

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, May 21, 2015
1:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH

BILLS 150162, 150163, 150164, 150165, 150166,
150167, and 150438
RESOLUTION 150179

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
afternoon. We're going to start now.

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
afternoon. This is the public hearing of
the Committee of the Whole regarding Bill
Nos. 150162, 150163, 150164, 150165,
150166, 150167, 150438, and Resolution
No. 150179.

Ms. Lewis, please read the
titles of the bills and the resolution.

MS. LEWIS: Bill No. 150162, an
ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for
the six Fiscal Years 2016 through 2021
inclusive.

Bill No. 150163, an ordinance
to adopt a Fiscal 2016 Capital Budget.

Bill No. 150164, an ordinance
adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal
Year 2016.

Bill No. 150165, amending
Section 19-1801 of The Philadelphia Code,
entitled "Authorization of Tax," to
further authorize the Board of Education
of the School District of Philadelphia to

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 impose a tax on real estate within the
3 City of Philadelphia, to provide for an
4 increase in the tax, and making technical
5 changes, all under certain terms and
6 conditions.

7 Bill No. 150166, amending
8 Section 19-1806 of The Philadelphia Code,
9 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
10 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the
11 Board of Education of the School District
12 of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the
13 use or occupancy of real estate within
14 the School District of Philadelphia,
15 under certain terms and conditions.

16 Bill No. 150167, amending
17 Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia Code,
18 entitled "Wage and Net Profits Tax," by
19 revising certain tax rates, under certain
20 terms and conditions.

21 Bill No. 150438, amending
22 Section 19-1806 of The Philadelphia Code,
23 entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and
24 Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the
25 Board of Education of the School District

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the
3 use or occupancy of real estate within
4 the School District of Philadelphia and
5 to set the rate for such tax, and making
6 technical changes; all under certain
7 terms and conditions.

8 Resolution 150179, providing
9 for the approval by the Council of the
10 City of Philadelphia of a Revised Five
11 Year Financial Plan for the City of
12 Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years 2016
13 through 2020, and incorporating proposed
14 changes with respect to Fiscal Year 2015,
15 which is to be submitted by the Mayor to
16 the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
17 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority")
18 pursuant to the Intergovernmental
19 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an
20 ordinance of this Council approved by the
21 Mayor on January 3rd, 1992 (Bill No.
22 1563-A), by and between the City and the
23 Authority.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
25 you, Ms. Lewis.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Today we continue the public
3 hearing of the Committee of the Whole to
4 consider various bills read by Ms. Lewis
5 that constitute proposed operating and
6 capital spending measures for Fiscal Year
7 2016, a Capital Program and a
8 forward-looking Capital Plan for Fiscal
9 Year 2016 through Fiscal Year 2021.

10 Today we will hear testimony
11 from these City departments: Revenue,
12 BRT, and also hear on the revenue tax
13 bills. And then there will be a break.
14 There will be public testimony later this
15 evening.

16 So the first department is the
17 Revenue Department. Commissioner.

18 (Witnesses approached witness
19 table.)

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
21 afternoon. Please identify yourself and
22 proceed.

23 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good
24 afternoon. My name is Clarena Tolson.
25 I'm the Commissioner for the Department

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 of Revenue and the City's Chief
3 Collections Officer. With me is
4 Mr. Frank Breslin, who is the Deputy
5 Commissioner for our Tax Bureau.

6 If I could, Mr. Chair, I'd just
7 like to acknowledge Mr. Breslin. Today
8 is his last opportunity to sit with us.
9 He will be retiring next week after 31
10 years of service to the City of
11 Philadelphia.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
13 Congratulations, sir.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRESLIN:
15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And thank
17 you for all your service.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I thought
20 Ms. Breslin was smiling a little bit more
21 than I usually see him.

22 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: He's the
23 happiest man in the room.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I
25 understand.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Please proceed.

3 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good
4 afternoon, members of City Council and
5 Committee of the Whole. My name is
6 Clarena Tolson, Chief Collections Officer
7 and Revenue Commissioner.

8 The following testimony
9 provides an overview of the Department of
10 Revenue's FY16 Operating Budget and our
11 strategies and goals.

12 Last year I spoke to you about
13 the exciting progress we were making in
14 the collection of delinquent taxes with
15 improvements in collections for school
16 income tax, liquor by the drink, and real
17 estate. I'm glad to share the pending
18 appeals for AVI have impacted real
19 estate-based taxes. We expect to exceed
20 \$100 million in prior year real estate
21 collections for the second year in a row.
22 In addition, we expect to meet target
23 projections in other prior year
24 collections, with an anticipated increase
25 of close to 25 percent for SIT, the

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 school income tax.

3 We continue to experience
4 success with our newest collection
5 initiatives, Commercial Activity License
6 Revocation and Sequestration, with both
7 programs combined bringing in over \$50
8 million since their inception. In
9 addition, we continue to expand the use
10 of more traditional tools such as Sheriff
11 Sales, with filings increasing over 17
12 percent since 2014 and 900 percent since
13 2009. Our newest tool should come online
14 in June, with an online sale of tax
15 liens. This pilot program will help us
16 identify how to best approach the sale of
17 real estate tax liens in the future.

18 In addition to the lien sale,
19 the Department is also excited about the
20 following initiatives:

21 Our Cashiering and Remittance
22 program, the new state-of-the-art
23 Cashiering and Remittance system, that
24 will be fully implemented by June;

25 Our Earned Income Tax Credit

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 program that assisted over 5,000
3 individuals in receiving \$9 million in
4 total refunds and \$2.4 million in EITC
5 funding and also saved them \$500,000 in
6 tax preparation fees;

7 Our modernized electronic
8 filing that was installed in April of
9 this year, which enabled taxpayers to
10 file and pay their business income and
11 receipts tax and net profits tax
12 electronically and also allowed us to
13 partner with tax software providers who
14 modified their products to further expand
15 electronic tax filings. Through this,
16 over 17,000 taxpayers filed
17 electronically;

18 Implementation of our data
19 warehouse. We are moving aggressively
20 with that program and expect to see some
21 increases in delinquent collections to be
22 realized from this project early in
23 Fiscal '16;

24 There have been significant
25 customer service improvements where we

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 have improved the customer experience
3 through improvements with our taxpayer
4 services phone system, our cashiering
5 system, and we're going to be expanding
6 our payment options and the like later
7 this year. We also worked with the
8 University of Pennsylvania with an
9 experiment with regard to messaging, that
10 we had the opportunity to generate
11 approximately \$250,000 worth of revenue
12 for the City, as well we've worked with
13 grants that we have received through the
14 City accelerated program, and through
15 this, we're innovating to increase
16 enrollment in our assistance programs,
17 have people better understand how they
18 may access and be involved in assistance
19 programs.

20 The Department continues to
21 meet our organizational goals such as
22 MBEC participation and promoting
23 diversity in the workplace, with an
24 executive staff of over 50 percent
25 minority and close to the same for women.

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2 We are proud of our work inclusion. Our
3 WBE/MBE/DBE participation is also
4 expected to approach 50 percent this
5 year.

6 The budget proposed here allows
7 the Department to meet its mission of
8 revenues for schools and services.
9 Therefore, we request your favorable
10 consideration of this budget.

11 Thank you so much.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
13 you, Commissioner. Just a couple
14 questions and then I'll go to other
15 members.

16 The Earned Income Tax Credit
17 program, can you talk a little bit about
18 that. How many, if you have any
19 statistics or if you can get us, how many
20 Philadelphians are benefiting and is
21 there other strategy to kind of reach
22 other eligible Philadelphians for that
23 program?

24 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes. We
25 were just able to start our involvement

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 with that program this year. We were in
3 collaboration with the Campaign for
4 Working Families and was quite a
5 successful initial effort. Through that
6 program, we were able to have 5,000
7 people participate at the sites that the
8 City Department of Revenue sponsored.
9 Those individuals received \$9 million
10 worth of refunds. Of that \$9 million,
11 \$2.4 million was in EITC tax refunds. So
12 it's federal dollars, not City dollars.
13 Additionally, they were able to save
14 approximately \$500,000 in tax filing
15 costs, because through our sites, we
16 offered free tax filings.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Now, I
18 know you were working with the Campaign
19 for Working Families, and I think that
20 was certainly beneficial. Is there any
21 other strategy that's thought about to
22 try to get as many Philadelphians that
23 are eligible to apply?

24 COMMISSIONER TOLSON:
25 Certainly. We will have an aggressive

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2 outreach campaign, whether it be through
3 our block captains, door to door, other
4 marketing through mailings,
5 electronically, telephonically. As a
6 department, we're using more e-mail as a
7 way to contact and reach our taxpayers.

8 So we'll be making an
9 aggressive effort to get assistance for
10 people. Certainly to the extent that we
11 get other folks money to help support
12 them, that's a very good thing for us.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
14 Great. Thank you.

15 Obviously there's going to be a
16 request for a tax increase for the
17 property owners of Philadelphia. There's
18 a number of taxes that are self-reporting
19 taxes?

20 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Can you
22 talk about how successful that has been
23 in getting the folks who have to
24 self-report to do it and are there any
25 other measures? Because I think we're

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2 going to hear from one of the criticisms
3 of the property tax increases often, that
4 there's other taxes out there that you're
5 not collecting. Not you; the City of
6 Philadelphia.

7 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Surely.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So could
9 you talk about that a little bit, about
10 the self-reporting taxes and --

11 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Sure.
12 I'll start in and then I'll let Mr.
13 Breslin add some information to that.

14 So self-reported taxes
15 certainly can appear to be a challenge,
16 and historically they may have been one
17 that pose a greater challenge to us than
18 they will in the future. Our future and
19 actually now our present is one where we
20 share data with both the state and the
21 federal government, and we're getting
22 more and more information about our
23 taxpayers to assist us with the
24 underreporting or complete lack of
25 reporting, people who don't file

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2 properly, as well we are increasing our
3 compliance efforts and audit efforts to
4 try to gain more information in pursuit
5 of people to help them properly pay the
6 appropriate tax levels.

7 I'll let Mr. Breslin add to
8 that if there's anything that I may have
9 missed there.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRESLIN:
11 I'll just add that we talk about -- with
12 these self-assessed taxes, we're dealing
13 with voluntary compliance, and voluntary
14 compliance is the most efficient way to
15 collect taxes. So the first step is
16 really for us to make the taxes easy to
17 file, educate taxpayers, educate the
18 professionals. So that's really the
19 first level that we start with in the
20 Department. We do a lot of outreach. We
21 constantly review our forms, take
22 suggestions, and try to make the taxes as
23 easy to follow and as easy to file. And
24 then when we get past that, the voluntary
25 compliance piece, we have to get into the

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 involuntary compliance is where we really
3 go out and try to identify taxpayers, and
4 I'll break that down into two areas. One
5 is tax discovery, where we look for
6 taxpayers who are really flying under the
7 radar. They're just not registered.
8 They're not filing. We don't really know
9 who they are until we can go out and find
10 them, and we use kind of boots on the
11 street. We have investigators that go
12 out. We have a tax fraud hotline where
13 we solicit information from taxpayers out
14 there, from citizens, and we use a lot of
15 third party -- a lot of it is now driven
16 by technology. We use a lot of
17 third-party information. We receive
18 information from the IRS. We receive
19 information from the State of
20 Pennsylvania, other third-party
21 information, and we try to identify those
22 taxpayers. And that's been very
23 successful, and we think it's going to be
24 even greater success once we bring this
25 data warehouse on board.

