> <p><b>profit</b> 32:4 53:21 74:23 101:3 131:15 170:15 251:5,6,15,23</p> <p><b>profiting</b> 100:23</p> <p><b>profits</b> 24:12 31:17 72:16 251:3 254:2</p> <p><b>program</b> 13:18 14:5,6,11 15:2 39:23 45:22 46:20 47:12 79:4 90:2,8,16 91:5,24 92:10 93:11 111:3 112:2,10 122:12 123:3 153:11,16,17,18,21 154:1,22 155:10 156:3,5 158:3,19,21 159:4 162:7 163:1,24 164:5 166:22 167:3 169:4,7,8,10 175:20,24 200:8 203:20 223:15 246:22,23</p> <p><b>Programming</b> 89:13</p> <p><b>programs</b> 12:16 15:19 16:13 27:22 29:11,16,23 36:21 80:16 82:9 84:8,22 85:12 86:4 87:13 89:22 90:13,14,18 91:4,12 93:17 111:21 113:12,24 122:10 124:4,17 145:12, 15,18,22 146:3,9 154:6 155:8,13 156:17,20 157:2,19,24 158:5,13 159:3 162:4 167:13 170:7 175:19 176:22 177:15</p> |
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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>196:22 197:2 198:22<br/>199:22 200:13 201:11<br/>209:2,7,16,19 210:3<br/>235:2,10 236:18 246:17</p> <p><b>prohibitively</b> 109:6</p> <p><b>project</b> 13:1 38:24 39:7<br/>87:24</p> <p><b>projected</b> 248:5</p> <p><b>projection</b> 195:19</p> <p><b>projections</b> 103:16<br/>207:19</p> <p><b>projects</b> 12:8,20 15:8<br/>25:19 31:4 37:22 38:6,9,<br/>14,24 40:19 43:12 78:3,<br/>15,19,24 79:14 80:12<br/>86:17 96:14 149:18<br/>165:17</p> <p><b>promise</b> 51:3</p> <p><b>promote</b> 28:1 82:8 113:22<br/>190:11</p> <p><b>promoted</b> 16:5</p> <p><b>promoting</b> 38:3 122:7</p> <p><b>proof</b> 160:6</p> <p><b>properties</b> 46:11,16,17</p> <p><b>proportion</b> 111:14</p> <p><b>proposal</b> 120:24 245:2</p> <p><b>proposals</b> 102:23</p> <p><b>propose</b> 249:1</p> <p><b>proposed</b> 31:18 121:2<br/>238:5 239:13</p> <p><b>proposes</b> 236:8</p> <p><b>Pros</b> 222:15</p> <p><b>prospectively</b> 190:8</p> <p><b>protect</b> 33:6 34:7 55:6<br/>97:14 161:9,12,16</p> <p><b>protection</b> 27:2 125:14</p> <p><b>protections</b> 34:9</p> | <p><b>proud</b> 33:10 194:16</p> <p><b>proven</b> 114:1</p> <p><b>provide</b> 11:13 20:11 53:7<br/>59:9 86:23 88:18 98:11<br/>108:4,21 114:15 129:9<br/>142:4 174:5,15 184:17<br/>187:21,22 203:15 227:21<br/>234:7 252:12</p> <p><b>provided</b> 79:6 112:8<br/>116:23 122:13 172:12</p> <p><b>providers</b> 11:12 18:24</p> <p><b>providing</b> 91:16 182:8</p> <p><b>provisions</b> 25:17 130:24<br/>197:22</p> <p><b>PSE&amp;G</b> 11:12,15 14:18<br/>47:21 139:3</p> <p><b>public</b> 2:9 3:21 4:1,10<br/>7:11 9:12 10:15 12:5,11<br/>13:3 19:6 27:15 31:21<br/>45:24 46:22 47:7 57:16<br/>59:22 68:9,15 81:22<br/>90:12 105:23 107:9<br/>115:13 117:19 122:18<br/>172:17,20 173:10,14<br/>179:22 180:4 203:21<br/>204:1,24 205:9 208:16<br/>221:11 224:12,14,20,24<br/>225:1 233:16 241:18<br/>259:21</p> <p><b>publish</b> 89:14</p> <p><b>PUC</b> 80:22 98:2 105:18<br/>117:1,4 118:24 152:1<br/>156:2 208:12 247:11<br/>254:8</p> <p><b>PUC's</b> 117:8</p> <p><b>PUC-REGULATED</b><br/>109:11</p> <p><b>pull</b> 132:1</p> <p><b>pullback</b> 43:17 55:22</p> <p><b>pulled</b> 26:1 39:1,16 79:13</p> | <p><b>pulling</b> 96:13</p> <p><b>pumps</b> 41:4 71:16 76:13<br/>84:19 200:19 231:7</p> <p><b>punishing</b> 212:19</p> <p><b>purchase</b> 118:18</p> <p><b>pure</b> 31:20</p> <p><b>purpose</b> 114:15</p> <p><b>push</b> 200:14</p> <p><b>pushback</b> 198:14</p> <p><b>pushed</b> 26:4,5</p> <p><b>pushing</b> 213:24</p> <p><b>put</b> 24:6 25:19 33:17 40:3<br/>42:3 46:10 51:6 54:7<br/>62:13 63:3,10,16 66:13,<br/>15 74:14 127:1 143:20<br/>146:8 149:22 150:22<br/>159:4 161:24 164:18<br/>175:19 181:15 190:22<br/>208:2 211:20 215:12<br/>221:22 227:5 229:18<br/>235:21 239:10 251:21,22<br/>252:8 254:22</p> <p><b>Putnam</b> 253:19</p> <p><b>putting</b> 50:8 119:7 182:21<br/>198:9 202:4 211:6 236:13<br/>239:9 245:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Q</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>qualified</b> 11:14</p> <p><b>qualify</b> 39:19 112:5 210:2</p> <p><b>Qualifying</b> 14:10</p> <p><b>quality</b> 82:13 89:1,18<br/>92:19 179:10</p> <p><b>quarter</b> 83:1 230:21<br/>231:14,15</p> <p><b>quasi-</b> 175:5</p> <p><b>question</b> 38:20 42:21<br/>48:21 51:2 53:23 73:7</p> |
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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>77:4 94:12 99:21 100:1,6<br/>102:1 103:10 105:19<br/>147:7,8 150:20 156:15,16<br/>159:18 160:13 161:1<br/>163:22 164:2 165:11,21<br/>166:5 185:12 186:13<br/>190:2,10 213:21 215:2<br/>221:17 223:9 238:20<br/>255:20</p> <p><b>questions</b> 20:17 23:13<br/>37:10,18 59:10 81:15<br/>93:19,23 97:4 99:20,23<br/>100:7 101:7,16,21 103:24<br/>108:5 125:3,12 127:17<br/>128:16 129:2 138:22<br/>141:5 142:24 152:18<br/>162:17 174:23 192:8<br/>210:6 211:13 258:19,22</p> <p><b>queue</b> 181:10 216:14</p> <p><b>quick</b> 43:5 143:1 152:18<br/>175:14 179:16 181:8<br/>209:14 210:13 211:12<br/>212:2,7 237:4</p> <p><b>quickly</b> 31:11 65:6</p> <p><b>quo</b> 202:10</p> <p><b>quorum</b> 3:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>R</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>race</b> 103:5</p> <p><b>Rachel</b> 93:13</p> <p><b>radioactive</b> 232:1,6</p> <p><b>rail</b> 191:13</p> <p><b>raise</b> 101:6 205:10</p> <p><b>range</b> 82:5 116:12</p> <p><b>rapidly</b> 39:15</p> <p><b>rarely</b> 220:21</p> <p><b>rate</b> 31:18 33:3 69:7,19,23<br/>72:22 73:15 75:14 76:10,<br/>17 80:21 97:10,17 109:17<br/>111:15 112:11 113:7</p> | <p>120:15,23 142:7 143:19,<br/>23 144:4 145:1 180:1,9<br/>205:11,13,15,21 208:12<br/>209:7 217:22,23 245:2<br/>248:8</p> <p><b>rate-making</b> 180:10</p> <p><b>rates</b> 9:14 26:6 70:5 72:15<br/>74:8 109:23 116:24<br/>120:12 121:2 125:24<br/>126:16 205:10 206:18,20<br/>209:13 217:18</p> <p><b>ratio</b> 83:12</p> <p><b>re-enrolled</b> 33:2</p> <p><b>re-erolled</b> 33:2</p> <p><b>re-industrialization</b><br/>217:15</p> <p><b>re-industrializing</b> 191:3</p> <p><b>re-look</b> 128:2</p> <p><b>reach</b> 19:1 26:9 86:20<br/>87:2 120:13 145:11</p> <p><b>reached</b> 62:17 97:17</p> <p><b>reaching</b> 59:15 70:1<br/>167:11</p> <p><b>REACT</b> 16:4</p> <p><b>reactors</b> 30:24</p> <p><b>read</b> 4:4 36:7</p> <p><b>ready</b> 2:3,14</p> <p><b>real</b> 22:22 79:23 117:18,<br/>24 143:1 175:14 178:11<br/>179:15 198:16 209:14<br/>210:13 212:7 237:22</p> <p><b>realistic</b> 186:17</p> <p><b>reality</b> 21:20 25:8 108:16<br/>250:9</p> <p><b>realize</b> 243:15</p> <p><b>reason</b> 61:13 128:19<br/>144:21 161:12 229:5<br/>254:16</p> | <p><b>reasonable</b> 206:21</p> <p><b>reasonableness</b> 206:18</p> <p><b>reasons</b> 5:14 214:7 219:9<br/>250:23,24</p> <p><b>receive</b> 14:12 46:24 63:6<br/>64:23 79:10 112:16<br/>118:19 145:8 176:22</p> <p><b>received</b> 39:21 62:7 70:9<br/>98:23</p> <p><b>receiving</b> 232:4</p> <p><b>recent</b> 9:18 25:10 31:17<br/>68:13 80:7 87:21 120:23<br/>189:3 245:1</p> <p><b>recently</b> 12:6 78:12 79:11<br/>97:22 136:1 144:23 189:7</p> <p><b>receptive</b> 216:6</p> <p><b>recess</b> 259:16</p> <p><b>Reclaim</b> 234:17</p> <p><b>recognition</b> 139:2</p> <p><b>recognize</b> 5:22 44:16<br/>114:4 141:7,13 142:9<br/>195:16</p> <p><b>recognized</b> 5:7 6:8 117:5<br/>139:8 149:13</p> <p><b>recognizes</b> 28:3 40:7<br/>93:21 97:5 152:11 166:3<br/>245:20</p> <p><b>recognizing</b> 190:23</p> <p><b>recommendation</b> 176:21</p> <p><b>recommendations</b> 84:2<br/>120:7</p> <p><b>recommended</b> 207:6</p> <p><b>reconceptualizing</b> 219:21</p> <p><b>reconsider</b> 207:13</p> <p><b>reconsidering</b> 75:1</p> <p><b>reconstituted</b> 186:15</p> <p><b>record</b> 7:24 21:4 45:7<br/>59:12 67:13 70:1 72:5</p> |
