

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND THE HOMELESS

City Hall, Room 400
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, March 30, 2026
12:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

CHAIR JAMIE GAUTHIER
VICE CHAIR RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE

Ms. Jones, The Clerk

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

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: If

3 everyone can have a seat. We're
4 going to get the hearing started.

5 Good afternoon, everyone.

6 I now note that the hour
7 has come and this hearing is called
8 to order. This is the public
9 hearing of the City Council
10 Committee on Housing, Neighborhood
11 Development and the Homeless.12 The purpose of this public
13 hearing is to hear testimony on Bill
14 Nos. 250329 and 250330.15 Ms. Jones, would you please
16 call the roll?17 THE CLERK: Councilmember
18 Bass.19 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
20 Present.21 THE CLERK: Councilmember
22 Driscoll.23 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
24 Present.

1 THE CLERK: Councilmember
2 Squilla.

3 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
4 Present.

5 THE CLERK: Councilmember
6 Jones.

7 COUNCILMEMBER JONES:
8 Present.

9 THE CLERK: Vice Chair
10 Landau.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
12 Present.

13 THE CLERK: Chair Gauthier.

14 CHAIR GAUTIER: Present.

15 Thank you so much,
16 Ms. Jones.

17 Joining us is also Minority
18 Whip Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke.

19 I note, for the record,
20 that a quorum of this committee is
21 present and this hearing is now
22 called to order.

23 Good afternoon.

24 Housing is the bedrock of a

1 successful life, healthy communities
2 and a vibrant city. So it may come
3 as no surprise that as the places we
4 live change, that the very thing
5 that make Philadelphia Philadelphia
6 is at stake.

7 Since our last hearing the
8 Philadelphia Coalition of Affordable
9 Communities issued another report
10 that confirmed how true this is.

11 Since 2000, the medium home
12 value rose 120 percent, while the
13 median income in the city only rose
14 7 percent. One-third of Philly
15 households still earn 35,000 a year
16 or less.

17 Half of all renters in our
18 city and more than a quarter of
19 homeowners make the impossible
20 choice every month between paying
21 their rent or mortgage, putting food
22 on the table or filling their
23 prescriptions.

24 I am proud to be the Chair

1 of a committee that recognizes that
2 no one should be put in this
3 horrible position.

4 The stories that we've
5 heard during our past two hearings
6 broke my heart. And we cannot a law
7 the broken status quo to continue.

8 Philly's housing crisis
9 touches every corner of our city and
10 everyone needs to be part of
11 comprehensive strategy to solve it.

12 City Council has two core
13 tenants as it relates to the issue
14 of housing, appropriations and
15 legislation. I'm delighted that the
16 first \$400-million this body
17 approved for the City's initiative
18 is on its way to Philadelphians, but
19 H.O.M.E. on its own will not be
20 enough. That's why this committee
21 unanimously voted right side our
22 landlord tenant laws and encourage
23 us to do so today.

24 I went to thank the members

1 of this committee for their patience
2 and for your commitment to Safe &
3 Healthy Homes for every
4 Philadelphian. I also want to thank
5 every stakeholder on both sides for
6 working to make these bills as
7 effective as possible, most
8 especially Councilmember Nicolas
9 O'Rourke, who through hurdle after
10 hurdle has never slowed down, has
11 never waived in his commitment to
12 do what is right and to deliver for
13 Philadelphia.

14 Councilmember, we see your
15 hard work, we see your passion, we
16 see your leadership, and
17 Philadelphia owes you a debt of
18 gratitude for it.

19 I look forward today's
20 discussion. Thank you so much. And
21 I'll ask if any of my colleagues and
22 also the bill sponsor have any
23 opening remarks.

24 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

1 Thank you Chair Gauthier
2 and thank you to my colleagues on
3 the Housing Committee for setting
4 aside the time to consider these
5 bills for a third and I hope final
6 time.