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2 The other piece that's really
3 important to us is the audit piece, and
4 especially with the business income and
5 receipts tax where we have taxpayers who
6 may be filing erroneously, not filing
7 correctly, not reporting all of their
8 income, and there's all categories of
9 non-compliance, and we use -- we have
10 screening techniques where we try to
11 identify tax returns that are filed
12 incorrectly or improperly and we bring
13 those into our audit process. We will
14 also be using the data warehouse to help
15 us better identify cases to audit.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Is there
17 a target amount of money that you think
18 you can raise? You talk about some of
19 the measures you're taking. Is there
20 like an estimate of how much more you
21 could bring in or will be able to bring
22 in with those kind of activities?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRESLIN: I
24 don't have a hard number. I mean, we've
25 talked to a lot of other jurisdictions

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2 who have brought on data warehouses, and
3 they really talk about their lift in
4 collections and it's not uncommon to see
5 15, 20 percent increases in collections.
6 But we're -- so that's kind of the
7 impetus. We talked to a lot of other
8 jurisdictions and saw great success
9 there.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
11 All right. Thank you. Thank you both
12 very much.

13 Councilman Jones, are you
14 ready?

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm sorry.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's
17 okay.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES:

19 Mr. Chairman.

20 Real quick, and you probably
21 answered this question and I was not
22 paying attention, but I will be brief in
23 repeating.

24 The liens outside of
25 Philadelphia County, the process by which

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2 we have owners of Philadelphia
3 properties -- so you didn't answer? Oh,
4 good. You have Philadelphia properties
5 that have outside of Philadelphia
6 ownership and putting liens on those
7 properties outside of Philadelphia's
8 jurisdiction. How are we doing in
9 establishing those reciprocities with
10 other counties?

11 (Witness approached witness
12 table.)

13 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: I'm going
14 to ask our chief legal expert in the
15 Department of Revenue who heads up our
16 Law Bureau, Mr. Frank Paiva, to address
17 that, sir.

18 MR. PAIVA: Council, my name is
19 Frank Paiva. I'm Chief Revenue Counsel
20 for the City of Philadelphia.

21 Yes. Back in November of 2013,
22 the General Assembly gave municipalities
23 throughout the Commonwealth the authority
24 to take our liens and transfer them to
25 other jurisdictions where the owner of

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 the lien has other property and to treat
3 that lien as a judgment against that
4 property. We were excited to start to
5 use this. In order to do that, we had to
6 work with the First Judicial District to
7 implement rules to that end.

8 We met with them last August,
9 and after some negotiations, it was made
10 clear to us that there were some IT
11 issues that had to be corrected. And so
12 we've worked with the First Judicial
13 District. As of last Saturday, that fix
14 has been put through and now we have the
15 green light to actually find the
16 properties and to start to do the
17 transfers.

18 It's hard to believe how long
19 some of these IT things --

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh, no, it
21 isn't.

22 MR. PAIVA: -- take to happen.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: No, it's
24 not. We believe you. We believe you
25 about IT.

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2 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: I should
3 say it's not all an IT issue. There
4 certainly have been some administrative
5 issues that had to be addressed as well.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: So the
7 universe of property owners that are
8 Philly delinquent, what is that value of
9 that property amount?

10 MR. PAIVA: I do not have that
11 number.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: There was an
13 article that was done a couple of years
14 back, I believe it was, Mr. Chairman, and
15 it chronicled how much that was, and if I
16 recall -- and please don't hold me to
17 it -- it was in the neighborhood of \$300
18 million, where people actually own
19 delinquent properties here but in their
20 respective municipalities were paying
21 their local taxes.

22 So if we can start to stir up
23 the pot, if you would, by putting liens
24 on those Main Line homes so that the
25 North Philly homes actually get the

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 proper tax payments that we need, we
3 could start to do it. So do we have a
4 sense of what that universe is?

5 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: One
6 second, sir. We're looking for the
7 number. We do have that.

8 Councilman, 7 percent of our
9 delinquency, our delinquent accounts, 7
10 percent of our delinquent accounts are in
11 Pennsylvania but not in Philadelphia.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: So what does
13 that represent by real dollars?

14 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: In terms
15 of dollars, I don't have the number, but
16 we can get it for you.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: We got some
18 public school grads here. Can we get
19 somebody to work on that.

20 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: That's on
21 the number of accounts. I would have to
22 figure it out for the dollar value.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: So that will
24 be interesting as we start to contemplate
25 how we get the \$105 million ask. There's

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2 a lot of money still sitting on the
3 shelf. And you've done a wonderful job
4 to improve that, but I think the whale
5 that we want to get and for a matter of
6 respect, that if you live in Montgomery
7 or Potter County, for all I care, and you
8 own properties here but you're willing to
9 pay your home county tax but not willing
10 to pay us, we need to really address
11 that.

12 That's all I have,
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
15 you, Councilman.

16 Councilwoman Blackwell.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
18 you.

19 Good afternoon, Commissioner.

20 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good
21 afternoon.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I know
23 this was before you started, but the City
24 offered that tax amnesty program in 2010.
25 Do you know how many people enrolled in

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 it and how much was collected in real
3 estate taxes from that program?

4 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We do
5 know that, Councilwoman. Excuse me one
6 second.

7 Councilwoman, if I can get you
8 that number shortly versus holding you
9 up, unless it's critical that you have
10 the answer right now.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.
12 And we ask that to question the viability
13 of offering another amnesty program so
14 that people may -- especially in the
15 areas where people are calling and crying
16 about gentrification.

17 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes. I
18 think I can answer your question if I
19 don't have that number with me, if you
20 don't mind.

21 We've analyzed the performance
22 during the amnesty period and compared
23 that to our collection performance since
24 then, and certainly in the last two years
25 under Mr. Breslin's leadership with

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2 regard to Commercial Activity License
3 Revocation or with Mr. Paiva also with
4 Sequestration, we have far outstripped
5 the performance of collections for
6 delinquent property taxes without
7 amnesty, and we also found that a number
8 of amnesty accounts, a significant
9 number, took advantage of amnesty at the
10 time, but then did not subsequently stay
11 compliant. So there was a one-time
12 infusion as opposed to it being ongoing.
13 It was not.

14 What we're doing now with
15 regard to our compliance efforts and
16 collecting on delinquent taxes will be
17 reoccurring and will not be a one-time
18 bump in our activity. And we actually
19 have some graphs that can show that, and
20 I can send those to your office and share
21 those with Councilmembers.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

23 Thank you.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 you.

3 Seeing no further questions,
4 thank you, Commissioner. Thank you very
5 much.

6 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Thank
7 you. And if I'm not too much of a piglet
8 here, I'd like to just say again thank
9 you to Mr. Breslin for all that he has
10 done. He has been a wonderful
11 participant and leader in the process of
12 tax management for the City.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
14 you.

15 Thank you, Mr. Breslin. Enjoy
16 your retirement, sir.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BRESLIN:
18 Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
20 you, all.

21 Our next department is the
22 Board of Revision of Taxes.

23 (Witness approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 afternoon.

3 MS. PAGAN: Good afternoon.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: How are
5 you? Please identify yourself and
6 proceed.

7 MS. PAGAN: Good afternoon,
8 Chairman and members of Council. I'm
9 Carla Pagan, Executive Director of the
10 Board of Revision of Taxes, before you
11 today to testify on the Fiscal Year 2016
12 Operating Budget. And I'd ask before we
13 take the floor to questions if I can just
14 share with you the biggest accomplishment
15 our department has had over this past
16 fiscal year.

17 After receiving over 23,214
18 appeals from AVI, the Board has exhausted
19 or scheduled or rendered decisions on 97
20 percent of those. So we're so pleased to
21 share that with Council. And we're also
22 well underway in starting to hear 2015
23 residential appeals. So that's good news
24 we wanted to share first.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

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2 That's it?

3 MS. PAGAN: Yeah.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Oh, okay.

5 You just wanted to brag about the good
6 stuff first.

7 MS. PAGAN: Sweet and simple,
8 yes.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Actually
10 I was going to ask about appeals. Just
11 so I'm clear, 97 percent of 2014, right?

12 MS. PAGAN: Yes.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And do
14 you have in raw numbers how many appeals
15 there actually were?

16 MS. PAGAN: How many appeals
17 are actually what?

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Were
19 filed.

20 MS. PAGAN: So for 2014, 24,270
21 appeals were filed, yes. So as of July
22 14th of this year, we will have 839 left
23 open, unscheduled, and no decisions
24 rendered.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And 2015,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 how many?

3 MS. PAGAN: So for tax year
4 2015, we received 4,780 appeals. Right
5 now we have -- we've gone through 43
6 percent -- or 43 percent are still left
7 open. So we've started to actually hear
8 residential cases for tax year 2015.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
10 Now, I don't know, maybe Mr. Dubow can
11 answer this better, but I know when we
12 talked about all the appeals that were
13 going to be filed for 2014, we knew there
14 was going to be a certain -- I think it
15 was allowed a certain amount of money was
16 estimated would be lost. Do you have
17 details on how that came out? Was there
18 more, less, somewhere around the same?

19 MS. PAGAN: I can tell you
20 approximately of the appeals that the
21 Board reduced, it comes to about 335
22 million. That's an approximate number.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Three
24 hundred thirty-five million decrease?

25 MS. PAGAN: Decreases, yes.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

3 Mr. Dubow --

4 MS. PAGAN: From Board of
5 Revision's. That does not include other
6 settlements and things like that.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: No. I
8 got you. I was just thinking about the
9 appeals.

10 (Witness approached witness
11 table.)

12 MR. DUBOW: Just to be clear,
13 that's in assessed value. So if the tax
14 value -- you have to apply the tax rate
15 to that to get the dollar value of the
16 tax reduction.

17 I think in general the
18 reductions have kind of been in line with
19 where we thought they were. I think one
20 of the complications has been, as you
21 know, that taxpayers can pay their old
22 amounts until the appeals are resolved,
23 and I think that's led to hopefully
24 temporarily our seeing lower property tax
25 collections than we anticipated because

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 people are paying the old amounts.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: While
4 you're here, maybe I should ask the
5 Commissioner this. I know there's still
6 this delay in getting the bills correct.
7 Do you know where that stands, Mr. Dubow?

8 MR. DUBOW: I am not sure.

9 About the certification issue
10 and how long and kind of getting the new
11 certs to you guys. I know you've been
12 meeting with OPA.

13 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We've
14 been working with the Office of Property
15 Assessment and certainly the BRT. They
16 have taken a little bit of time over the
17 last month and a half to strategically
18 address what, for lack of a better word,
19 I'll call a backlog or some of the things
20 that had been in the pipeline for
21 certification, and they're getting to
22 them very quickly. By the end of June,
23 they believe that -- mid to late June,
24 they believe that they will only be about
25 three weeks behind the whole

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 certification process from the time they
3 have a hearing in BRT to the time that
4 they can process and then we get it and
5 can process it, about three weeks.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So does
7 that mean --

8 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: So in
9 another three to four weeks, the process,
10 for all intent and purposes, will be very
11 good.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And that
13 will mean basically people will have the
14 correct bills?

15 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: That's
16 correct.

17 MR. DUBOW: Correct.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Short way
19 of saying it. Because that's what I
20 think we still here, that I won my
21 appeal, but they're sending me bills that
22 aren't consistent with that, that kind of
23 thing. So you're saying by the end of
24 June that should be resolved?

25 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Yes, it will.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
4 right. We're going to hold you to that.

5 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Okay.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I'm
7 sorry, ma'am. I got off on a couple
8 other things, but one other question for
9 you. The CAMA system, I think you say
10 that will dramatically reduce the amount
11 of processing and all that. Could you
12 just describe that a little bit, like why
13 that will make such a significant
14 difference, in your opinion.