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| 81:11 108:3 128:24 141:9<br>174:20 175:9 185:9<br>202:19 225:2,12 229:18<br>230:5 233:7 241:9 249:9<br>254:2<br><br><b>records</b> 244:15<br><b>recover</b> 24:11<br><b>recovered</b> 151:17<br><b>recovering</b> 126:15<br><b>recreates</b> 176:5<br><b>recreating</b> 184:11<br><b>redesigning</b> 140:9<br><b>redevelopment</b> 192:2<br><b>redid</b> 210:16<br><b>reduce</b> 11:2 12:1,10 13:15<br>29:20 31:2 34:21 36:24<br>46:5 80:12 87:9,19 88:9,<br>10,15 93:7 113:14 196:3<br>197:16 201:6<br><br><b>reduced</b> 25:22 111:18<br>154:10,17<br><br><b>reducing</b> 82:15 89:17<br>201:7 209:12 236:20<br><br><b>reducing-demand</b> 195:11<br><br><b>reduction</b> 25:18 78:23<br>84:8 111:21 124:11<br>153:18 231:2<br><br><b>reductions</b> 197:19 222:20<br><br><b>reference</b> 74:1<br><br><b>refinery</b> 184:14 239:8<br><br><b>reflect</b> 67:22 88:3<br><br><b>reflected</b> 114:21<br><br><b>reflects</b> 116:16<br><br><b>reform</b> 31:23 72:22 124:3<br><br><b>reforms</b> 32:18<br><br><b>refrigerate</b> 204:14<br><br><b>regard</b> 72:18 | <b>region</b> 4:21 5:23 12:24<br>19:13 42:5 49:11,23<br>51:15 54:21 55:4 70:10,<br>14 100:5,10 168:9 171:18<br>201:23<br><br><b>regional</b> 7:12,20 8:13 12:2<br>23:18 47:8 50:16 51:13<br>52:5,11,13 80:13 93:2<br>106:5 129:15 138:11<br>139:3 140:2 142:14<br>170:23 192:17 214:2,12<br>221:20 222:5,6,17 223:22<br>224:10<br><br><b>regular</b> 9:8 66:19 143:11<br>157:11<br><br><b>regulate</b> 18:22 147:18<br><br><b>regulated</b> 116:23 130:21<br>205:8<br><br><b>regulates</b> 73:11<br><br><b>regulation</b> 53:7 68:22<br>69:22 72:11 74:17 254:8<br><br><b>regulations</b> 15:7 53:18<br>57:4 148:11 201:20<br><br><b>regulator</b> 69:1 73:6<br><br><b>regulatory</b> 24:10,24 27:16<br>30:12 73:15,16 97:11<br>108:13 131:2,3 179:16<br>180:10<br><br><b>reimbursement</b> 39:20<br><br><b>reinforcement</b> 235:1<br><br><b>reiterate</b> 201:18<br><br><b>related</b> 26:23 27:18 70:15<br>209:3<br><br><b>relates</b> 42:8 49:12 50:1,21<br>57:11 129:10 161:3,20<br>171:1 214:5 218:21 224:7<br><br><b>relative</b> 82:23<br><br><b>released</b> 140:6<br><br><b>reliability</b> 25:21 29:1<br>117:9,11,12,17 121:4,9, | 18 122:1,8 129:11 130:20<br>131:24 133:14 134:5<br>137:2,13,23 140:14<br><br><b>reliable</b> 30:3 48:4,5<br>114:16 117:6 130:13<br>186:7<br><br><b>reliably</b> 24:11<br><br><b>reliance</b> 80:12<br><br><b>reliant</b> 40:8<br><br><b>relieve</b> 10:9<br><br><b>rely</b> 16:20 51:19<br><br><b>remains</b> 76:22 108:23<br>112:19<br><br><b>remarks</b> 5:8<br><br><b>remember</b> 36:6 146:11<br>209:4 215:5 243:13 250:3<br><br><b>remotely</b> 15:1<br><br><b>removes</b> 30:22<br><br><b>renew</b> 37:21 91:6 175:23<br><br><b>renewable</b> 24:3 27:23<br>37:22 38:9,14 43:11<br>45:20 77:19 116:15<br>149:12 223:3 246:24<br>249:2<br><br><b>renewables</b> 43:1,2,18<br>48:1 183:13<br><br><b>renovated</b> 197:17<br><br><b>renovations</b> 197:5<br><br><b>rent</b> 15:5 64:15,19 92:2<br>246:1<br><br><b>rental</b> 35:22 46:17 91:13,<br>18 175:22<br><br><b>renters</b> 83:14 92:2<br><br><b>Rep</b> 6:22,24 20:10,18,23<br>37:17,21 41:18 51:1,3<br>52:20 196:6 198:3 222:24<br><br><b>Rep's</b> 20:11<br><br><b>repair</b> 35:23 85:12 91:2,5, |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>6 175:21,23 200:22</p> <p><b>repairs</b> 83:9 90:23 91:8, 15,17 123:21</p> <p><b>repeat</b> 175:8</p> <p><b>repeating</b> 229:14</p> <p><b>rephrase</b> 52:18</p> <p><b>replace</b> 47:23 76:1 176:8 228:20</p> <p><b>replacement</b> 226:18 227:11 238:6 248:4</p> <p><b>replaces</b> 228:12</p> <p><b>replacing</b> 154:2 237:15</p> <p><b>replicate</b> 218:1</p> <p><b>report</b> 69:12 70:21 84:2 199:23 200:6 211:6</p> <p><b>reported</b> 232:2,4</p> <p><b>reporting</b> 242:6</p> <p><b>reports</b> 69:23</p> <p><b>represent</b> 57:17 114:1 117:20 203:21,24</p> <p><b>representation</b> 37:19</p> <p><b>representative</b> 6:16 21:11 27:13 29:9 30:9,20 32:17 47:17 72:19 74:20 206:10 229:6</p> <p><b>Representative's</b> 45:19</p> <p><b>representatives</b> 253:7</p> <p><b>representing</b> 6:21 21:12 69:6 79:14 212:22 213:4</p> <p><b>Representive</b> 102:3</p> <p><b>request</b> 4:19 180:24 205:13</p> <p><b>requested</b> 205:21</p> <p><b>requesting</b> 178:22 208:7</p> <p><b>requests</b> 70:1</p> <p><b>require</b> 18:21 27:20 90:23 121:22 183:6,8 199:22</p> | <p>248:23</p> <p><b>required</b> 101:4 186:1 200:5 213:10</p> <p><b>requirements</b> 17:20 70:15 179:2 183:4 198:2,19</p> <p><b>requires</b> 92:24 215:18</p> <p><b>requiring</b> 78:24</p> <p><b>research</b> 133:1 184:18</p> <p><b>resetting</b> 236:9</p> <p><b>reside</b> 15:5</p> <p><b>resident</b> 68:3 83:22 144:13,14,17 225:16 241:12 249:16</p> <p><b>residential</b> 14:24 24:16 69:14 70:4 75:15 79:7 110:2,7,9 116:7 119:9 137:18,19 198:21 199:15</p> <p><b>residents</b> 9:5,9,11,14 10:6,12 11:6 13:15,21 14:2,7,10,21 16:8 19:15 27:19 29:17 34:7,19 46:8, 24 48:3 87:1,7,12 90:10 92:8,12 98:12 112:13 114:2 144:8 169:15 198:11 201:4 204:19 215:23 223:5 235:8 251:9</p> <p><b>residents'</b> 82:24 243:9</p> <p><b>resilience</b> 12:12 13:4</p> <p><b>resilient</b> 92:14</p> <p><b>Resistant</b> 90:1</p> <p><b>resolution</b> 4:1,5,6 82:3 108:20 240:4 259:4</p> <p><b>resolve</b> 65:10</p> <p><b>resource</b> 30:19 102:14 157:22 202:6</p> <p><b>resources</b> 11:14,23 83:8 87:6 96:16 104:9,10 163:15 180:19 181:14 208:2 216:2,3 217:10 218:11,14 242:11 246:23</p> | <p>247:6,12 254:13,17 255:1</p> <p><b>respect</b> 57:14 78:8 165:19</p> <p><b>Respectfully</b> 244:24</p> <p><b>respond</b> 45:10 54:2 234:21</p> <p><b>response</b> 71:18 72:1 73:7 104:12 108:19 136:1 212:2</p> <p><b>responsibility</b> 34:6 111:17 218:10 221:4 230:10</p> <p><b>responsible</b> 114:24 252:17</p> <p><b>rest</b> 59:8 125:16 184:15</p> <p><b>restart</b> 239:8</p> <p><b>restore</b> 91:6 175:22 176:11 177:19</p> <p><b>restoring</b> 18:7</p> <p><b>restricted</b> 9:6</p> <p><b>restriction</b> 59:7</p> <p><b>Restrictions</b> 40:2</p> <p><b>result</b> 18:17 24:23 110:10</p> <p><b>retail</b> 