7 Thank you genuinely also to
8 the listening and commenting public
9 that are here today. We are your
10 representatives. That's the reality
11 of the way this is set up, and
12 therefore you deserve our attention,
13 you deserve our consideration so I'm
14 grateful for your being here today.

15 Some of the tenants who
16 join us today, who I've met and
17 listented to through this process,
18 know what it's like to be trapped in
19 your own home. And I mean precisely
20 that, trapped in your own homes.
21 Because when you save up every penny
22 that you can just to afford move
23 into a rental, and then find it's
24 unsafe or becomes that way through

1 no fault of your own, that's what
2 you call it. Trapped in your own
3 home.

4 And I want to thank Vice
5 Chair Landau for your work on easing
6 the cost of moving. But I'm still
7 shocked of how often I've heard
8 people reply to a tenant with a
9 negligent landlord with "just move."

10 Friends, we live in an
11 economy where "just move" doesn't
12 work to actually protect the well-
13 being of tenants. And when it is
14 possible, it doesn't work fast
15 enough.

16 Since tenants can't rely on
17 the economic freedom needed to pack
18 up whenever an issues arises, I
19 believe that we in government have
20 to protect their rights to a safe
21 and a secure living space. Because
22 we know what can happen when that
23 right is not protected.

24 I've lifted her name up

1 before and do so again today because
2 we honor her memory when we do say
3 her name. But I want us to recall
4 12-year-old, Jah'Nae Campbell, a
5 child of Philadelphia. And if James
6 Baldwin be true, that all the
7 children are ours. A child of our
8 own taken from us due to a fatality
9 asthma attack brought on by the
10 rampant mold in the apartment where
11 she lived.

12 Colleagues, we know that
13 her fate didn't come down to a
14 negligent landlord, but the city's
15 delays were also the reason the
16 repairs she needed never actually
17 came. So as a member on Council's
18 Committee on Licenses & Inspection
19 and the Public Health Committee, for
20 that matter, I want Philly to
21 understand me when I say that that
22 is the cost of lacking code
23 enforcement. Death in some cases.

24 And even when it's not as

1 tragic as a direct matter of life
2 and death, the human toll is still
3 far too vast, which is why we've got
4 to make change and why we need to do
5 so soon.

6 But briefly, before the
7 committee begins to consider this
8 legislation again, I would submit to
9 the smaller landlords in the room
10 represented by HAPCO above all.
11 That respectfully, I do not think
12 you are being represented well by
13 the people who you have been tasked
14 with doing the important work for
15 you and I'll tell you why.

16 I imagine many of you are
17 feeling the crunch from our new tax
18 structure. I was one of the
19 Councilmembers in fierce opposition
20 to ending the BIRT tax exemption for
21 small landlords and small businesses
22 last year. And for my part it's
23 precisely because I know how it
24 impacts you in all of our local

1 small business owners who are
2 At-large.

3 I fought for more money in
4 the rental improvement fund so small
5 landlords could have access to the
6 more capital to make repairs to
7 their homes. I've introduced the
8 Transit Access Fund which will
9 provide small matching grants to
10 provide free SEPTA passes to small
11 businesses and housing providers.

12 In other words, I've been
13 willing to stand with small
14 landlords on issues that I believe
15 that affect the bottom line. And if
16 the folks claiming to represent you
17 were doing the same, they would be
18 fighting just as hard on those
19 fronts as well, not misrepresenting
20 a bill that is focused on the worst
21 actors in the industry.

22 Here, today, we are
23 concerned with the protections that
24 tenants can call upon when they need

1 to based on the conditions that they
2 are living in. Again, here, today
3 in this hearing, we're concerned on
4 the protections that tenants can
5 call upon when they need to based on
6 the conditions that they are living
7 in.