15 MS. PAGAN: Yes. So even
16 though the CAMA system is mainly used for
17 mass appraisal, a piece of that does
18 include appeal filing for those that want
19 to appeal their market value. So right
20 now the system that we use to enter in
21 appeals, manage them, do all the data
22 entry, even send out hearing letters,
23 decision letters, it's antiquated. It's
24 similar to those systems just after the
25 typewriter, before Windows. So with

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 CAMA, it will streamline the process that
3 we bring in new appeals. A lot of
4 electronic filing can happen with that
5 and scanning and using bar codes, and
6 also automate a lot of decisions and
7 things that we do manually now, printing
8 letters and so forth.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
10 Great. All right. Thank you.

11 Councilwoman Blackwell.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
13 you.

14 In line with what you've been
15 asking and, Commissioner, what you've
16 been saying, our people are still saying
17 in my area that they're getting their
18 2016 assessments as recently as the 18th,
19 18th of May, the day before election, and
20 that the deadline for appealing is May
21 26th. So what can we do? Will an
22 extension time be given, and, if so,
23 when? We'd like to get information out
24 to our constituents regarding that if
25 you're willing to do that.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MS. PAGAN: So, yes. That's
3 actually an OPA concern. So the OPA sent
4 out those assessment notices. The appeal
5 that you're referring to that's in that
6 mailing is actually a first-level review
7 or an initial review or appeal with the
8 OPA. And I'm almost sure they are going
9 to follow and honor that deadline, but
10 the formal appeal with the Board of
11 Revision of Taxes, they have until the
12 first Monday in October to get in. So if
13 in fact they miss that first appeal
14 filing deadline, they still have a chance
15 to appeal at the BRT.

16 The only downside to a BRT
17 appeal versus the first-level review is
18 that if they file a first-level review
19 and the Assessment Office says the
20 account warrants a reduction, that
21 reduction is usually put in the system
22 before their tax bill goes out. So
23 that's one downside. But I think on the
24 bottom of their first-level review appeal
25 form it does say you might have 30 days

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 from the date the notice was received.
3 So I'd really encourage them to get those
4 first-level review forms in, even if they
5 feel like they're a week or two weeks
6 late.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
11 you. Because eight days sounds awful
12 tight, and I know you say that's not
13 yours, but --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Right.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: -- that's
16 kind of tight.

17 Any other questions?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Seeing
20 none, thank you very much. Thank you for
21 all you're doing there.

22 MS. PAGAN: Thank you,
23 Chairman. Thank you, Council.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
25 Mr. Dubow, you're back, revenue bills. I

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 know you're looking forward to discussing
3 this.

4 (Witnesses approached witness
5 table.)

6 MR. DUBOW: I look forward to
7 every hearing.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Come on,
9 you said that with a straight face too.
10 Come on.

11 You're both scaring us with
12 those big folders.

13 MR. DUBOW: Yeah.

14 MS. RHYNHART: I'm important.

15 MR. DUBOW: Should we start?

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes,
17 please. Please proceed.

18 MR. DUBOW: So good afternoon.
19 My name is Rob Dubow. I'm the Director
20 of Finance and I'm here to testify on
21 Bills 150165, 150166, and 150167. I am
22 joined at or close to the table by
23 Rebecca Rhynhart, Budget Director, and
24 Clarena Tolson, the Revenue Commissioner.

25 Bill 150165 would authorize an

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 increase in the real estate tax rate to
3 support enhanced educational investments
4 for Philadelphia's school children.
5 Under the bill, the public school portion
6 of the property tax rate, which supports
7 both District and charter-managed
8 schools, would increase from 0.7382
9 percent to 0.8633 percent in FY16. That
10 action would generate about \$105 million
11 in stable, recurring revenue to help fill
12 an existing approximately \$85 million
13 deficit and to fund investments that were
14 described in Dr. Hite's Action Plan 3.0.

15 Our schools and students have
16 gone through several painful years of
17 funding crises caused by a number of
18 factors, but primarily cuts in state
19 funding and the end of federal stimulus
20 funds. The District has struggled to
21 balance its budget and avoid running out
22 of cash. It's made unavoidable cuts that
23 have seen the services it provides
24 deteriorate to a level that no one thinks
25 is acceptable.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 At the same time as the schools
3 were making painful and unavoidable cuts,
4 to ensure that those cuts weren't
5 substantially worse, the Mayor and City
6 Council were taking steps to add funding
7 to the District. Through a combination
8 of tax increases, parking fee increases,
9 improved property tax collections, and
10 increasing the City's grant to the
11 District, among other steps, the City's
12 elected officials increased funding to
13 our schools by more than it had been
14 increased at any point in at least 30
15 years. In total, \$360 million in
16 recurring revenues have been added since
17 FY09. While these increased dollars were
18 necessary, the funding alone has not been
19 sufficient to allow the schools to
20 provide for the safe school environments
21 and necessary curricular and
22 extracurricular activities for
23 Philadelphia youth.

24 We know that the only way that
25 schools will receive the funding that is

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 needed to give the City's children the
3 education they deserve is if the state
4 does its share. That means that the
5 state must increase funding and adopt a
6 full and fair funding formula. While
7 I'll discuss Governor Wolf's proposal in
8 more detail later in the testimony, even
9 with an increase to an appropriate level
10 of state funding, there is more that must
11 be done at the local level. That's why
12 Superintendent Hite has asked both the
13 City and state to make additional
14 investments for our school children next
15 year.

16 Recognizing that the state must
17 bear the larger portion of that
18 investment, Dr. Hite asked the
19 Commonwealth to provide substantially
20 more than he's asked the City to provide.
21 The requested City portion of the
22 investment is \$105 million.

23 Dr. Hite has laid out a clear
24 vision for how those investments would be
25 made in District-operated schools. If

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 both revenue increases, the state and
3 local increases are approved, the schools
4 would be able, for the first time in
5 years, to focus on making investments to
6 provide essential educational
7 opportunities for Philadelphia's school
8 children rather than considering
9 crippling cuts just to ensure that
10 schools can remain open. These
11 investments include providing social,
12 emotional, and behavioral health
13 interventions and support to many more
14 students who experienced adverse
15 childhood experiences; counseling,
16 health, and library services to students
17 who experienced declines in those
18 services; more students with
19 opportunities to participate in advanced
20 programming such as Advanced Placement,
21 International Baccalaureate, and dual
22 enrollment; and resources to support
23 District turnaround schools and expand or
24 replicate high-performing schools.

25 Without the additional funding,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 our schools will have another bleak year.
3 Increasing costs for pensions,
4 healthcare, debt service, and charters,
5 all of which are beyond the District's
6 ability to control, combined with
7 stagnant revenue would once again force
8 the District into a position in which it
9 has to make cuts rather than investments.

10 Given those choices, the Mayor
11 believes it's essential for both the
12 Commonwealth and the City to provide
13 stable, recurring revenues to invest in
14 the education of the City's children.
15 Governor Wolf's proposed budget would
16 provide \$159 million in basic education
17 funding for the District. The District
18 would also receive an additional 25
19 million in cyber charter reimbursements.
20 This proposal would provide critical
21 investments to help address past years of
22 declining state funding. The Mayor has
23 proposed providing 105 million through a
24 property tax increase. While the Mayor
25 doesn't like the idea of raising taxes,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 he believes it's a better option than
3 facing another year of cuts.

4 In considering how to generate
5 additional revenue, the Administration
6 looked for a local source that would
7 provide stable, recurring revenue
8 beginning in FY16 without needing any
9 state action so that the District could
10 plan for the future knowing that its
11 revenues were secure. We believe that
12 the best option is an increase in the
13 property tax.

14 While we understand increasing
15 the property tax will create an increased
16 burden for taxpayers, we'd like to
17 provide some context about the proposed
18 increase. The median residential
19 property in Philadelphia is valued at
20 \$113,100. Under this proposal, property
21 taxes increase on the median home value
22 would increase by about \$104 in FY16.
23 More than 42 percent of Philadelphia's
24 residential properties are valued at
25 below 100,000. Their additional tax

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 would be under \$88 a year, less than 7.50
3 a month.

4 Those proposed increases could
5 be offset by portions of the Governor's
6 proposal. In addition to proposing to
7 increase funding for our schools, the
8 Governor has proposed substantial tax
9 relief. That relief includes wage tax,
10 sales tax, cigarette tax, and the
11 property tax. Philadelphia would receive
12 about \$88 million in property tax relief
13 in FY17 to be used to increase the amount
14 of the homestead exemption to the maximum
15 amount allowed under state law.

16 Moreover, the proposal provides about 2
17 million to go towards reducing property
18 tax rates, which would decrease the rate
19 from 1.4651 if the Mayor's proposal were
20 enacted to 1.4633 in FY17. The resulting
21 changes of the property tax rate increase
22 for the School District combined with the
23 larger homestead exemption would mean
24 that a typical Philadelphia homeowner
25 would see a decrease in their current

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 property tax bill by \$287 from '15 to
3 '17, although the bills would increase
4 from '15 to '16 by \$104.

5 Combined, the Mayor's and the
6 Governor's proposals would provide our
7 schools with \$289 million in new
8 resources and investments to provide
9 essential educational opportunities for
10 Philadelphia's school children. Even if
11 both the Mayor's and the Governor's
12 proposals are enacted by FY17, City
13 residents would see a combination of
14 lower taxes and increased investments in
15 education.

16 The Administration believes
17 that it's critical to provide stable,
18 recurring funding to our schools in order
19 to invest in educating our children.
20 Bill 150165 provides such revenue without
21 having a negative impact on the City's
22 General Fund or requiring any further
23 action in Harrisburg.

24 To switch over to Bill 150166,
25 that authorizes the same tax rate for the

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 use and occupancy rate as it is currently
3 in place. Bill No. 150167 would
4 authorize a decrease in the wage earnings
5 and net profits tax rate for both
6 residents and non-residents. The rates
7 now, 3.92 percent for residents, 3.4915
8 percent for non-residents. The resident
9 rate includes the portion for PICA to pay
10 debt service on PICA bonds. The bill
11 would lower the rates to 3.9102 for
12 residents and 3.4828 for non-residents.

13 That concludes my testimony,
14 and we'd be happy to answer any questions
15 that you might have.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
17 you, Mr. Dubow. You say in your
18 testimony in considering how to generate
19 additional revenue, the Administration
20 looked for a local source to provide
21 stable revenue.

22 MR. DUBOW: Right.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You
24 decided on the real estate tax increase.
25 Could you talk about other things you

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 looked at and why you didn't think they
3 were the right way to go.

4 MR. DUBOW: Sure. I mean, when
5 we talked about options, there wasn't
6 anything else that could provide that
7 level of revenue without really dramatic
8 increases, like the U&O, for example. To
9 get 105 million out of the U&O, you'd
10 need an 80 percent increase.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: How much?

12 MR. DUBOW: Eighty percent
13 increase.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Eighty
15 percent?

16 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. So we didn't
17 think that was a reasonable option.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Was there
19 any other place, maybe a combination of
20 things that was possibly looked at?

21 MR. DUBOW: In terms of
22 revenues that go to the District,
23 property tax is the only one that's large
24 enough not to require an enormous
25 increase to generate that kind of

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 revenue.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: How many
4 real estate tax increases have there been
5 over the last -- well, say through this
6 Administration?

7 MR. DUBOW: There was one for
8 the City, one straight for the School
9 District, and I think one that was a City
10 side but went to the District. So two
11 years, three different increases.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Two
13 years, three different increases. Okay.

14 Now, you talk about the
15 Governor's plan, which I personally think
16 is a good one, but obviously --

17 MR. DUBOW: Me too.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: -- very
19 ambitious up there. And obviously
20 that's, I guess you would say, the best
21 argument for a property tax increase if
22 the Governor's plan passes. But
23 realistically, any idea -- and I know the
24 problem we have is we got to do what we
25 have to do before Harrisburg does what it

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 has to do, whenever it does it. So what
3 conversations have there been up there?