32:19 80:17 119:17, 22 144:2</p> <p><b>rethink</b> 161:3 214:18</p> <p><b>rethinking</b> 148:11 161:23</p> <p><b>retrofits</b> 179:2</p> <p><b>return</b> 73:15 76:4 109:17 177:1,4 205:21</p> <p><b>returns</b> 32:6</p> <p><b>revamped</b> 149:9</p> <p><b>revenue</b> 126:24 222:19 223:12</p> <p><b>review</b> 181:10,13</p> <p><b>reviewed</b> 105:9 116:24 118:6</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>reviewing</b> 238:12<br><b>revisit</b> 100:16 148:1 161:7<br>164:13 214:11,15<br><b>revisited</b> 57:7<br><b>revisiting</b> 53:16 164:7<br><b>RFP</b> 14:15 47:2,3,10<br><b>RGGI</b> 223:5,13<br><b>Rich</b> 173:5 192:14<br><b>Richmond</b> 225:17 226:17<br><b>rid</b> 148:3<br><b>RIF</b> 91:18<br><b>rights</b> 251:13<br><b>risen</b> 70:6 121:6<br><b>rises</b> 24:6<br><b>rising</b> 4:11 8:18 20:1<br>21:23 23:18 24:20 55:7<br>79:22 82:4 83:7 86:5<br>89:22 92:3,22 119:4<br>168:2 250:22<br><b>risk</b> 24:17 60:9 228:11<br><b>risks</b> 24:19<br><b>River</b> 129:23<br><b>RMI</b> 69:13<br><b>roadmap</b> 89:15<br><b>Rob</b> 27:13<br><b>robust</b> 40:16<br><b>ROE</b> 73:5<br><b>ROES</b> 73:1<br><b>role</b> 43:2,18 92:16 131:11<br>182:13 183:10,12 221:24<br><b>roll</b> 2:17<br><b>rollback</b> 25:16<br><b>roof</b> 95:16 176:13 182:3<br><b>roofs</b> 84:18 86:1,17 87:24<br>88:3,5,7 89:3 176:11<br>200:18 | <b>rooftop</b> 36:19 84:20<br>181:15 182:7<br><b>rooftops</b> 14:24 29:18<br>181:18<br><b>room</b> 81:1 115:18 191:1<br><b>rooms</b> 146:16<br><b>Roselle</b> 12:21<br><b>rosy</b> 228:1<br><b>roughly</b> 70:6 75:20<br>109:19<br><b>round</b> 57:21<br><b>Route</b> 129:22<br><b>routine</b> 81:12<br><b>row</b> 46:18<br><b>RTO</b> 140:2<br><b>rules</b> 183:18 184:4,5<br><b>run</b> 104:6 131:8 185:3<br>204:16 253:20<br><b>running</b> 69:4<br><b>runs</b> 131:7<br><b>runway</b> 128:8<br><b>rushed</b> 233:13<br><b>Russia</b> 94:19 95:14<br><b>Ryan</b> 238:24 | <b>Samuelson</b> 27:8<br><b>sat</b> 233:11<br><b>satisfied</b> 207:10<br><b>save</b> 29:3 61:14 155:22<br>162:2 163:2<br><b>saved</b> 111:4 113:18<br>227:2,18<br><b>saves</b> 159:17 182:4<br>198:10 228:20<br><b>saving</b> 33:20<br><b>savings</b> 120:19 124:14<br>198:16 201:1 228:3<br><b>scalability</b> 139:15<br><b>scale</b> 26:10 36:18 85:24<br>87:23 88:13 89:8 181:6<br>242:22<br><b>scaled</b> 39:14<br><b>scalars</b> 188:7<br><b>scandal</b> 235:14<br><b>scenarios</b> 18:15<br><b>scenes</b> 254:6<br><b>Schapira</b> 173:6 175:1,3<br>215:1,17 236:4<br><b>scheduled</b> 79:10<br><b>school</b> 33:12,14,20<br>117:16 130:11<br><b>schools</b> 33:9 39:13,18<br>106:22 254:15<br><b>Schuykill</b> 129:22<br><b>scour</b> 157:21<br><b>scrambled</b> 246:9<br><b>sealing</b> 35:4<br><b>seals</b> 61:23<br><b>season</b> 5:21 112:15<br><b>seat</b> 220:22<br><b>second-largest</b> 219:4 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <hr/> <b>S</b> <hr/> <b>sacrifice</b> 227:20<br><b>sad</b> 25:23<br><b>saddle</b> 237:19<br><b>safe</b> 48:15 114:15 130:13<br>204:4,7<br><b>safer</b> 30:23 89:1<br><b>safety</b> 34:13 113:13<br>121:3,18<br><b>sales</b> 76:10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>seconds</b> 143:11,16<br/>148:18 228:16 248:1</p> <p><b>section</b> 48:8 64:12,19<br/>211:7</p> <p><b>sector</b> 15:4</p> <p><b>sectors</b> 214:18</p> <p><b>secure</b> 92:14 110:21</p> <p><b>security</b> 79:16 125:19<br/>132:21 134:2 191:16</p> <p><b>seeking</b> 149:16,20</p> <p><b>Senate</b> 28:18</p> <p><b>senator</b> 10:22,23</p> <p><b>send</b> 150:15 155:5</p> <p><b>sending</b> 103:18 140:22</p> <p><b>senior</b> 58:11 67:18 108:11<br/>129:18</p> <p><b>seniors</b> 9:5,8 22:5</p> <p><b>sense</b> 54:14 55:23 187:5,<br/>6 242:21 244:1</p> <p><b>separable</b> 245:23</p> <p><b>separately</b> 87:15</p> <p><b>September</b> 13:23</p> <p><b>SERGEANT-AT-ARMS</b><br/>228:14 232:7 238:17<br/>241:2,6</p> <p><b>series</b> 83:18</p> <p><b>servants</b> 57:16 105:23<br/>107:9</p> <p><b>serve</b> 15:9 28:5 85:9<br/>86:24 115:9 117:20<br/>129:18 139:11 152:1<br/>163:8,11 192:15</p> <p><b>served</b> 145:15</p> <p><b>serves</b> 130:15</p> <p><b>service</b> 14:18 47:7,24<br/>72:11 79:2 110:22 112:10<br/>113:24 116:23 118:14,20,<br/>22 120:1 145:21 185:1</p> | <p><b>services</b> 29:24 85:14<br/>86:23 116:14 129:19<br/>155:20 180:13 203:1,2,<br/>15,16 247:9</p> <p><b>services-type</b> 207:23</p> <p><b>serving</b> 109:19</p> <p><b>session</b> 26:21</p> <p><b>set</b> 72:24 73:4 74:8<br/>122:17 124:6,17 227:8</p> <p><b>setting</b> 133:6 199:16</p> <p><b>settlement</b> 97:18 120:14</p> <p><b>settlements</b> 207:5</p> <p><b>seven-year</b> 135:16</p> <p><b>severe</b> 117:22</p> <p><b>sewage</b> 241:23 242:7</p> <p><b>sewer</b> 17:8</p> <p><b>shade</b> 13:5</p> <p><b>shaking</b> 174:11</p> <p><b>Shale</b> 96:4</p> <p><b>shame</b> 147:3</p> <p><b>shameful</b> 146:24 167:11</p> <p><b>shameless</b> 145:17</p> <p><b>shaped</b> 93:2</p> <p><b>shaping</b> 81:3</p> <p><b>Shapiro</b> 73:1 132:15<br/>216:22 222:13 223:7</p> <p><b>Shapiro's</b> 74:18</p> <p><b>share</b> 10:3 22:18 68:5<br/>81:7 113:5 159:24 161:5<br/>164:5 178:8 247:23</p> <p><b>shared</b> 210:20</p> <p><b>shareholders</b> 109:15</p> <p><b>sharing</b> 155:4 159:19<br/>210:15</p> <p><b>shed</b> 137:11</p> <p><b>sheets</b> 61:22</p> | <p><b>Sherrill</b> 10:22 74:2</p> <p><b>shift</b> 256:19,24</p> <p><b>shifting</b> 27:18 149:5</p> <p><b>shipyards</b> 48:10</p> <p><b>shop</b> 33:1 85:10</p> <p><b>shopping</b> 189:14</p> <p><b>short</b> 37:2 128:9</p> <p><b>short-term</b> 180:15</p> <p><b>shortfall</b> 126:24</p> <p><b>shortly</b> 52:16 87:10<br/>153:20</p> <p><b>shout</b> 36:14</p> <p><b>showed</b> 231:23</p> <p><b>showing</b> 182:7</p> <p><b>shows</b> 84:12</p> <p><b>shrinking</b> 237:19</p> <p><b>shut</b> 60:10 63:7,23 152:24<br/>204:13</p> <p><b>shutoff</b> 34:12 152:21<br/>162:23 203:18</p> <p><b>shutoffs</b> 92:8 142:3,4<br/>163:3 251:16</p> <p><b>side</b> 20:3 47:21 48:19<br/>75:2 147:5 153:24 159:14<br/>190:14 195:11 210:24<br/>229:2</p> <p><b>sign</b> 63:15 123:5,7 144:4<br/>168:17</p> <p><b>signals</b> 140:23</p> <p><b>signed</b> 155:24</p> <p><b>significant</b> 27:10 31:21<br/>52:7 72:14 76:9 119:7<br/>123:21 126:11 189:5,14<br/>209:12</p> <p><b>significantly</b> 35:18 39:17<br/>42:13 84:15 155:11<br/>209:24</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <b>Silicon</b> 133:17,21<br><b>similar</b> 9:2 29:15 100:7<br>107:23 117:2 155:7 166:6<br>205:4<br><b>simple</b> 29:2 79:17 177:21<br><b>simply</b> 21:24 24:5 28:9<br><b>single</b> 60:3,9 113:20<br><b>single-family</b> 84:14<br><b>singular</b> 17:21<br><b>sir</b> 7:6 75:7 104:15 252:15<br>258:1<br><b>sit</b> 161:7<br><b>sites</b> 99:6<br><b>situated</b> 188:1<br><b>situation</b> 83:17 123:1<br>135:1 136:5 138:15<br>158:10 186:22 215:8<br>242:20<br><b>situations</b> 