8 For example, it is already
9 illegal for a landlord to collect
10 rent without a rental license. It
11 is already illegal for a landlord to
12 collect rent without a rental
13 license. Safe Healthy Homes didn't
14 create that. Safe Healthy Homes
15 doesn't change that one bit. That
16 is the law and it has been for
17 sometime. Unfortunately this law is
18 violated constantly. Thousands of
19 dollars are illegally collected from
20 renters every day.

21 My legislation simply
22 clarifies their rights to a refund
23 when profits are illegally collected
24 some might call that stolen, the

1 party who illegally took the money
2 needs to give it back. That is
3 basic. That's 101 stuff.

4 And I want to be crystal
5 clear because I've seen
6 misinformation being spread. This
7 right is not able about penalizing a
8 landlord for a mistake or something
9 out of your control. That's not
10 what these bills do. This is about
11 protecting tenants from landlord who
12 is refuse to follow the law, who
13 neglect to apply for a license, who
14 refuse to repair crumbling
15 properties, who do not take the
16 responsibility to provide Safe
17 Healthy Homes seriously. And then
18 all the while, collect rent from
19 vulnerable residents and tenants.

20 And we've worked at length,
21 at length with small landlords
22 stakeholders to include a safe
23 harbor provision protecting
24 landlords when L&I is at fault. If

1 you didn't know that, unfortunately
2 you have been misinformed.

3 But this hearing ideally
4 can be a space for clarity, there
5 will be plenty of testimony today,
6 and through that I believe we can
7 discuss the real implications and
8 the intent of these bills.

9 So as Women's History Month
10 actually comes to a close, today is
11 the last day, I want to close by
12 lifting up the names of some ladies
13 alongside the deeply missed young
14 Jah'Nae Campbell.

15 Lucy Speece. History buffs
16 will know that Ms. Speece was a
17 resident of the old 7th Ward. The
18 city's black neighborhood which
19 W.E.B. Du Bois famously wrote about.
20 We cherish the culture that was
21 fostered in that space and we know
22 that the old 7th Ward was slumlord
23 central.

24 Ms. Speece lived in one

1 such slum with her three children
2 and tragically, they died in that
3 same slum as well. On a cold
4 December in 1936, their poorly
5 maintained building collapsed. The
6 Speece family perished along with a
7 few neighbors.

8 The tragedy spurred
9 authorities to take up that era's
10 idea of bold action to build public
11 housing in the wake of the collapse.
12 But it also spurred residents of the
13 7th Ward to organize as the Tenants
14 League, black organizers forming the
15 vanguard of the fight for fair and
16 safe housing. And they certainly
17 had some socialists among their ranks
18 seeking renters justice as well.

19 Today, another grass roots
20 formation is building on the work
21 they began six years ago, which
22 started by knocking on doors and
23 collecting neighbors in need of
24 support. Now they're knocking on

1 the doors and major change in
2 Philadelphia and there are some
3 names attached to that that I want
4 to mentioned today.

5 Names like Melissa Mont,
6 names like Laurie Peterson, Theresa
7 Howell and Eden Gibson, Paul
8 Whitfield and Sonya Sanders and
9 Janet White, just a few of the
10 ladies of One PA Renters United
11 Philadelphia and Philly Thrive who
12 are collectively making history to
13 the fights they are waging for
14 tenants rights.

15 I lift them up and their
16 organizations out of appreciation
17 and respect for your organizing.
18 Gratitude for all the support and
19 solidarity and hope for what we'll
20 accomplish together. And that is
21 meaningful protections for tenants
22 and Safe Healthy Homes for
23 everybody. Anything else is second
24 best and we ain't not going for

1 that.

2 Thank you, Chair Gauthier,
3 for giving me a few minutes to
4 speak. Glory to God and power to
5 the people.

6 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you,
7 Councilmember.

8 Ms. Jones, will you now
9 read the titles of the bills.

10 THE CLERK: Bill No.
11 250329-A, an ordinance amending
12 Chapter 9-3900 of the Philadelphia
13 code entitled property licenses and
14 owner accountability to clarify
15 licensing requirements authorize the
16 department to create a proactive
17 inspection program require public
18 reporting related to co-compliance
19 and establish remedy damages and
20 protections for tenants, all under
21 certain terms and conditions.