4 MR. DUBOW: So we had a lot of
5 conversations. Last week, I think it was
6 last week, the House moved a bill from
7 Representative Saylor, republican, that
8 was also a tax relief bill, and while it
9 provides a lot less tax relief for
10 Philadelphia, I think about 200 rather
11 than the over 400 from the Governor's
12 bill, it was focused only on property tax
13 and actually provided more property tax
14 relief for the City than the Governor's
15 proposal. And I think the conversation
16 up there has been that there will be some
17 type of compromise on relief, and it
18 looks like the two proposals, one from
19 the Governor and one from the
20 republicans, vary on property tax relief,
21 but the republican one is actually more
22 relief than what we're talking about in
23 this testimony.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: More?

25 MR. DUBOW: More for the

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 property tax. Nothing for anything else,
3 but more for property tax.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So right
5 now the republican plan focuses solely on
6 property tax relief?

7 MR. DUBOW: Correct. It's a
8 combination of -- I think it's about \$120
9 million for a rate decrease and about 75
10 million for homestead relief, whereas the
11 Governor's proposal has about 88 million
12 for property tax relief and with money
13 for wage tax relief, sales tax relief,
14 cigarette tax relief.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So when
16 you put that all together, when you look
17 at the total budget, so we lose out. Is
18 that what you're saying?

19 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. Under the
20 Governor's proposal, we get, I think
21 it's, \$458 million in tax relief, and
22 under the Saylor proposal, it's 200
23 million.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
25 But I'm sure there's still a lot of

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 negotiating going on.

3 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We'll be
5 going up there.

6 MR. DUBOW: Right.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If I can
8 just have one other question -- I see
9 Councilman Oh wants to ask too -- on
10 another area, the commercial tax liens.
11 How much revenue is expected to be
12 realized from that? Do you have that?

13 MR. DUBOW: So we're doing a
14 pilot this year to look at kind of the
15 best way to do that. I think we think
16 that kind of the upper limit on the
17 commercial real estate liens would be
18 somewhere in the \$60 million range
19 combined, City and School District. So
20 the School District portion may be like
21 in the 35 range and the City portion, the
22 25. I think those are the numbers.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

24 Thank you.

25 Councilman Oh.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
3 much, Mr. Chairman.

4 MR. DUBOW: Sorry. It's about
5 55 million. So it's 30 on the School
6 District side, 25 on the City side.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: So in the wage
10 reduction, why are you reducing the rate
11 for non-residents? Why is that being
12 reduced?

13 MR. DUBOW: So when we look at
14 the wage tax reduction, it's really
15 intended -- it's kind of to help
16 stimulate the economy and to help
17 employers choose to employ people in
18 Philadelphia.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: I'll get right
20 to the point.

21 MR. DUBOW: Can I -- just let
22 me answer and then --

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Sure.

24 MR. DUBOW: One of the things
25 that we look at to say, okay, this works

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 is analysis done by Bob Inman up at Penn,
3 and he actually finds that the
4 non-resident wage tax is more effective
5 in terms of creating jobs than the
6 resident side. So in terms of job
7 creation, based on his analysis, it's
8 actually more effective. So for us, it's
9 important to reduce both sides.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I have
11 great respect for him. All I'm saying is
12 that if you focused -- just for
13 argument's sake, if you focused on
14 residential workers and decrease more
15 significantly the wage tax cut for them,
16 it is more likely, in my opinion, that
17 jobs would be focused on people who live
18 in Philadelphia and pay additional taxes
19 in the City as opposed to people who come
20 from the suburban areas and come to work
21 in the City. So we would get more tax
22 revenues rather than providing a slighter
23 decrease in wage tax and not capitalizing
24 on the real estate and other taxes that
25 we would collect, including sales tax,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 inside the City. And I'm just bringing
3 that up because I don't really completely
4 agree with this idea about the wage tax
5 proposed by Governor Wolf, because I did
6 propose a wage tax which is particular to
7 Philadelphia. So I'm biased. But the
8 other point of it is that I'm really not
9 in favor of increasing the property tax
10 and I would like to see what were the
11 other alternatives. What happened to the
12 advertising, the commercial buildings and
13 all that? I know we've been talking
14 about that. What happened to alternative
15 sources of revenues?

16 MR. DUBOW: So as to Councilman
17 Greenlee, there's no other real source
18 that would generate this much. I mean,
19 in terms of kind of the advertising, we
20 put out a bid. That doesn't generate a
21 lot of money. This is \$105 million. You
22 need to do something significant to get
23 there.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: So could I
25 propose at least that if we did the taxi

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 medallions, that's \$150 million, and at
3 least you would have three years of \$50
4 million. The delinquent tax collection
5 improvement would be approximately 26
6 million a year on a decreasing basis. I
7 mean, it's the end of the Administration
8 to be putting in like a whole
9 stabilization of the School District.
10 How about the new Mayor come in and do
11 that, because you're at the end of eight
12 years now.

13 MR. DUBOW: Well, a couple of
14 things. The school children of
15 Philadelphia actually need the money in
16 the year coming up. They can't keep
17 having to wait. So we don't think
18 waiting makes sense.

19 Medallion sales -- they haven't
20 been successful in their last couple of
21 medallion sales.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Say that again.

23 MR. DUBOW: They haven't even
24 been successful in the last couple taxi
25 medallion sales. So I don't know why you

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 think it would generate that much
3 revenue.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: Because the
5 problem with the taxi medallion sales is
6 that when you only offer like 30 or 40
7 medallions, a bank is not going to
8 finance it. Therefore, nobody is
9 interested in purchasing it. But when
10 you sell 300 medallions, a bank will
11 finance that and people will purchase it,
12 roughly. But, in other words, it's in
13 the quantity of the sale, not in the per
14 medallion sale. You're not going to
15 generate any sales that way.

16 MR. DUBOW: Well, also a
17 medallion sale is not recurring revenue.
18 We need recurring revenue too.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: I understand,
20 but at \$150 million, that's at least
21 something you could do over three years,
22 to get 50 million for three years.

23 MR. DUBOW: And I would really
24 like to see that analysis, how you get to
25 that 150 million.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I'll be
3 happy to share it with you, because that
4 may be an alternative in the immediate
5 future against a 9.32 percent tax
6 increase on real estate.

7 MR. DUBOW: Well, again, that
8 increase is a recurring, stable source
9 that the District can count on for years
10 and years going forward.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: I think --

12 MR. DUBOW: And that's what
13 they need.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: I think it
15 hurts a lot of people. I think it hurts
16 a lot of people. So I understand the
17 desire to help and I want to help the
18 schools, but not at the price of hurting
19 people in the neighborhoods and
20 communities. I think the issue is that,
21 is that the best that you got after eight
22 years?

23 MR. DUBOW: It is. It is the
24 only proposal that has been put up in the
25 last several months that gets recurring,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 stable revenue at that level to the
3 School District that doesn't require
4 state action and that will be in place
5 for FY16.

6 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
7 much.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
9 you, Councilman.

10 Councilwoman Bass.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman.

13 Question, can you just review
14 your explanation that you just gave to
15 Councilman Oh in terms of the decrease in
16 wage tax to non-City residents.

17 MR. DUBOW: Oh, the reductions
18 for non-residents?

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

20 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. So the kind
21 of rationale for the cuts is to help
22 stimulate our economy. There's a
23 Professor up at Wharton named Bob Inman
24 who analyzes --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Say again.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. DUBOW: There's a Professor
3 up at Wharton named Bob Inman who kind of
4 analyzes the impact of tax changes, and
5 his analysis showed that in terms of
6 resident and non-resident wage tax, the
7 non-resident wage tax actually has a
8 bigger impact on jobs than the resident
9 impact.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is he a
11 City resident? I'm just kidding.

12 MR. DUBOW: So that was just
13 the rationale.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is that
15 analysis provided?

16 MR. DUBOW: We can get it for
17 you, yeah.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'd like to
19 actually see what the analysis says.

20 MR. DUBOW: Sure.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Because
22 obviously City residents feel very
23 differently about it.

24 MR. DUBOW: Understood.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
3 you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
5 Thank you, Councilman.

6 Hi.

7 MR. DUBOW: Hi.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
9 heard you guys were almost done. I said
10 I got to get in there, string this out a
11 little longer.

12 No. Seriously, the
13 conversation that you were having with
14 Councilman Oh and you referenced that
15 there was only one proposal that created
16 annualized revenue of this level, is that
17 because you all did not propose, say, an
18 increase in U&O or an increase in parking
19 tax? Is it because you just put that on
20 the table as the sole source of
21 annualized revenue?

22 MR. DUBOW: What I was saying
23 is any -- we're not the only ones who
24 have made proposals, right. So none of
25 the proposals we've seen have met those

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 criteria.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
4 Okay.

5 MR. DUBOW: That's what I was
6 saying.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
8 Because there are other ways to create
9 annualized revenue. U&O.

10 MR. DUBOW: Right, and what we
11 talked about a little before is, for U&O
12 to get to 105 million a year, you would
13 need an 80 percent increase.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Okay. So you're suggesting that the 105
16 million is the only figure that can be
17 achieved in these budget hearings.

18 MR. DUBOW: We're saying that's
19 the amount that the Superintendent
20 requested. That's an amount that helps
21 solve the District's budget deficit and
22 provides additional funding for --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: The
24 budget deficit?

25 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. Let me just

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 finish. That solves their projected FY16
3 deficit, which is about \$85 million, and
4 then begins to provide money for the
5 investments that the Superintendent laid
6 out in his Action Plan.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
8 there's three things. The 105 from the
9 City you're talking about, right?

10 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And
12 it does more than just solve the deficit.

13 MR. DUBOW: That's correct.
14 And I think the Superintendent made a
15 conscious decision that he didn't want to
16 just ask for an amount that left the
17 District at the steady state, which is
18 really at an unacceptable level, and he
19 wanted to be able to make additional
20 investments, and the combination of the
21 request to the state and the City would
22 clearly allow for investments beyond just
23 solving the deficit.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: That
25 would be the 300.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. DUBOW: Roughly, yes. It's
3 264 plus \$25 million in cyber charter
4 relief. So it gets close to 300.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: But
6 that's from the state, right, the cyber
7 charter relief?

8 MR. DUBOW: The cyber charter
9 and -- it's a 159 million request from
10 the state, plus \$25 million in cyber
11 relief. So that combination is 184
12 million, plus 105 from the City. So you
13 get close to the 300 million.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
15 is it your belief that the state is going
16 to contribute the 184?

17 MR. DUBOW: So I believe that
18 they'll have a back and forth up there
19 and come up with a number. What that
20 number will be, I don't know, but hope
21 they get us close to that number as
22 possible.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
24 if the back and forth only generates 100
25 from the state, are we going to be asked

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 to backfill the additional 80 to get to
3 where Dr. Hite wants us to be?

4 MR. DUBOW: We've never heard
5 the School District say that. I've never
6 heard that request, so I don't think so.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
8 they won't come back next year and say,
9 We need an additional 80 because the
10 state only gave 100, the City gave 100,
11 we need 80 more?

12 MR. DUBOW: No. I mean, I
13 think what it would mean is that there
14 would be a lower level of investments in
15 the District.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
17 Okay. So at what point -- and I know you
18 don't know the answer to this question,
19 but I have to ask it -- do you think we
20 will have some sense of what's likely to
21 happen on the state, particularly as it
22 relates to the homestead relief? Because
23 that's a significant issue with us,
24 because we're being asked to raise real
25 estate taxes again, with no guarantee

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 that we're going to get homestead relief
3 that would minimize significantly the
4 level of pain for our residents.