242:22<br><b>six-year-old</b> 60:11<br><b>skeptics</b> 177:22<br><b>skewed</b> 79:21<br><b>skin</b> 164:19<br><b>skyrocketed</b> 251:3<br><b>slash</b> 77:12<br><b>slice</b> 19:19<br><b>Slow</b> 126:3<br><b>slow-walking</b> 257:22<br><b>slowed</b> 39:2<br><b>slower</b> 69:19 192:11<br><b>small</b> 25:23 27:19 48:10<br>54:18 91:14 117:15<br>119:19 179:6 181:16<br>201:2 205:24 207:22<br>209:9<br><b>smaller</b> 9:3 46:17 199:15<br>207:24 | <b>smart</b> 29:19 64:14 154:7<br><b>smarter</b> 176:19<br><b>snap</b> 44:3 141:24<br><b>soar</b> 77:3<br><b>social</b> 16:20 143:4 230:9<br><b>socks</b> 250:4<br><b>software</b> 28:23<br><b>solar</b> 11:23 13:13,18,22<br>14:4,8,16,17,23 15:3,8,13<br>17:15,16 29:18 31:3,7<br>33:8,17 36:19 39:12,21<br>40:14 43:12 45:21 46:6,8,<br>10,20 47:4,11,13 77:15<br>78:19 79:3,7 84:20 96:17<br>120:18 181:2,18 182:8<br>183:15 200:19 254:14<br>255:2,16 257:16,20<br><b>Solarize</b> 92:11 236:19<br>246:22<br><b>solars</b> 15:1<br><b>solely</b> 113:7<br><b>solution</b> 17:21 49:8 76:15<br>147:17 186:16 190:20<br>251:19,21<br><b>solutions</b> 51:20 93:7,13<br>115:14 190:13 195:15<br>226:5<br><b>solve</b> 107:7 191:22 217:1<br><b>sort</b> 44:12 177:1 183:17<br>185:12,18 186:14 187:8,<br>17,21 188:11 190:3,16<br>192:4 193:7 195:18<br>215:7,12 216:16 217:5,14<br>219:1,15,16,20 220:18<br><b>sorts</b> 23:22 56:9 179:21<br>183:12 189:10<br><b>sounds</b> 123:14,18 164:22<br><b>source</b> 30:15 96:16<br>222:19 | <b>sourced</b> 40:9<br><b>sources</b> 30:6 54:10 77:14,<br>20 142:16,17 157:4<br>257:23<br><b>South</b> 21:13 22:7 191:4,8,<br>9,10 192:2,3 218:12,16<br><b>space</b> 45:20 148:6<br><b>spaces</b> 18:5 28:8<br><b>span</b> 12:16<br><b>speak</b> 21:10 22:23 23:10<br>65:5,21 97:16 105:2<br>108:14<br><b>speaker</b> 195:17<br><b>speakers</b> 195:3<br><b>speaking</b> 35:1 219:5<br>244:24 249:14<br><b>specific</b> 113:1 175:11<br>180:20 209:2<br><b>specifically</b> 220:5 225:23<br>226:8,15<br><b>speed</b> 133:3,20 134:22<br>136:23 138:18 149:6<br>185:3<br><b>spell</b> 185:22<br><b>spend</b> 94:14 124:20<br>153:18 167:2 179:8<br>193:22 198:5 237:14<br>252:24 253:22 254:11,24<br>255:7,12 256:16<br><b>spending</b> 72:17 76:7,19<br>83:3 112:11 176:14<br>238:4,9 253:14<br><b>spent</b> 35:3 57:17 69:2<br>95:4 112:10 149:14<br>153:12 194:19 248:5<br><b>spike</b> 110:19<br><b>spikes</b> 104:12 215:11<br><b>split</b> 91:20 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                             |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>spoke</b> 38:7 147:9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>statement</b> 147:10                                                                                     | 228:17 229:11                                                                   |
| <b>spontaneous</b> 245:3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>states</b> 40:12 53:13 55:16,<br>17 69:15 72:12 73:10,20<br>104:3,4 130:17 132:14<br>138:7 139:11 191:11 | <b>strain</b> 9:22                                                              |
| <b>spreadsheets</b> 207:19                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                             | <b>strained</b> 92:3                                                            |
| <b>square</b> 200:4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                             | <b>strains</b> 54:22                                                            |
| <b>Squilla</b> 3:13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>States'</b> 132:24                                                                                       | <b>strategic</b> 18:6 93:14<br>110:12 113:17                                    |
| <b>stability</b> 243:10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>statewide</b> 9:18                                                                                       | <b>strategy</b> 77:17,21 84:1<br>85:16 86:3 89:7 96:12,22<br>97:9 201:14 223:23 |
| <b>stable</b> 103:12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>stating</b> 62:9,16                                                                                      |                                                                                 |
| <b>staff</b> 16:23                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>statistic</b> 193:20                                                                                     | <b>Strawberry</b> 86:1 87:24<br>88:14 89:4                                      |
| <b>stakeholders</b> 121:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>status</b> 165:14 202:10                                                                                 | <b>streaming</b> 189:8                                                          |
| <b>stalled</b> 25:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>statutes</b> 73:10,16 74:13                                                                              | <b>streamline</b> 157:8                                                         |
| <b>standard</b> 200:9 201:6<br>206:20                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>statutory</b> 130:24 205:22                                                                              | <b>streamlined</b> 156:21                                                       |
| <b>standards</b> 32:3 35:14<br>175:18 176:21 177:20<br>178:16,20 199:17 202:8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>stay</b> 66:13 122:21 163:9,<br>19 217:2 229:5                                                           | <b>street</b> 13:2                                                              |
| <b>standpoint</b> 202:11,12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>stayed</b> 114:20                                                                                        | <b>streetlights</b> 17:11                                                       |
| <b>start</b> 2:15 6:9,11 15:21<br>37:20 94:11 96:23 141:21<br>187:24 224:23 245:12<br>253:8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>stenographer</b> 152:9 210:8                                                                             | <b>strengthen</b> 36:2 89:15<br>97:24                                           |
| <b>started</b> 2:4,11 5:6 57:3<br>147:12,13 194:7 225:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>step</b> 32:7 91:2 121:13<br>147:16 164:18 187:22                                                        | <b>strengthened</b> 25:14                                                       |
| <b>starting</b> 189:2 197:18                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Stephen</b> 129:17                                                                                       | <b>strengthening</b> 12:11 34:9<br>84:23 85:1                                   |