22 Bill No. 250330-A; an
23 ordinance amending Chapter 9-800 of
24 the Philadelphia Code, entitled

1 Landlord and Tenant to modify the
2 requirements related to good cause
3 for ending a tenancy, add
4 protections against retaliation and
5 harassment for tenants and tenant
6 organizations, specified tenants'
7 rights related to the implied
8 warranty of habitability, and
9 provide a legal presumption related
10 to breaches of the implied warranty
11 of habitability, create a tenant
12 right to organize, specify deadlines
13 for certain claims, and establish
14 and enhance enforcement mechanisms,
15 remedies, damages, and protections,
16 all under certain terms and
17 conditions.

18 CHAIR GAUTHIER: The clerk
19 will please call the first panel of
20 witnesses to testify on the bills.
21 I would ask that all witnesses
22 please summarize your testimony. We
23 have a very packed agenda today, and
24 we'll be setting a timer for five

1 minutes per witness at which time
2 I'll ask you to wrap up.

3 Please call the first
4 panel.

5 THE CLERK: Okay. Before I
6 call the first panel, I just want to
7 announce that there is a public
8 comment list to my left over here
9 for folks to sign up if they so
10 choose. Yes, public comment list to
11 my left for folks who haven't signed
12 up yet. And our first panel will be
13 Mo Rushdy, Lev Kravinsky, and
14 Theresa Howell and Katie -- Katie
15 Ashby. Excuse me.

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
17 afternoon. Please state your name
18 for the record and proceed with your
19 testimony.

20 MR. RUSHDY: Thank you,
21 Madam Chair. My name is Mo Rushdy.
22 I am testifying today on Bill Nos.
23 250329 and 250330 on behalf of the
24 Building Industry Association of

1 Philadelphia. The BIA agrees with
2 the spirit of these bills and wants
3 to be supportive. I don't like the
4 word "opposition" because I believe
5 in collaboration and compromise.

6 We are for safe and healthy
7 homes. We as developers want to
8 support our tenants and residents
9 and do not want to see bad housing
10 providers protected. The BIA has
11 proposed five common sense
12 amendments to these bills that we
13 believe are true to the Bill's
14 intent while making these bills
15 easier to implement for all
16 involved.

17 First, it's allowing 60
18 days to cure and remove fire safety
19 violations from rent refund
20 requirement, Bill No. 250329-3902
21 Section 2(D).

22 Amend bill current language
23 as follows: failure by the owner to
24 correct those code violations

1 covered by subsection 2B(3)
2 concerning whether the premises are
3 free of unfit, unsafe, or imminently
4 dangerous conditions as defined by
5 section PM-108, PM-109, and 110
6 within 60 days of receiving a notice
7 of violation, or sooner as indicated
8 by department, shall be considered
9 to be non-compliance with this
10 section, except with respect to
11 violations for where there is a
12 pending appeal.

13 Two, allow grace period to
14 correct minor administrative issues,
15 not caused by housing providers.

16 Bill No. 250329 Section 93901

17 Section 4, adding a new subsection
18 that says; administrative cure
19 period. An owner whose rental
20 license has expired, whose
21 certificate of rental sustainability
22 has lapsed due to administrative or
23 clerical error, shall have 15
24 business days from notice of the

1 department to cure the deficiency
2 before the owner is deemed
3 non-compliant.

4 Three, preserve organizing
5 rights while maintaining building
6 security, Bill No. 250330 Section
7 98161B. Replacing the subsection
8 with new language as follows: any
9 tenant organizer must follow all
10 building access and security
11 policies of a residential rental
12 accommodation provided they are
13 applied equally to all
14 non-residents.