5 MR. DUBOW: Correct. I think
6 the thing that was encouraging in that
7 regard is the bill that moved through the
8 House last week that would give property
9 tax relief, and while it gives a lot less
10 total tax relief to Philadelphia, it's
11 focused exclusively on property tax
12 relief.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
14 Right.

15 MR. DUBOW: So I think you're
16 now at a place where both republicans and
17 democrats in Harrisburg said you need to
18 do tax relief and that the negotiation
19 will be about what the level of that
20 relief is.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 Right.

23 MR. DUBOW: So I think that's
24 encouraging. Obviously there are never
25 any guarantees with legislative bodies.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
3 the level generated as a result of the
4 republican version -- was that Saylor's
5 bill?

6 MR. DUBOW: Saylor's bill, yes.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: How
8 much would that be?

9 MR. DUBOW: For Philadelphia it
10 would be \$200 million, combination of 120
11 for rate relief and 75 million for
12 homestead relief.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
14 how much would the homestead relief allow
15 us to take the homestead up to?

16 MR. DUBOW: I think it's
17 probably from about -- we're at 30 now.
18 I think to about 50 probably, somewhere
19 in that range.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
21 right. So have you done an analysis --
22 it's probably too soon -- on what that --

23 MR. DUBOW: On what that bill
24 means? Yes.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Yeah. So if we were able to get the 50,
3 up to 50 -- is that what you're saying,
4 up to 50?

5 MR. DUBOW: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
7 Fifty thousand per household?

8 MR. DUBOW: What that would
9 mean for -- so the median tax bill now is
10 \$1,114. Under the Mayor's proposal, that
11 goes up by \$104. If the Saylor bill was
12 enacted, both the rate decrease and the
13 homestead that's in there, that would go
14 down to about \$764. So a \$350 decrease
15 from where it is now. The Governor's
16 proposal would get a \$280 increase --
17 decrease, sorry, median.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Say
19 that again.

20 MR. DUBOW: The Governor's
21 proposal, it has less property tax
22 relief, but it has wage tax. That would
23 be about a \$280 decrease from '15 to '17.
24 The Saylor proposal would be about \$350
25 for the median home.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Increase?

4 MR. DUBOW: Decrease from '15
5 to '17. So it would go up in '16 and
6 then go down in '17, and the decrease in
7 '17 would be much larger than the
8 increase in '16.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

10 Okay.

11 MR. DUBOW: Under either
12 proposal. But it's up there.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

14 Okay. So give you a snapshot. So we've
15 done an analysis on incremental increases
16 and decreases based on revenue generated
17 from real estate taxes.

18 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
20 various rates -- I know you know how we
21 do it, right?

22 MR. DUBOW: Right.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So I
24 just want to make sure I understand. So
25 the Saylor proposal as is -- it may not

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 get any better than that -- would
3 generate how much exactly?

4 MR. DUBOW: Well, 195 million.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Just
6 for homestead relief.

7 MR. DUBOW: Seventy-five for
8 homestead.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
10 Okay. All right. I got to throw that in
11 the mix. Okay. And did you do an
12 analysis on U&O in incremental increases?

13 MR. DUBOW: We did a series
14 that we sent to staff, yes.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
16 just want to let people know that we are
17 cooperating.

18 MR. DUBOW: We are.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
20 right. And the lien sales -- I'm sorry
21 to ask questions if they were already
22 asked. Did you talk about the lien sales
23 today?

24 MR. DUBOW: I don't think that
25 we --

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Did
3 we not talk about that?

4 MR. DUBOW: Did we talk about
5 lien sales at all?

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
7 right. We'll talk about it later.

8 MR. DUBOW: Okay.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
10 right. I'm good. I think Councilman Oh
11 had a question.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Thank
13 you, Council President.

14 Could I ask you the PICA
15 portion of the wage tax right now, what
16 is -- 1.54 percent?

17 MR. DUBOW: 1.5, yes.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: How much money
19 is that, roughly?

20 MS. RHYNHART: About \$350-some
21 million.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Per year?

23 MS. RHYNHART: Yes.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: So that expires
25 in 2023.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. DUBOW: Correct.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Can we
4 negotiate the extension of that tax,
5 money today for money tomorrow?

6 MR. DUBOW: I'm not sure I
7 understand the question.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: In other words,
9 can we extend -- if we were able to
10 extend the PICA portion of the wage tax
11 for five years in exchange for dollars we
12 get today for the schools and pay it down
13 after the expiration of the PICA portion
14 of the wage tax.

15 MR. DUBOW: So I just want to
16 take a step back. So the PICA portion of
17 the wage tax --

18 COUNCILMAN OH: Expires in
19 2023.

20 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. That goes
21 back to '92 when PICA was created.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Understood.

23 MR. DUBOW: That was a portion
24 of the wage tax that we were to receive.
25 We didn't get new tax to get the PICA

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 portion of the wage tax. So eliminating
3 the PICA portion of the wage tax would be
4 a \$350 million hit to our budget.

5 COUNCILMAN OH: Right. So it
6 expires. We don't get that anymore,
7 but --

8 MS. RHYNHART: But wait. Can I
9 just add a clarification?

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes.

11 MS. RHYNHART: It is set to
12 expire, but the reality of the situation
13 is, if we don't at some point re-up that,
14 that it would open up a big hole in our
15 budget. So I think your assumption is
16 that we don't need that money anymore
17 when it expires.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: My bill, which
19 I did on the wage tax, concludes that
20 tax. So when it expires in 2023, it's
21 gone, and I understand that both the
22 Administration and the Governor are not
23 committed to removing that tax per needs
24 of the City. I'm not proposing that we
25 extend the PICA portion. What I'm saying

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 is, I'd like to know that before we get
3 to a property tax increase, that every
4 other possible way of getting the money
5 for the schools that is out there has
6 been considered and explored so that we
7 don't end up adding a tax that's going to
8 hurt folks, because I don't believe the
9 numbers in terms of how many seniors,
10 people on a fixed income, people with
11 disabilities, declining conditions of
12 homes, lack of jobs and other things that
13 the 9.32 percent is reasonable. What I'm
14 saying is, have you explored alternative
15 methods if you are any way going to try
16 to extend that PICA, the wage tax, that
17 people may be comfortable paying for, to
18 get a loan or something or money up front
19 on the schools so we can get a continuing
20 way to pay for schools that the state is
21 comfortable with, that we are comfortable
22 with, that our population is comfortable
23 with because of the portion of salaries
24 as opposed to new money that folks got to
25 pull out for paying for their homes, many

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 of which are in disrepair.

3 MR. DUBOW: And I guess what
4 we're trying to say is, that's \$350
5 million that comes to the General Fund,
6 and if you take that away, you are
7 looking at making massive cuts in the
8 General Fund, and that's one of the
9 things that we're trying to avoid in this
10 process.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: It's due to
12 expire anyway.

13 MR. DUBOW: Right, and it's
14 essential that we get it extended. If
15 not, we will face a budget crisis on the
16 City side that is larger than anything
17 we've faced in decades, because we would
18 lose \$350 million in one year.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. So this
20 is a conversation for another day, but, I
21 mean, I really would like to -- okay.
22 Anyway, I have great problems with that
23 property tax increase.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

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1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Thank you, Councilman.

3 It looks like we're done.

4 MR. DUBOW: Okay. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: For
6 today. Thank you.

7 MR. DUBOW: Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: The
9 Committee will stand in recess until 6:30
10 p.m., at which time we will have public
11 testimony here in Room 400, City Hall.

12 Thank you.

13 (Recess.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
15 evening, everyone. We're going to start
16 now, if it's okay. First of all, I want
17 to thank you very much for coming down
18 this evening.

19 This is a continuation of the
20 public hearing of the Committee of the
21 Whole. We're here this evening to hear
22 from you about the proposed 2016
23 Operating and Capital Budgets and where
24 you believe the City should focus its
25 spending priorities to ensure that there

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 is an opportunity for all here this
3 evening.

4 We have certain ground rules.
5 We want to make sure that everybody has
6 an opportunity to testify, so we will
7 have a limit with respect to the time to
8 testify. It will be three minutes. You
9 can pretty much say pretty much
10 everything in three minutes, from our
11 perspective.

12 So we want to again thank you
13 very much. We will call your name.
14 We'll probably call you in groups of
15 three. Just come up to the witness table
16 and state your name for the record and
17 please give your testimony.

18 Ms. Lewis, you want to call the
19 name of the first three witnesses.

20 MS. LEWIS: Yes, sir. Maud
21 Lyon, Nicole Allen, and Angela Bey. Maud
22 Lyon, Nicole Allen, and Angela Bey.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 evening. Please start.

3 MS. LYON: Good evening,
4 Council President Clarke and members of
5 City Council. I'm Maud Lyon, President
6 of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural
7 Alliance and representing over 300 arts
8 and culture organizations here in
9 Philadelphia, and I'm here to ask the
10 Council to deliver a budget that includes
11 level funding to the Philadelphia
12 Cultural Fund, maintaining it at 3.14
13 million.

14 I don't have to tell you how
15 much Philadelphia's cultural sector means
16 to the City, to its image, to the tourism
17 industry that brings in 2.8 billion every
18 year, but today I'm here as an advocate
19 for the much smaller organizations, the
20 kind that anchor Philadelphia's
21 neighborhoods. Through festivals,
22 concerts, and art projects, neighborhood
23 cultural non-profits bring residents
24 together and draw customers to local
25 businesses. They mentor young people,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 like some of the people with me tonight,
3 and to give them the tools to succeed in
4 life.

5 The Philadelphia Cultural Fund
6 is a critical factor to ensure the
7 sustainability of community-based arts
8 and culture. The primary beneficiaries
9 are organizations with small budgets,
10 which have a difficult time finding
11 funding from other sources. General
12 operating support from PCF helps them to
13 operate day to day and especially to pay
14 staff salaries.

15 The Norris Square Neighborhood
16 Project in Kensington serves youth and
17 adults with programs in Latino culture.
18 Norris Square helps youth to develop
19 socially responsible businesses and
20 teaches community members how to maintain
21 urban gardens. This makes their
22 neighborhood more economically stable,
23 less prone to violence, healthier and
24 more diverse, and attracts Latinos from
25 all economic backgrounds who are drawn to

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 the neighborhood's strong sense of
3 identity and community.

4 When the Council restored the
5 Cultural Fund budget to 3.14 million last
6 year, the impact was tremendous. Two
7 hundred and eighty-five organizations
8 received grants, 11 more than the
9 previous year, and all grants were
10 significantly larger. The Council's
11 increase also reinstated the Youth Arts
12 Enrichment grants for the first time
13 since 2010. Eleven grantees received
14 full project support in addition to their
15 general operating grant. The Scribe
16 Center in West Philly will use their
17 \$25,000 grant to fund a ten-month program
18 that teaches teens to create broadcast
19 quality historical documentaries.
20 Ninety-five percent of their students
21 graduate from high school and 70 percent
22 go on to college. This year's students
23 will research and investigate the history
24 of policing youth and better ways to
25 maintain order in society, and this year

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 after Ferguson and Baltimore, what could
3 be more timely.

4 It's imperative that we find
5 ways for our teens to express their
6 frustration in productive ways and to
7 help them believe in the processes of
8 social change. The arts are uniquely
9 qualified to provide this creative
10 outlet.