| <b>state</b> 6:21 7:23 11:3,11<br>12:17 19:20 20:10,11,18<br>21:4,10 22:20 25:1 26:13<br>31:1 33:17 45:7 48:12<br>51:9 55:3,10 59:11 67:12<br>80:22 81:10 108:2<br>112:19,20 113:3 117:8<br>124:5 128:2,24 132:13<br>151:23 166:10 168:10<br>174:20 185:18 196:9<br>200:21 202:18 219:23<br>223:5 225:2,11 230:4<br>233:6 241:8 247:10<br>248:16,24 249:1,8 | <b>steps</b> 13:23 33:23 146:3<br>210:22,23 224:8                                                           | <b>stress</b> 241:19                                                            |
| <b>state's</b> 12:12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Steve</b> 141:16 171:9,11                                                                                | <b>strike</b> 121:8                                                             |
| <b>stated</b> 253:9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Steven</b> 107:20                                                                                        | <b>strong</b> 18:8 196:15                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>steward</b> 215:23                                                                                       | <b>Stronger</b> 35:13                                                           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>stint</b> 68:13                                                                                          | <b>strongly</b> 120:8 124:22<br>197:13                                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>stock</b> 34:20 83:7 131:20                                                                              | <b>structural</b> 114:10                                                        |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>stood</b> 246:11                                                                                         | <b>structure</b> 24:10 109:21<br>150:1 215:3                                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>stop</b> 11:1 61:4 78:2<br>127:20 142:3 152:8                                                            | <b>structured</b> 116:1                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>stopgap</b> 176:18                                                                                       | <b>structures</b> 13:5 140:19                                                   |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>storage</b> 11:24 31:3 96:19<br>113:11                                                                   | <b>struggle</b> 22:2 238:7                                                      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>store</b> 114:9                                                                                          | <b>struggled</b> 110:21                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>stored</b> 110:16                                                                                        | <b>struggling</b> 56:17 79:24<br>107:4 145:10 146:18                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>story</b> 114:7 229:2                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Stowers</b> 225:6,15,16,21                                                                               |                                                                                 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 162:14 214:4 237:10<br>249:23<br><b>study</b> 165:13,15 231:22<br>238:3<br><b>studying</b> 117:14<br><b>stuff</b> 61:22,24 96:24<br>190:14 194:23 220:1<br>247:7 258:15<br><b>stymied</b> 96:13<br><b>sub-metering</b> 36:3<br><b>subject</b> 43:16 130:24<br>131:2 181:23<br><b>submitted</b> 108:18 132:4<br>174:1<br><b>subscribers</b> 15:11,13<br><b>subscription</b> 15:18<br><b>subsequent</b> 191:6<br><b>subsidize</b> 125:17<br><b>substantial</b> 169:21<br><b>successful</b> 140:13<br><b>successfully</b> 120:15<br><b>sudden</b> 245:3<br><b>suddenly</b> 43:7<br><b>suffer</b> 217:16<br><b>suggest</b> 36:21 211:7<br><b>suggestion</b> 159:12<br><b>suggestions</b> 138:2<br><b>suited</b> 149:11<br><b>summarize</b> 125:7 127:14<br>210:5<br><b>summary</b> 108:21<br><b>summer</b> 141:18 238:8<br><b>sunlight</b> 88:3<br><b>supervisor</b> 65:5<br><b>supplement</b> 112:20 113:4 | <b>supplier</b> 32:24 47:9<br>118:13,19 119:18 144:2<br>145:1<br><b>suppliers</b> 118:21 119:22<br>120:3<br><b>supplies</b> 77:12<br><b>supply</b> 11:18 24:2,7 42:7,<br>13 77:1 79:19 110:21<br>118:9,18 119:4 128:13<br>135:7 138:16 186:21<br>187:14 195:13 196:3<br>215:10 256:15,21<br><b>supply-</b> 190:13<br><b>supply-demand</b> 185:15<br><b>supply-side</b> 190:20<br><b>support</b> 86:22 87:8 98:13<br>106:2 111:9 112:24<br>113:2,8 115:2 120:8<br>121:3 178:15 223:24<br>235:20 246:14 247:15<br>254:24<br><b>supported</b> 47:21 124:23<br><b>supporting</b> 85:3 92:1<br>113:5<br><b>supports</b> 17:18 91:14<br>92:5 197:14<br><b>surface</b> 13:8<br><b>surge</b> 71:9<br><b>surged</b> 114:20<br><b>surging</b> 69:24<br><b>surpassed</b> 231:7<br><b>survey</b> 9:18<br><b>survive</b> 22:3 101:6<br><b>sustain</b> 16:2<br><b>sustainability</b> 58:20 82:1,<br>7,10 105:4,17 179:18<br><b>sustainable</b> 17:18 114:17<br><b>sweatpants</b> 250:4 | <b>switching</b> 231:6<br><b>sympathy</b> 123:1<br><b>system</b> 40:17 54:7 62:2<br>65:13 66:6 76:8 118:12<br>121:20 122:3,4 126:13,20<br>127:9 128:3 135:4 137:17<br>139:22 216:17 231:13,14<br>250:18<br><b>systemic</b> 135:20<br><b>systemically</b> 211:23<br><b>systems</b> 35:5,16 36:2<br>91:1,5 118:5 121:17<br>155:19 157:14 175:21<br>176:9,10 178:5 200:2,21 |