11 If you want to continue to reap
12 the benefits that these organizations
13 bring to the communities and our youth,
14 you must fund them. I ask the Council to
15 ensure level funding for the Cultural
16 Fund at 3.14 million.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

19 Thank you very much.

20 Please proceed.

21 MS. MACKEY: My name is
22 Adrienne Mackey and I'm here to advocate
23 on behalf of the Philadelphia Cultural
24 Fund as a member of the arts community
25 with my company, Swim Pony, as a

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 five-time PCF grant recipient, a former
3 panelist, and one of the Fund's newest
4 Board members.

5 There's a lot I want to say
6 about the impact of the Fund, but first
7 I'd like to tell you a quick story. In
8 2004, I moved here as a midwestern
9 transplant. I missed my hometown of
10 Chicago, and as a chemistry and theatre
11 studies double major, I wasn't sure which
12 part of my brain would win out when
13 choosing a professional path.

14 Despite the advice about the
15 supportive scene here, I wasn't exactly
16 sure what it meant to break into the
17 avant-garde theatre-directing business,
18 but I figured I could always move back
19 home and apply my research experience
20 with copper porphyrin DNA aggregates into
21 some kind of real job. I believed that I
22 had something unique to contribute and
23 that I had a lot of ideas and energy, but
24 I also had a sizable student debt and no
25 trust fund.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 So I applied to arts
3 foundations in Philly seven times over
4 several years, and seven times I was
5 rejected, with feedback like, Good
6 proposal, well articulated ideas, but no
7 evidence of capacity to raise other
8 funds. It was frustrating, needing
9 funding to get funding, and I feared that
10 I would succumb to that porphyrin
11 aggregate siren call of stable income.

12 Luckily, in 2009, I went to an
13 info session for PCF, and later that year
14 I received my first grant for a whopping
15 \$1,700. That money went into projects
16 that raised my artistic profile. Their
17 general operating nature allowed me to
18 build infrastructure that didn't fit into
19 project support, meaning that for the
20 first time, I didn't have to pay for
21 printer paper out of my own pocket.

22 Those funds allowed me to crack
23 the funding ceiling that had held me back
24 for years. It made it possible for me to
25 create a folk musical, exploring a labor

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 icon at Eastern State, a 20,000 square
3 foot interactive adventure about the
4 multiverse and currently a citywide video
5 game live theatre hybrid with Drexel's
6 Entrepreneurial Game Studio.

7 The Cultural Fund's general
8 operating program is the only thing like
9 it in the City, and if it's cut, sure,
10 the biggest players stand only to lose a
11 tiny fraction of their income, but to the
12 hundreds of small and mid-sized
13 organizations like me, these funds
14 literally mean the difference between a
15 future of incredible art and chemical
16 aggregate day jobs in Chicago.

17 Thank you. I appreciate the
18 work you do on behalf of Philadelphia and
19 considering the City's investment in the
20 Cultural Fund.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

23 Thank you very much.

24 MS. BEY: Good evening. My
25 name is Angela Antoinette Bey and I'm not

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 going to pretend that I'm an expert about
3 the inner workings of politics and the
4 distribution of money in Philadelphia.
5 However, what I do know is that the
6 budgetary cuts to the Philadelphia
7 Cultural Fund will do nothing but
8 debilitate youth like myself who rely on
9 the arts as not only a means of
10 entertainment but as an outlet in an
11 educational system that does nothing but
12 suppress creativity and expression.

13 How bold of me, a 17-year-old,
14 soon-to-be college freshman to say and
15 how much do I know about such claims
16 about a caldric (ph) system that I seemly
17 know nothing about. To those who doubt
18 my testimony, perhaps what I say today
19 will have you change your minds, and
20 perhaps the reason why you're so willing
21 to cut \$1.3 million from PCF's budget is
22 because you're detached from the
23 real-life impact that the arts have on
24 Philadelphia and youth.

25 I stand before you today as a

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 living example of a person whose life was
3 saved by the creative and performing
4 arts. Growing up in Southwest
5 Philadelphia, there aren't many healthy
6 outlets for a girl like me to express
7 myself, let alone in a public school
8 system. I went to John M. Patterson
9 Elementary School where the arts are
10 virtually non-existent. Instead of
11 making music and writing stories, my
12 peers were starting fights on the
13 playground, disrupting classes like
14 English and math and being told
15 subconsciously that their worth is
16 dependent on their understanding of time
17 tables and the scores of their tests.

18 I cannot blame my peers who do
19 not succeed academically to resorting to
20 extracurriculars that are harmful to
21 themselves and others. After all, with
22 nearly \$8 million reserved for the
23 construction of a new prison in the
24 Northeast and a cut of over 600 million
25 to education in Pennsylvania as proposed

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 by Tom Wolf's budget plan, at least my
3 classmates can be assured that there will
4 be a future waiting for them behind bars.

5 Kids will find happiness in the
6 darnedest places, and I should know. I
7 found a safe place in writing. My first
8 grade teacher encouraged me to write
9 stories and poetry in order to distract
10 myself from hardships of that year. Due
11 to her and my family support, my poetry
12 were displayed in such places such as the
13 school cafeteria, at the Bartram's
14 Gardens, to the John Heinz Wildlife
15 Center. These moments are some of the
16 happiest of my life, but I couldn't help
17 but feel like I was living two different
18 lives, one in the world of arts who
19 accepted and praised my talents and
20 another in the world academics that,
21 although beneficial, was much less
22 fulfilling than creatively putting my pen
23 to paper.

24 This year I will be graduating
25 from Friends Select School, and although

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 I am not directly impacted from the cuts
3 to the arts budget of Philadelphia public
4 schools, as an active member of
5 Philadelphia Young Playwrights, I and
6 students like me will be heavily
7 impacted. In addition, so will my
8 friends from Teen Arden, the Mural Arts
9 Program, Mighty Writers and other
10 organizations like these. These
11 organizations are not only outlets of
12 creativity but also hubs of opportunity.

13 For example, through Philly
14 Young Playwrights, I am a Youth Council
15 member and I have the opportunity to meet
16 in the Caucus Room right across from this
17 hall in an effort to plan and coordinate
18 more arts programming at PYP. I've been
19 invited to countless galas and events on
20 behalf of this program. I was a winner
21 of the Young Voices Monologue Festival,
22 where my original piece, Pedestals, which
23 discusses racism in private schools, was
24 professionally produced at InterAct
25 Theatre Company and has toured with PYP

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 throughout residencies in schools
3 throughout the Philadelphia region.

4 I am a Paula Vogel's Mentor
5 Fellow, where I'm been paired with Quiara
6 Alegria Hudes, a famed alumna of the
7 Philadelphia Young Playwrights and
8 Pulitzer Prize winner for Water by the
9 Spoonful, to write a full-length play
10 over the course of this year that is
11 slated to be produced at the Asian Arts
12 Initiative.

13 These opportunities in the arts
14 are only granted to me by PYP alone, and
15 I assure you that I have had many more
16 throughout my career here. In fact, the
17 arts has had such a huge impact on my
18 life that next year I will be attending
19 Ursinus College on full scholarship due
20 to my work in theatre.

21 My saying all of this is not to
22 brag, but to demonstrate how much the
23 arts can cultivate and aspire success.
24 It is easy to undermine the impact of the
25 arts and it's easy to cut arts funding

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 from schools with students full of
3 potential, talent, and passion outside of
4 the traditional academic subjects, but
5 it's not easy to do so when I sit here
6 before you with undeniable proof that the
7 arts undeniably matter. We are not only
8 being deprived of pens, paints, and
9 musical instruments. It's much deeper
10 than that. We are also being deprived of
11 the opportunity to act on our potential
12 as the upcoming civically engaged,
13 cultured leaders of this City. I ask you
14 to maintain the Cultural Fund funding
15 with that in mind.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

18 Thank you for your testimony.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Hold
21 on one second, please. I just had a
22 quick question. Can you talk to me about
23 the level of job creation and the
24 economic impact that the arts have. I
25 don't know if you have a specific number.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 I do know many years sitting here these
3 discussions. Can you just kind of give
4 me a sense of --

5 MS. LYON: Yeah. There's about
6 30,000 people in the City of Philadelphia
7 that work in the arts. The work we've
8 done in Greater Philadelphia identifies
9 65,000 people that are part of making
10 arts and culture happen. That's
11 equivalent to 44,000 full-time equivalent
12 jobs, and that's for the five-county
13 area.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Okay. So it's a pretty good return on
16 investment.

17 MS. LYON: Yeah.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 Well, thank you. Thank you very much for
20 your testimony.

21 MS. LYON: Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. LEWIS: Judith Robinson,
24 Iliyaas Muhammad, and Asia Adams. Judith
25 Robinson, Iliyaas Muhammad, and Asia

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Adams.

3 (Witness approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'd
6 just like to say that we have a witness
7 list where individuals have called in
8 earlier, and if there's anyone here that
9 has not called in and is interested in
10 testifying, we need you to sign up at the
11 table to my left. I'm not sure if you
12 guys are all here to give support for the
13 individuals.

14 Good evening, sir.

15 MR. MUHAMMAD: Good evening. I
16 would like to ask --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Just
18 state your name for the record.

19 MR. MUHAMMAD: Oh, okay. Sorry
20 about that. My name is Iliyaas Muhammad.
21 I would like to ask that \$500,000 of the
22 Fiscal Year 2016 budget goes towards
23 funding of Neighborhood Advisory
24 Committees. Again, my name is Iliyaas
25 Muhammad. I'm the Neighborhood Advisory

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 Committee Coordinator with Universal
3 Community Homes. Universal Community
4 Homes was established as a 501(c)(3)
5 non-profit corporation in 1993 with a
6 focus on community development and
7 education management, and since has
8 evolved to have amazing strides in the
9 area of housing, economic education,
10 community services, family and support
11 services, health, and technology. Due to
12 Universal Community Homes having a
13 holistic approach to community
14 revitalization, it has become the leading
15 community development and education
16 management organization in the City of
17 Philadelphia.

18 As NAC Coordinator, I serve as
19 a connector that helps bring community
20 resources to the forefront of our
21 community. I identify the needs and
22 concerns of community members. We
23 improve quality-of-life issues that
24 directly impact our residents. The NAC's
25 goal directly correlates with Universal

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 Community Homes' mission of resolving
3 conditions that are affecting the
4 community's quality of life. These
5 conditions vary from unemployment to
6 community filling in the education system
7 to lack of financial intelligence.

8 Losing your home to foreclosure
9 is a terrifying ordeal. Homeowners often
10 do not know where to go for help, are
11 confused by information from the lender,
12 and can just be paralyzed by the fear of
13 losing one of their only assets but
14 finding another place to go. Many of
15 these homeowners can be helped and can
16 find ways to stay in their home. That's
17 what the Philadelphia Residential
18 Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Program is
19 designed to do.

20 Every month the NACs get a list
21 of homeowners in their service area that
22 are facing foreclosure. Universal
23 Community Homes NAC at high moments in
24 the outreach --

25 (Bell rung.)

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Go
3 ahead.

4 MR. MUHAMMAD: -- receive up to
5 50-plus names and addresses of residents
6 per month that homes are at risk of
7 foreclosure. To help these families that
8 are facing the loss of foreclosure of
9 their home, the NAC goes to door and door
10 and explains the Diversion Program.

11 Once the NAC reaches the
12 resident, there are four steps that we
13 instruct the residents to follow. We ask
14 them to actually call the Save Your Homes
15 Hotline at 215-334-4663, assemble their
16 financial documents, meet with assigned
17 housing counselors, and attend a
18 scheduled conciliation conference.

19 I recall having a community
20 member come to our office whose
21 grandmother was facing foreclosure. Her
22 grandmother was a senior that had a
23 difficult time managing her financial
24 responsibilities. When the community
25 member entered our office with the

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 documents and paperwork, I referred her
3 and her grandmother to the Dixon House,
4 which is a subdivision of Diversified
5 Community Services, to seek financial and
6 housing counseling. The following month
7 I found her grandmother's name on our
8 list of foreclosure. Once I reached the
9 home, the community member explained to
10 me that she was currently working through
11 their housing difficulties with the Dixon
12 House to resolve their foreclosure
13 issues.

14 This is just an example of how
15 the NAC can play a critical role in
16 getting frightened homeowners to
17 resources that they need to keep their
18 home.

19 More resources for the NAC
20 would mean increased funding towards
21 transportation of NAC representatives
22 during their outreach as far as public
23 transportation, car fare, and mileage
24 reimbursement. Presently the NAC does
25 not receive funds for transportation at

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 all. Whether it's public transportation
3 funds or reimbursement of gas and
4 mileage, we are using our personal
5 vehicles to get to our destination for
6 foreclosure outreach. Currently, NAC
7 representatives find creative ways to get
8 to and from where they conduct their
9 outreach on their own, from spending
10 their own money on public transportation
11 or asking individuals from police
12 stations to escort them around to do
13 their foreclosure outreach. This becomes
14 an inconvenience for many individuals.
15 If there was a system in place to ensure
16 that each NAC person had funds to travel
17 to the residents or community members, it
18 would make a world of difference.
19 Furthermore, more funding can increase
20 the number of NACs that can assist with
21 the foreclosure outreach as the number of
22 foreclosure cases increase.

23 I just last week actually
24 received a list of about 30 names for
25 foreclosure, and each month it's about

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 30, 50, 30, 20, things like that. So
3 it's very important.

4 So in closing, I would like to
5 ask again that \$500,000 of the Fiscal
6 Year 2016 budget goes towards funding
7 Neighborhood Advisory Committees.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 MR. MUHAMMAD: Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Can
12 I ask you a question. With respect to
13 your NAC contract, my assumption is that
14 your budget has been decreasing over the
15 years as the federal dollars coming to
16 the City continue to diminish. Has your
17 area or your scope of services with
18 respect to your contract also increased
19 at the same time?

20 MR. MUHAMMAD: It has. Even
21 the service area, it increased. So we
22 cover more ground than what we initially
23 did.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
25 right.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. MUHAMMAD: It was actually
3 one point for the foreclosure outreach, I
4 was actually doing foreclosure for not
5 only my NAC but another NAC that was
6 across Broad Street. So not only did I
7 have my 50 names, I also had another 25
8 to 30 names. So all together I had about
9 80, and at that time, I had no vehicle,
10 so I was on the bus going three times to
11 that one house and I had to deal within
12 the month before the conciliation
13 conference.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Okay.

16 MR. MUHAMMAD: So that's the
17 type of work we do.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: It's
19 a challenge.

20 MR. MUHAMMAD: Yeah, it is.
21 But it's worth it, because if you're able
22 to work with the community members and
23 they find a way, because a lot of times
24 there is a way, but community members are
25 not aware of it, but once they find out

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 there is a way, you just open a world of
3 opportunities for them. So that's the
4 satisfaction we receive as NAC employees.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
6 Right. Okay. Well, thank you for your
7 great work.

8 MR. MUHAMMAD: Thank you very
9 much.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
11 Thank you for your testimony.

12 MR. MUHAMMAD: Thank you for
13 hearing me out. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. LEWIS: David Ortiz, Guy
16 Larson, and Philip Green. David Ortiz,
17 Guy Larson, Philip Green.

18 (Witnesses approached witness
19 table.)

20 MR. ORTIZ: Good evening. My
21 name is David Ortiz and I am testifying
22 on behalf of the Norris Square Community
23 Alliance in support of OHCD's
24 Neighborhood Advisory Committee or NAC
25 program.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Norris Square is a neighborhood
3 non-profit in Eastern North Philadelphia
4 that's been serving the community over 30
5 years with childhood education,
6 after-school programs, case management
7 services for adults, housing counseling,
8 and development of affordable housing for
9 rental and homeownership. Our NAC
10 program is usually the first point of
11 contact for neighborhood residents who
12 need our services or similar services
13 offered by other community organizations
14 or City agencies. We average about 200
15 referrals a month.

16 Recent funding cuts of the NAC
17 program may reduce its effectiveness at a
18 time when the service area and the
19 population the program serves have grown.
20 In our case, funding has been reduced
21 about 20 percent and our service area has
22 been expanded to cover a population over
23 55,000 residents. Previously we used to
24 serve about 15,000 residents. So it's a
25 threefold increase.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Restoring the NAC budget to
3 previous levels will enhance our capacity
4 to conduct outreach in the expanded area.
5 We make an extra effort to hire bilingual
6 staff in order to reach out to
7 communities where English may not be the
8 predominant language. We translate most
9 of our materials, so we go the extra
10 mile.

11 The Norris Square neighborhood
12 is now facing gentrification pressure, so
13 it's even more important to connect
14 long-term residents with local sources of
15 employment, assistance with reducing
16 housing costs for individuals, families,
17 and seniors. The assistance includes
18 referrals to programs that reduce
19 property taxes, provide rent rebates, and
20 lower energy costs, such as the City's
21 Basic Systems Repair Program. NAC staff
22 also help coordinate resident reviews of
23 proposed development projects and zoning
24 changes. We see the NAC program as
25 supporting a community that's sustainable

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 for all residents.

3 Currently, staff is assisted by
4 volunteers and we are researching
5 additional sources of funding to leverage
6 the NAC program. We think these outside
7 funds and adding 500,000 to the NAC
8 budget can increase our capacity to
9 connect residents to programs that are
10 needed to save their homes, alleviate
11 poverty, and improve their quality of
12 lives.

13 Thank you for your attention.
14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you so much for your testimony.
17 How are you doing today?

18 MR. ORTIZ: Good. Thanks.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 Please proceed.

21 MR. GREEN: I have a handout as
22 well as a written testimony.

23 Good evening, members of City
24 Council. My name is Philip Green and I
25 am the Program Director of the North 5th

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 Street Revitalization Project. We work
3 closely with the merchants and residents
4 of the Olney community on the North 5th
5 Street commercial corridor.

6 The bulk of our funding comes
7 from the Commerce Department's Targeted
8 Corridor Management Program and Corridor
9 Cleaning grants, both of which are funded
10 through CDBG dollars. Our ultimate goal
11 is to establish a business improvement
12 district for self-sustained funding of
13 our program. However, the vast majority
14 of our businesses are immigrant-owned
15 mom/pop shops with limited resources. So
16 we rely on Commerce Department funds
17 until the district is primed and ready to
18 form a BID.

19 Please see the attached flyer
20 right here of our program's
21 accomplishments.

22 A crucial part of our work on
23 North 5th Street is implementing the
24 Commerce Department's Storefront
25 Improvement Program. In the last four

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 years, we have successfully improved 11
3 storefronts. These 11 projects used a
4 total of \$82,323 in SIP funds, which
5 leveraged \$114,000 of private investment,
6 to create a total investment of just shy
7 of \$200,000 of storefront facades on
8 North 5th Street.

9 These SIP projects range from a
10 simple \$2,500 awning to a complete
11 \$31,000 facade transformation. I feel
12 it's also important right now to say that
13 all 11 of the businesses assisted were
14 minority and/or female owned and provide
15 goods and services to the low- and
16 moderate-income neighborhood.

17 These facade renovations on
18 North 5th and hundreds more citywide are
19 a major force behind Philadelphia's
20 current resurgence. The SIP program is a
21 broken windows theory at work, literally
22 fixing broken windows.

23 But last December, HUD imposed
24 strict guidelines on the dollars used to
25 fund the SIP program. The new roles

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 require projects over \$2,000 to comply
3 with Davis-Bacon prevailing wage laws.
4 The mountains of paperwork and sky-high
5 contractor costs under Davis-Bacon have
6 brought all of our current SIP projects
7 to a screeching halt. Without the use of
8 General Fund dollars, the SIP program is
9 struggling to repair the City's broken
10 windows.

11 So on behalf of the merchants
12 of North 5th Street in Olney, I urge City
13 Council and Mayor Nutter to fund the
14 Storefront Improvement Program with
15 General Fund dollars in the coming fiscal
16 year. I also urge City Council and Mayor
17 Nutter to continue to allocate CDBG funds
18 toward the Targeted Corridor Management
19 and Corridor Cleaning programs. With
20 these dollars, we can get back to taking
21 down shutters, repairing broken windows,
22 and putting up signs that say "open for
23 business" again.

24 Thank you very much.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. LAREN: My name is Guy

5 Laren. I'm a developer primarily in the

6 West and Southwest area of Philadelphia.

7 I've done approximately ten Storefront

8 Improvement grants and brought ten

9 businesses into various parts of the

10 City.

11 I'm here similar to this man on

12 my left requesting that we find a way to

13 continue to fund this wonderful

14 Storefront Improvement Program. I'm

15 going to give you an example of a

16 neighborhood where I've done most of my

17 work, which is the West Shore area where

18 Councilwoman Blackwell has been very

19 helpful with us.

20 In that area where we started

21 about eight years ago, it consists of

22 approximately 400 homes and 400 families

23 who were underserved for basic goods and

24 services. There were probably five

25 operating stores serving them. Everyone,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 including primarily low-income families,
3 would have to get on a bus or get in a
4 car just for such basic needs as milk and
5 clothing.

6 So when we started working
7 there, the community came to us and said,
8 We'd like primarily fruits, vegetables,
9 furniture, really the basics, and we
10 tried to bring many small businesses
11 there, but initially the shuttered
12 storefronts and many of the commercial
13 spaces which have been de-converted to
14 residential were uninviting for these
15 small shop owners. So we slowly started
16 one building at a time. We brought a
17 bakery and a day care, each of them using
18 the Storefront Improvement grant and
19 really starting to bring life to the
20 community. We later brought a dentist
21 and a pharmacist and we were able to
22 bring the market that had been so
23 requested by the neighbors.

24 Each one of these storefront
25 grants involves small contractors -

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 carpenters, painters - primarily
3 neighborhood people doing the work. And
4 then once the work is done, the business
5 generally employs neighborhood people.
6 Our day care has expanded to a second
7 facility, and now they have a third, and
8 everyone that works there comes from the
9 direct neighborhood.

10 I don't believe any of this
11 could have been done without the
12 assistance. These small merchants, for
13 each of them even a few thousand dollars
14 is the difference between doing the rehab
15 or not. And now we're at the point where
16 we have a couple of more tenants coming
17 to the area. We're bringing Philly
18 Homebrews is going to open there and
19 employ some people and as well as a
20 specialty cake baker, and they talk about
21 bringing jobs as well as the cost of the
22 renovations. They would not open there
23 if the Storefront Improvement grants were
24 not available.

25 So I agree with this young man,

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 that if the City could find a way to
3 continue to fund this program, I think it
4 really pays for itself.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 Thank you for your testimony. Thank you
8 very much.

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. LEWIS: Thoai Nguyen,
11 Leslie Benoliel, and W. Pieczynski.
12 Thoai Nguyen, Leslie Benoliel, and W.
13 Pieczynski.

14 (Witnesses approached witness
15 table.)

16 MS. BENOLIEL: Is it okay if I
17 go first? He asked me to.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'll
19 let you guys choose. Good evening.

20 MS. BENOLIEL: Good evening.
21 Good evening, Council President Darrell
22 Clarke and fellow Councilmembers. My
23 name is Leslie Benoliel. I'm the
24 Executive Director of Entrepreneur Works,
25 which is a Philadelphia-based

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 microfinance community development
3 financial institution providing loans and
4 business support services to
5 entrepreneurs and small business owners
6 in Philadelphia. I am here today as a
7 member of the Mayor's Office of Community
8 Empowerment's Oversight Board. I'm here
9 to encourage your support for the Mayor's
10 Office of Community Empowerment and
11 Opportunities and their request for \$1.09
12 million from the new General Fund support
13 for Fiscal Year '16.