| <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>T</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>T&amp;d</b> 71:22 72:9<br><b>table</b> 161:7 190:13 225:7,<br>9 240:20 246:1,6<br><b>tables</b> 157:21<br><b>tackle</b> 196:13<br><b>tackling</b> 199:13<br><b>tailspin</b> 41:11<br><b>taker</b> 138:3<br><b>takes</b> 126:10 135:8 181:8<br><b>taking</b> 6:24 31:16 54:4<br>55:20 96:21 105:24 107:8<br>182:17 187:21 243:22<br>252:18<br><b>talk</b> 8:9 10:8 30:5 38:21<br>39:11 50:5,6 54:5,21<br>100:2 105:16 124:24<br>162:14 172:21 179:15<br>180:12 183:21 194:22<br>196:11 198:4 200:18,19<br>203:23 209:15 212:5,7<br>217:14 228:2 230:19<br>254:12,15<br><b>talked</b> 16:10 41:16 51:5<br>120:9 141:23 144:1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>155:16 167:7 182:13<br/>190:24 195:17 196:17<br/>211:13,17 222:21 226:24<br/>230:16,22 253:16</p> <p><b>talking</b> 9:10 17:8 22:7,11<br/>73:14 146:9 169:11 188:7<br/>189:22 191:6 192:18<br/>222:24 226:23 228:4<br/>229:14 232:23 255:21<br/>257:16</p> <p><b>tangible</b> 195:8,15</p> <p><b>tap</b> 30:18 155:9 158:20</p> <p><b>target</b> 102:18 103:1</p> <p><b>targeted</b> 77:20 112:3<br/>114:1 124:18</p> <p><b>targeting</b> 120:3</p> <p><b>targets</b> 122:22</p> <p><b>tariffs</b> 26:3 41:9 117:2</p> <p><b>task</b> 54:18 211:4,5</p> <p><b>tax</b> 39:13 40:24 41:2 54:7<br/>55:22 78:17,22</p> <p><b>taxes</b> 116:16</p> <p><b>taxpayers'</b> 33:21</p> <p><b>teaching</b> 95:5</p> <p><b>team</b> 20:15,17 89:13<br/>105:14 152:10 180:20<br/>232:22</p> <p><b>tech</b> 152:10 155:2 165:8</p> <p><b>technical</b> 38:12 216:24</p> <p><b>technologies</b> 28:13,22<br/>29:17 30:23 96:19 115:15<br/>200:16 256:23</p> <p><b>technology</b> 23:23 27:2<br/>50:7 54:10 132:24 133:16<br/>180:17</p> <p><b>telling</b> 64:20 66:11 183:22</p> <p><b>temperatures</b> 13:8 88:9,<br/>21 114:19</p> | <p><b>ten</b> 188:3</p> <p><b>tenant</b> 35:13 36:7 91:22<br/>206:10 242:9</p> <p><b>tenants</b> 35:23 36:5 201:2</p> <p><b>tend</b> 124:13 213:4</p> <p><b>tended</b> 96:2</p> <p><b>tens</b> 235:5</p> <p><b>term</b> 113:15 176:20<br/>242:18</p> <p><b>terms</b> 46:13 73:4,8 74:21<br/>102:17 103:22 105:7<br/>120:11,23 122:10,23<br/>143:11 163:15,21 188:12<br/>219:10 243:8</p> <p><b>territory</b> 14:18</p> <p><b>testified</b> 41:15 45:21 46:7<br/>74:2 122:24 240:17</p> <p><b>testifiers</b> 6:1</p> <p><b>testify</b> 59:5 81:14 82:2<br/>93:10 172:17 174:22<br/>175:7 202:15 234:5<br/>245:11 258:24</p> <p><b>testifying</b> 18:14 245:18</p> <p><b>testimonies</b> 37:13</p> <p><b>testimony</b> 8:1 20:12 21:5<br/>37:12 59:9 67:5,14 72:19<br/>81:13 102:3 104:19<br/>108:4,19 115:23 127:14<br/>129:1 132:4 141:10 149:1<br/>173:24 174:4,15,21 175:9<br/>184:16,24 185:9 202:20<br/>207:17 209:9 211:12<br/>213:19 225:4,13,19 230:6<br/>232:8,23 233:8,13 234:7<br/>236:3,7 238:18 244:18<br/>252:3,6,21 258:17 259:4</p> <p><b>Texas</b> 219:13</p> <p><b>thanking</b> 141:21</p> <p><b>That'll</b> 171:24</p> | <p><b>theft</b> 251:6</p> <p><b>then-and-now</b> 215:7</p> <p><b>thermal</b> 95:19</p> <p><b>thermos</b> 66:6</p> <p><b>thermostat</b> 61:17 154:8</p> <p><b>thermostats</b> 29:19 44:10</p> <p><b>thing</b> 8:12 39:10 61:9<br/>66:24 123:16 126:16<br/>127:22 132:4 136:6<br/>138:20 143:24 145:9<br/>151:23 152:10 155:8<br/>158:23 159:2 160:3 176:1<br/>181:1 182:11 199:12<br/>205:7 210:12 211:1 217:8<br/>233:10 238:15 239:24<br/>244:20 246:13 248:2<br/>255:18</p> <p><b>things</b> 10:7 11:8 22:11,14<br/>23:8 26:15 33:23 40:22<br/>41:3,14 42:6 43:6 51:4<br/>54:8 57:9 95:4,8 100:22<br/>101:5,12 102:6,18<br/>103:18,20,22 104:4 105:5<br/>123:3 133:15,22 135:7,14<br/>136:4,19 140:5 143:1<br/>147:1 148:8 158:1 160:5<br/>174:6 175:12 178:6<br/>179:15,21 181:10 182:1<br/>188:14,15 189:8,11 190:8<br/>193:9,12,16 210:13<br/>216:17,21 220:3 230:18<br/>233:19,21 234:24 237:3<br/>244:23 246:10,19 247:22<br/>248:18 250:7 251:13<br/>253:5</p> <p><b>thinking</b> 51:16 53:3 66:14<br/>100:4 102:7 144:8 187:10<br/>190:7,19,21 192:5 194:14<br/>209:1 217:11</p> <p><b>Thirty</b> 139:21</p> <p><b>Thomas</b> 2:2,19,20 3:18<br/>4:16 6:7,18 8:5 20:4,6,23<br/>21:3,8 37:11 41:12 44:5,8</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <p>45:6,9 48:20 52:17 56:21<br/> 58:15,21 59:18 73:8 75:7<br/> 81:9,19 93:20 97:3 99:19<br/> 101:18 102:2 104:14<br/> 105:20 107:13,18,21<br/> 108:8 115:6 125:2,6,9<br/> 126:2,6 127:10,13<br/> 128:14,23 129:6 134:11<br/> 138:23 140:4 141:6<br/> 142:12 144:7,12 145:4,16<br/> 150:9,18 151:1,5,9,21<br/> 152:4 158:6 159:10<br/> 160:8,12,20 163:22 164:6<br/> 166:1,7 167:6,7 170:13<br/> 171:5 172:5,8 173:2,7,17,<br/> 21,23 184:22 185:4 193:3<br/> 202:16 203:4,10 209:21<br/> 210:4 211:10 212:21<br/> 213:7,14 215:14 218:15<br/> 221:3,9,18 224:2 229:4,<br/> 17 232:21 233:3,17,23<br/> 234:3,13 239:21 240:11,<br/> 21,24 241:3,7 243:14<br/> 249:7 252:2 257:24<br/> 258:4,6,9</p> <p><b>Thomas's</b> 129:14</p> <p><b>thought</b> 150:17 161:21<br/> 215:11</p> <p><b>thoughtful</b> 44:23</p> <p><b>thoughtfully</b> 81:4</p> <p><b>thoughts</b> 34:1 42:16 54:1<br/> 68:6 159:11 162:15</p> <p><b>thousands</b> 108:16 235:6<br/> 257:19</p> <p><b>threshold</b> 200:4</p> <p><b>throw</b> 41:10</p> <p><b>thrust</b> 244:9</p> <p><b>Thursday</b> 74:3</p> <p><b>thwarting</b> 78:4</p> <p><b>tie</b> 253:1</p> <p><b>ties</b> 201:12</p> | <p><b>tighter</b> 10:2</p> <p><b>till</b> 143:22</p> <p><b>time</b> 24:1 35:20 39:9 57:8,<br/> 18,19 59:6 62:12,18<br/> 63:24 64:7,12 65:7 66:7<br/> 74:15 94:15,23 95:5<br/> 105:24 107:9 121:13<br/> 126:16 139:1,24 140:4<br/> 146:4 148:23 158:2<br/> 177:24 179:4 180:14<br/> 184:9 186:2 188:12<br/> 193:21 206:9 214:10<br/> 223:14 226:1 229:24<br/> 234:9,10 238:16 241:5,20<br/> 243:16 244:1 248:7<br/> 249:24 250:11 252:20<br/> 253:1 255:24</p> <p><b>timelines</b> 40:1</p> <p><b>times</b> 30:2 61:12 130:14<br/> 144:3 186:20 217:23<br/> 218:16</p> <p><b>Timothy</b> 45:14</p> <p><b>tired</b> 221:12</p> <p><b>title</b> 4:4</p> <p><b>today</b> 4:5 5:5,12 6:1,12<br/> 10:8,18 21:10,18 22:18<br/> 34:24 42:23 51:21 57:19<br/> 60:1 67:22 82:2,21<br/> 101:10 107:10 115:8,19,<br/> 23 142:13 164:21 175:8<br/> 176:6 187:20 190:4<br/> 192:18 193:4,6 194:14,<br/> 18,23 195:3 196:5,11<br/> 226:10 232:17 233:21<br/> 238:8 245:18 246:10<br/> 252:4,21 253:3,16 256:23<br/> 259:5,9</p> <p><b>today's</b> 7:11 8:6 48:23<br/> 57:8,11 108:22</p> <p><b>told</b> 61:20</p> <p><b>Tom</b> 115:9</p> <p><b>ton</b> 162:2</p> | <p><b>tons</b> 182:5 207:19</p> <p><b>tool</b> 181:21</p> <p><b>tools</b> 28:22 80:17</p> <p><b>top</b> 121:6 182:22 185:10</p> <p><b>top-20</b> 191:12</p> <p><b>topic</b> 23:17 191:5</p> <p><b>topics</b> 187:19</p> <p><b>tossed</b> 249:20</p> <p><b>total</b> 71:2 124:10 189:9</p> <p><b>touch</b> 187:16</p> <p><b>tough</b> 150:22 212:17</p> <p><b>tour</b> 68:24 130:8</p> <p><b>Township</b> 12:22,23</p> <p><b>toxic</b> 239:7</p> <p><b>track</b> 237:14 244:11</p> <p><b>trade</b> 130:10 222:7</p> <p><b>traditional</b> 112:5</p> <p><b>traffic</b> 131:11</p> <p><b>trained</b> 130:11</p> <p><b>trajectory</b> 218:3</p> <p><b>transform</b> 239:19</p> <p><b>transformational</b> 189:18</p> <p><b>transformative</b> 189:17</p> <p><b>transformers</b> 135:15<br/> 254:23</p> <p><b>transition</b> 76:12 192:24<br/> 200:8 230:17 231:11<br/> 247:4 248:19,20,21,22</p> <p><b>transmission</b> 24:4 28:12,<br/> 21 29:2 71:21 116:5,9<br/> 118:1 125:19 126:12,20<br/> 131:8 140:2</p> <p><b>transmit</b> 29:6</p> <p><b>transmitted</b> 131:17</p> <p><b>transparency</b> 237:12<br/> 238:14</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                  |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>transparent</b> 36:4 257:12                                   |                                                                                                                 | <b>universal</b> 112:10 113:24<br>116:14 246:16                                               |
| <b>Transparently</b> 229:12                                      | <b>U</b>                                                                                                        | <b>universe</b> 182:17                                                                        |
| <b>Transportation</b> 2:9 3:24<br>4:9 59:22 68:9 81:22<br>259:21 | <b>U.S.</b> 40:17 70:21,23 71:2,8<br>72:4 188:20,23 219:5                                                       | <b>university</b> 58:13 67:20,24<br>95:6 115:22 130:10<br>208:22 231:22                       |
| <b>traveling</b> 105:24                                          | <b>ugly</b> 78:20                                                                                               | <b>unknowingly</b> 33:1                                                                       |
| <b>treat</b> 102:13 117:2                                        | <b>Uh-huh</b> 99:8                                                                                              | <b>unlike</b> 242:20                                                                          |
| <b>treated</b> 244:6                                             | <b>Ukraine</b> 95:15                                                                                            | <b>unlock</b> 13:18                                                                           |
| <b>tree</b> 13:1 18:8                                            | <b>ultimately</b> 76:9 190:14                                                                                   | <b>unnecessary</b> 30:22                                                                      |
| <b>tremendous</b> 31:10 222:18                                   | <b>unanimously</b> 28:16 102:5                                                                                  | <b>unplanned</b> 248:22                                                                       |
| <b>tremendously</b> 220:24                                       | <b>uncertainty</b> 39:5,7 50:24<br>51:8,17 52:8 78:10                                                           | <b>unprecedented</b> 71:9<br>238:10 248:14                                                    |
| <b>Trenton</b> 12:19 74:4                                        | <b>uncomfortable</b> 251:17                                                                                     | <b>unprepared</b> 202:10                                                                      |
| <b>tri-state</b> 49:14 50:17<br>51:12 106:7 129:15<br>148:15     | <b>undermines</b> 204:8                                                                                         | <b>unregulated</b> 118:22                                                                     |
| <b>trillion</b> 72:6                                             | <b>understand</b> 17:3 21:17<br>49:3 51:12 138:10<br>143:12,17 161:9 171:15,<br>22 180:9 184:2 198:14<br>204:23 | <b>update</b> 197:11                                                                          |
| <b>tripling</b> 76:3                                             | <b>understanding</b> 62:20,21<br>155:1,3 168:16                                                                 | <b>updating</b> 17:10,11                                                                      |
| <b>trouble</b> 32:11                                             | <b>understands</b> 46:3                                                                                         | <b>upfront</b> 125:21 142:6                                                                   |
| <b>true</b> 198:8 242:15                                         | <b>understood</b> 139:4                                                                                         | <b>upgrade</b> 122:2                                                                          |
| <b>Trump</b> 25:10 77:9,18<br>78:1,12 79:5,12                    | <b>undersubscribed</b> 209:24                                                                                   | <b>upgraded</b> 90:24                                                                         |
| <b>trusted</b> 85:7                                              | <b>unfair</b> 233:15                                                                                            | <b>upgrades</b> 28:23 29:21<br>83:10 89:10 91:9,16,18,<br>22 121:20                           |
| <b>tune</b> 200:1                                                | <b>unfortunate</b> 106:24 107:1                                                                                 | <b>upgrading</b> 48:13 247:17                                                                 |
| <b>tune-up</b> 200:7                                             | <b>unimaginable</b> 191:17                                                                                      | <b>upsets</b> 249:22                                                                          |
| <b>turbine</b> 135:10                                            | <b>uninterrupted</b> 110:22                                                                                     | <b>upward</b> 72:14                                                                           |
| <b>turn</b> 44:20 206:9 257:1                                    | <b>Union</b> 206:10                                                                                             | <b>urban</b> 9:2 12:15 18:7<br>88:15                                                          |
| <b>turned</b> 44:10 212:24                                       | <b>unique</b> 34:6                                                                                              | <b>urge</b> 34:8                                                                              |
| <b>turning</b> 30:1                                              | <b>uniquely</b> 11:21                                                                                           | <b>urgency</b> 244:1,6                                                                        |
| <b>two-and-a-half-year</b><br>68:13                              | <b>Unit</b> 202:24 203:1,14<br>205:2                                                                            | <b>urgent</b> 69:9 83:17 235:22<br>247:4                                                      |