14 As you know, the City of
15 Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate
16 of all the ten largest cities in the
17 U.S., 26 percent. Thirty-six percent of
18 our children live in poverty. These
19 statistics are shocking. They are
20 heartbreaking. It is imperative on each
21 of us to work together to reduce the
22 poverty rate and, more importantly, to
23 create pathways of opportunity for our
24 most vulnerable residents, especially our
25 children and our young adults.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 I am very pleased to learn that
3 City Council has made addressing income
4 inequality and poverty one of its
5 priorities in 2015. I see the poster up
6 there. The work of the Mayor's Office of
7 Community Empowerment and Opportunity is
8 an important way to advance that agenda.
9 The new funding requested will help
10 advance the goals of the Shared
11 Prosperity Philadelphia, our City's
12 comprehensive plan to fight poverty.
13 Launched two years ago by CEO, this bold
14 plan has laid the groundwork that has
15 already successfully propelled direct and
16 collaborative actions of organizations
17 throughout the City to address the
18 multiple and complex challenges faced by
19 those living in poverty. Since Shared
20 Prosperity Philadelphia's launch, CEO has
21 made good progress, and here are a few
22 examples:

23 We've launched six BenePhilly
24 Centers, which have helped individuals
25 enroll in public benefits. This has

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 served over 5,000 people. We've doubled
3 the number of Financial Empowerment
4 Centers and helped residents reduce their
5 debt by 5.5 million, and we've increased
6 emergency meals by over 1,000 each week,
7 and there are more.

8 The Mayor's Office of Community
9 Empowerment and Opportunity's leadership
10 has been critical to coordinating the
11 efforts of hundreds of organizations
12 throughout the City to focus on and fight
13 poverty. We must build on these early
14 successes and be relentless in our
15 efforts to expand impact, reduce poverty,
16 and help the thousands of residents to
17 get on a pathway to a more prosperous
18 future. They deserve it. We deserve it.

19 I urge you to support the
20 Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment
21 and Opportunity to approve their request
22 for 1.09 million in General Fund support.

23 Thank you for your attention.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

25 Thank you for your testimony.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. NGUYEN: Good evening. My

4 name is Thoai Nguyen. I am the Chief

5 Executive Officer for SEAMAAC, which

6 stands for Southeast Asian Mutual

7 Assistance Associations Coalition.

8 Tonight I'm here on behalf of the Mayor's

9 Commission on Community Empowerment and

10 Opportunity, otherwise known as CEO.

11 As a member of CEO since its

12 inception, I'm here to share my support

13 and encourage your support for their

14 request of 1.09 million in new General

15 Fund support.

16 City Council's agenda for 2015

17 includes as one of its three components

18 addressing income inequality and poverty.

19 I feel that this is one of the best ways

20 to advance that agenda. This funding

21 will support such items as new BenePhilly

22 Centers, the Financial Empowerment

23 Centers, implementation of the early

24 learning plan and job training programs.

25 This funding will also enable CEO to

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 serve residents who are struggling to
3 make ends meet, but whose income is above
4 125 percent of poverty, which is \$29,813
5 for a family of four.

6 Our current funding, CEO's
7 current funding, the Community Service
8 Block Grant, prohibits serving those
9 above that income. Therefore, this
10 request is crucial.

11 Since the launch of Shared
12 Prosperity Philadelphia, our plan to
13 fight poverty, CEO has launched six
14 BenePhilly Centers, which help
15 individuals enroll in public benefits.
16 This has served over 5,000 people and
17 completed over 4,000 applications;

18 Launched a citywide early
19 learning planning process, which will be
20 completed shortly, and we will include a
21 shared agenda around building access,
22 spurring more high-quality early learning
23 seats, compensation, implementation, and
24 financing;

25 Funded two job training

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 programs that connect individuals with
3 barriers to identify job and long-term
4 career opportunities, including
5 expungement services to program
6 participants.

7 CEO's leadership has been
8 critical to coordinating the efforts of
9 hundreds of organizations throughout the
10 City to fight poverty. I hope you will
11 support their efforts to expand their
12 impact, reduce poverty, and help
13 thousands of residents to get back on
14 their feet.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

17 Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Good evening.

20 It's been a long time since I've been
21 here to talk. I'm a member of the
22 Greater Chamber of Commerce here in
23 Philadelphia, and what I would like to
24 talk about is how Philadelphia can
25 actually create millions and millions of

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 dollars and --

3 COURT STENOGRAPHER: Can you
4 state your name.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
6 sorry. State your name for the record.

7 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Oh, my name is
8 Walter Pieczynski, P-I-E-C-Z-Y-N-S-K-I.
9 I live at 1927 Devereaux Avenue,
10 Philadelphia, PA 19149. You don't want
11 my phone number. You can probably get
12 it. And I'm an economic consultant. I'm
13 a member with the business advisories
14 with the Chamber of Commerce.

15 And I'm not out to criticize
16 City Council, but I would like to put
17 City Council in a position of the City
18 Hall as a corporation. Okay? And I have
19 it written here as, when I look inside
20 City Hall, I see the Mayor as the
21 President of the corporation and City
22 Council as all the Board members that
23 control the City and all its main assets.
24 I mean, we have so many assets, it's
25 unbelievable. And when I talk about

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 them, I talk about all the abandoned
3 buildings that we have in the City right
4 now. There must be hundreds of them. I
5 got a paper right here that I brought
6 that I get and it's got Sheriff Sales on
7 here that are unbelievable, pages of
8 them. And this City can truly, truly
9 build money. I mean, create money from
10 all these abandoned buildings.

11 And I want to compare this
12 corporation here of City to a corporation
13 that I have studied over the past two
14 years. It's called Apple Corporation.
15 Over the two years, okay, it was -- in
16 2003, it was selling its stock at \$700 a
17 share, 700. And I can't imagine how many
18 people were able to go and buy this stock
19 at \$700 a share. But they bought it,
20 them people, in 2013, but what Apple did
21 and its corporation is just unbelievable.
22 It split the stock. And you understand
23 what split stock is? When you have --
24 say you have a share is worth \$100 and
25 they split it, and you will get two

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 shares, but they'll only come down to \$50
3 a piece. So you don't lose no money.
4 It's still -- you have the money.

5 What the Apple Corporation did
6 was, in 2013 it split its stock on the
7 stock market like I've never seen or
8 nobody has ever heard of. It split it
9 seven to one, meaning every person who
10 had only one share now has seven shares
11 of Apple Corporation. And what Apple did
12 that for is, it brought the price down to
13 \$100 a share.

14 Now, when it did that, the next
15 day I don't know how many millions and
16 millions of people, investors around the
17 world, went and bought up that stock.
18 Okay? And just bought it.

19 Today, over the past two years,
20 the reason they did that was, they wanted
21 to create millions and millions and
22 millions of dollars. They didn't want to
23 go to the bank and borrow all this money.
24 They needed investors, money from them.
25 So they lowered the stock down to that

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 price.

3 Now, as you know, they got the
4 wrist watch today. They got, you know,
5 all this technical -- you know, anything
6 that, you know -- the pads that we hold
7 and all this. This was all created over
8 the past two years because they lowered
9 that stock and they took in billions and
10 billions of dollars.

11 And what I say here is, City
12 Council, City as a whole, okay, should
13 lower its taxes. Now, listen well, okay,
14 I'm not criticizing anybody. Lower the
15 City taxes.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
17 was wondering how you were going to segue
18 to that. I was wondering how --

19 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Yeah. I'm
20 here talking about taxes.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: No.
22 I know you for some time. I know. I was
23 just wondering --

24 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Is it too
25 much?

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --

3 how is he going to get -- no. It's fine.

4 I was just wondering how is he going to
5 get to the tax reduction strategy.

6 MR. PIECZYNSKI: All right.

7 I'm sorry about that.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: No.

9 It's okay.

10 MR. PIECZYNSKI: What I'm
11 talking about is if the City lowers the
12 property taxes, the -- what's the name
13 taxes? When you go out and buy
14 something. Sales taxes, the business
15 taxes, okay. What that will do is -- we
16 have the people in Philadelphia today.
17 When they go and buy something here, they
18 live in Philadelphia, they'll go over
19 Jersey. They'll go outside City Line and
20 buy it and they'll say, Well, I'm buying
21 it because the taxes are so high in
22 Philadelphia. They will actually. And
23 the City loses millions and millions of
24 dollars for that.

25 If it lowers that tax, all

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 these people who are leaving the City
3 going up in Bucks County or City Line,
4 I-95, over up in Conshohocken out
5 Schuylkill Expressway and all, City Line,
6 they will stay in the City and begin to
7 invest into this City.

8 Now, we talk about, well, how
9 are we going to make up the difference of
10 these taxes coming down. Well, when you
11 look at here and you see all these
12 properties that are sitting empty, okay,
13 and they're not -- you're not getting no
14 property taxes off of them, these people,
15 when the taxes come down, these
16 investors, anybody, I mean, will go --
17 they'll come and buy these businesses
18 up -- these housing and everything
19 throughout the City. I mean, it will
20 just go sky high. I mean, we have
21 something here.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: We
23 get your point.

24 MR. PIECZYNSKI: The only thing
25 I'm saying is, do not raise no more

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 taxes, because every time we raise them,
3 we're driving out people. You know,
4 people have real estate up on their
5 houses for sale. They've had them up for
6 two years. They can't get nobody to come
7 in and buy them.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 Okay.

10 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Because the
11 taxes are so high. Lower them and then
12 it will generate millions and millions of
13 dollars.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: We
15 get your point.

16 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Every time.
17 I'm sorry I'm talking the way
18 I'm talking.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: No.
20 It's just that we have other people who
21 want to testify.

22 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Yeah. I know,
23 but I'm going to --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Thank you.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. PIECZYNSKI: I'm going to
3 what's a name.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. PIECZYNSKI: I'm going to
6 write this and I'm going to e-mail it
7 into City Council.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
9 Thank you so much.

10 MR. PIECZYNSKI: This
11 information. Because like I say, I'm
12 talking with so many business people and
13 everyone else, and all they've said is
14 the City is going wild. They're wanting
15 to raise them and raise them and raise
16 them, and they're pushing out these
17 businesses.

18 Now, there's one other thing --

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Sir,
20 sir, sir, we got your point. You
21 can't -- we have other people.

22 MR. PIECZYNSKI: All right.
23 You know me. I'm sorry.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Thank you.

1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.

2 MR. PIECZYNSKI: But I just had
3 to say all that.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
5 Thank you for your testimony.

6 MR. PIECZYNSKI: Lower the
7 taxes, and I guarantee the City will
8 never forget it. It will gain millions
9 and millions.

10 MS. LEWIS: Nicole Allen,
11 Judith Robinson, and Asia Adams. Judith
12 Robinson, Asia Adams.

13 (Ne response.)

14 MS. LEWIS: Council President,
15 there are no more speakers on the list.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
17 Thank you.

18 I would like to thank all of
19 you very much for coming down this
20 evening. It will be added to the record.
21 We look forward to continued dialogue,
22 and thank you again for your
23 participation.

24 This Committee will stand in
25 recess until Tuesday, May 26th, 2015 at

Committee of the Whole
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1 5/21/15 - WHOLE - BILL 150162, etc.
2 10:00, at which time we will reconvene in
3 Room 400, City Hall.
4 Thank you all very much.
5 (Committee of the Whole
6 concluded at 7:15 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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