| <b>type</b> 47:18 53:7,8 128:20<br>189:24                        | <b>United</b> 40:12 72:12<br>132:23 191:11 192:16<br>194:16 201:23                                              | <b>usage</b> 66:5 70:21 84:7<br>111:21 114:22 122:22<br>124:10 125:22 143:24<br>144:24 153:18 |
| <b>types</b> 19:2 177:7,9 216:12                                 | <b>units</b> 35:22                                                                                              |                                                                                               |
| <b>typical</b> 75:12                                             |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                               |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>user</b> 123:20 180:6 208:19<br>215:22 216:11<br><b>users</b> 208:19<br><b>USF</b> 16:4<br><b>utilities</b> 2:9 4:1,10 12:6<br>18:23 24:11 27:3,17 28:4<br>45:24 46:22 47:5 58:11<br>60:2 64:16 68:9,15 69:7<br>71:20 72:5,16,24 73:4,11<br>74:23 75:24 76:20 81:23<br>84:4 110:20 119:12<br>133:9,10 147:23 155:7<br>161:4 176:15 177:6 181:5<br>202:24 204:5,7,21 205:19<br>207:24 211:7 226:5<br>243:18 248:23 250:23<br>259:21<br><b>utility</b> 5:1 7:13 8:18 10:5<br>11:2,5,12 13:15 15:16<br>18:23 19:4 24:17 27:15<br>31:17 32:4 38:16 47:1<br>52:4 64:21 65:1 69:1,22<br>73:16,23 74:5 76:15 80:1,<br>21 84:6 85:11 91:23 92:8<br>106:21,23 109:10,12<br>111:15 116:23 117:7,8<br>118:7,14,20,22 120:1,12<br>122:18 133:8 144:21<br>147:14 148:16 177:5,16<br>179:22 180:5 203:18,20,<br>21 204:1,24 205:8,9<br>208:12,17 210:21,24<br>213:2 218:6 220:13,15<br>255:9,10,14<br><b>utility-scale</b> 181:6<br><b>utilization</b> 113:23 | <b>Van</b> 6:17 67:8,16,18<br><b>variable</b> 33:3<br><b>vast</b> 163:20 188:22<br><b>vastly</b> 79:18<br><b>vehicles</b> 71:16<br><b>vendor</b> 177:4<br><b>Venkat</b> 30:9<br><b>verification</b> 159:15 160:7<br><b>Verizon</b> 192:22<br><b>version</b> 185:8<br><b>vibrant</b> 95:19<br><b>Vic</b> 202:22 203:9,12<br><b>vice</b> 2:24 3:4 7:3 108:12<br>152:11,16 153:6 154:13,<br>24 156:8,14 157:15<br>158:17 159:23 160:18<br>162:19 164:10 165:1,5,23<br>221:7 225:10,18 240:2<br>244:17 259:19<br><b>Victor</b> 6:15 8:2<br><b>video</b> 23:21<br><b>viewed</b> 220:13,18<br><b>views</b> 67:21<br><b>Vikram</b> 173:6<br><b>Virginia</b> 95:6<br><b>virtual</b> 12:1 29:11<br><b>vision</b> 238:22<br><b>visit</b> 130:1 171:10<br><b>vital</b> 109:2<br><b>voltage</b> 118:3<br><b>volumes</b> 76:11<br><b>voters</b> 9:20<br><b>VPP</b> 29:23<br><b>VPPS</b> 45:1 254:15<br><b>vulnerability</b> 88:24 | <b>vulnerable</b> 111:10,14<br>112:13 120:4 124:22<br>252:15                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>W</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>wages</b> 194:3<br><b>wait</b> 28:18 52:3 56:5 122:5<br>212:6<br><b>waiting</b> 155:17 224:17<br><b>waive</b> 166:11 213:5,11<br><b>waivers</b> 178:21<br><b>waives</b> 213:3<br><b>waiving</b> 166:15<br><b>Walmart</b> 208:22<br><b>wanted</b> 5:6,7 58:24<br>141:21 142:6 152:20<br>168:11 185:17 193:15,20<br>195:7 201:18 225:22<br>233:11 240:3 247:23<br><b>wanting</b> 161:9 220:9<br><b>war</b> 26:4<br><b>Ward</b> 7:4<br><b>warehouse</b> 134:15<br><b>warm</b> 44:11 114:20<br>250:14,15<br><b>warmer</b> 44:22<br><b>Washington</b> 5:15 26:7<br>37:2,23 50:21<br><b>waste</b> 35:19 199:18<br>229:23 232:1,3,6 252:20<br><b>wasting</b> 179:11<br><b>watched</b> 242:4<br><b>watching</b> 143:3<br><b>water</b> 13:5 17:8,11,12<br>34:4 101:2 155:9 156:24<br>241:23<br><b>ways</b> 8:24 10:8 34:17,21 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 56:12 113:4 193:11<br>196:13 239:16 242:18<br><b>wealth</b> 177:13,18,20<br><b>weather</b> 23:19 72:2 90:1<br>111:2 112:19 113:20<br>117:21 187:2<br><b>weatherization</b> 34:18,20<br>84:11 85:13 90:2 111:22<br>177:8 200:20 209:6<br><b>weatherize</b> 90:6 223:2<br><b>weatherized</b> 90:24 153:23<br><b>weaved</b> 157:2<br><b>websites</b> 188:15<br><b>weeds</b> 189:16<br><b>week</b> 64:5<br><b>weeks</b> 65:3 69:13 73:3<br>79:12<br><b>weighing</b> 81:4<br><b>well-designed</b> 201:5<br><b>wells</b> 17:12 232:11<br><b>West</b> 95:5<br><b>wetter</b> 82:17<br><b>whims</b> 181:23<br><b>white</b> 102:21 136:2<br>217:23<br><b>wholesale</b> 26:6 70:18<br>119:6<br><b>wide</b> 82:5<br><b>wide-eyed</b> 199:6<br><b>wife</b> 167:19<br><b>Williams'</b> 16:19<br><b>win</b> 103:4<br><b>wind</b> 43:14 77:15,24 78:3,<br>6,8,14,18 79:11,13 96:10,<br>17 104:4 257:20<br><b>window</b> 61:22 | <b>windows</b> 35:17 36:1<br><b>winter</b> 110:20 114:18<br>123:14 250:12<br><b>winters</b> 250:3<br><b>wires</b> 253:13,20<br><b>Wisconsin</b> 73:17<br><b>wise</b> 52:13 54:13 232:18<br><b>wishes</b> 259:3<br><b>withdraw</b> 121:1 143:19<br>245:1<br><b>withdrawal</b> 142:8<br><b>withdrawn</b> 31:20 180:3<br>208:6<br><b>withdrew</b> 222:13<br><b>witnesses</b> 141:11 207:3<br>258:24 259:8<br><b>word</b> 5:16,19 249:20<br>250:1<br><b>work</b> 10:14,15 11:11<br>19:22 20:2 22:19 25:3,20<br>26:14 33:12 35:10 36:13,<br>23 45:17 47:22 56:20<br>57:15 61:7 72:20 75:5<br>82:19 98:6 105:22 107:23<br>121:24 139:19 140:17<br>159:18 170:22 171:18<br>179:6 191:19 196:7<br>198:17 204:11 212:14<br>214:16 226:7 234:18<br>235:12 236:20 237:2<br>246:19 247:13<br><b>worked</b> 10:19 13:11 28:20<br>54:20 74:10 98:20 103:11<br>142:2<br><b>worker</b> 146:7<br><b>workforce</b> 86:3 89:9,13,<br>16<br><b>working</b> 5:20 11:1 13:13<br>17:7,24 21:16 22:4 27:1,6<br>30:7 31:24 32:16 40:22 | 50:18 55:2 60:18 61:1<br>68:18,20 74:17,21 98:9,<br>15,18 100:13 106:16<br>111:12 112:3 115:17<br>117:14 137:24 156:23,24<br>159:22 195:6 206:9 209:4<br><b>working-</b> 199:3<br><b>works</b> 34:3 46:21 82:12<br>181:21 204:24 247:7<br><b>workshop</b> 74:5<br><b>workshops</b> 87:16<br><b>world</b> 16:14 106:19<br><b>worse</b> 26:18 120:2 133:16<br><b>worth</b> 53:16 74:24 134:15<br>233:18<br><b>would've</b> 39:21 78:18<br>79:6 96:3 143:21<br><b>wrap</b> 165:2 190:7 232:8<br>238:18 244:18<br><b>written</b> 173:24 193:9<br>207:17<br><b>wrong</b> 146:13 220:1<br><hr/> <b>Y</b> <hr/> <b>year</b> 13:10,23 35:6 52:23<br>90:7 119:18 123:6 143:22<br>144:6 152:22 153:11,19<br>154:21 170:1 200:3<br>232:14 236:5,7 237:2,18<br>243:13 244:16 251:2<br><b>years</b> 35:6 51:24 52:22<br>53:5,17 54:9 57:2,6 60:6<br>68:11 69:2,4,5,16 73:14,<br>19 74:14 75:13 76:6 81:2<br>100:9,15,17 110:16<br>114:23 115:12 134:18<br>135:9,13 138:24 139:21<br>147:12 148:2 149:15<br>151:13,16,18 161:21<br>181:8 182:6 183:23<br>184:13 194:1 199:19 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

214:1,3 215:9 216:14  
 217:17 222:10 227:10  
 237:23 241:21 257:17

**yesterday** 230:13

**York** 69:5 73:18 78:16  
 96:1 200:11

**you-all** 145:18 179:19  
 194:24 245:9

**Young** 3:5 152:13 162:16  
 165:3 166:3,4 168:23  
 172:3,6 211:17

---

**Z**

---

**zero-sum** 246:4

**zoning** 183:3