15 Four, balance the tenant
16 protections with the practical
17 realities of housing operations as
18 New York City adding new language as
19 follows, that the good cause
20 requirements for the subsection
21 shall apply only to tenants who have
22 continuously occupied residential
23 units for 12 months or longer. This
24 subsection will not apply to owner

1 occupied properties containing four
2 or fewer dwelling units, single
3 family homes or condominium units
4 owned by individuals who own fewer
5 than five residential units and
6 residential units constructed within
7 the previous 10 years.

8 Five, allow time for
9 educational efforts to ensure
10 compliance. Both bills should be
11 amended to have an effective date of
12 1/1/2027. These are reasonable
13 amendments that if adopted will
14 maintain the legislative intent,
15 which I completely agree with
16 Councilman Nick O'Rourke and what he
17 had discussed in terms of intent
18 while allowing housing providers and
19 developers some flexibility and thus
20 not discouraging them from providing
21 badly needed housing in our city.
22 And thank you for your
23 consideration. Thank you, Madam
24 Chair.

1 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
2 for your testimony.

3 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Madam
4 Chair?

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Yes.

6 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: In
7 your opinion order, author of this
8 legislation, if any of these
9 amendments that were stated for the
10 record materially impact the intent
11 of this law?

12 CHAIR GAUTHIER: I will
13 allow the bill sponsor to speak to
14 that.

15 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Okay.

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER:
17 Councilmember O'Rourke.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
19 Thank you, Mr. Jones -- member Jones
20 for the question. I was just
21 actually having a discussion with my
22 staff here about some of what we
23 heard just lifted up by Mr. Rushdy.
24 I think all of these we have

1 actually had been discussion about
2 already.

3 The first one was about the
4 fire code. There's a major concern
5 around the idea of extending cure
6 times for things that would be --
7 that would qualify for fire code.
8 The thing -- if we're talking about
9 creating safe, healthy homes the
10 idea that it would -- that you
11 should have longer period of time
12 for something that could endanger
13 your livelihood because if your fire
14 -- your house could catch on fire is
15 a major concern for us.

16 But the other four that
17 were lifted up, we have actually
18 we're actually a discussion to
19 clarify, because I think there's
20 some misunderstanding, at least, in
21 the first two about the bills.

22 And then the last one is
23 something that we are interested in
24 looking at potentially as well, but

1 of course this remains to be true
2 that we are open to talking with
3 folks, to hear things that are, that
4 they believe create unintended harm
5 to small landlords as long as it
6 does not get at the core of our
7 bill.

8 So we would have to have a
9 discussion about at least two of
10 those because I think it
11 misunderstands what the legislation
12 is actually doing.

13 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So if
14 I may Madam Chair?

15 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Uh-huh.

16 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: I did
17 not hear from the author to bill
18 that it was materially impactful to
19 the implementation of this law. So
20 I'm hoping that what we can keep is
21 a dialogue going so that we can move
22 this through and it -- that it can
23 be a win-win situation. That it
24 doesn't always have to be opposition

1 to -- so whether you talk about
2 places like Brith Sholom, that bill
3 I wish would've been involved during
4 that time, but those owners did not
5 have good intention.

6 Those owners were
7 predatory; those owners took \$35
8 thousand -- million worth of equity
9 out, did not make one improvement
10 over years, not 30 days, not 60
11 days; years. And took in and
12 pocketed that, and now are facing
13 criminal charges, which I think is a
14 good ending to that story.

15 What I am advocating for,
16 some of the mom and pops, some of
17 the folk that took their investments
18 that I know -- that members of this
19 body know that were worked all their
20 life at the post office and invested
21 in mom's property and started
22 renting. We have to protect them
23 too. And if not, what we'll have is
24 big companies that don't give a damn

1 about Philadelphia come in, invest
2 and do harmful things to the
3 tenants.

4 So I always try to
5 encourage that kind of dialogue so
6 that we come up with a good public
7 policy that the bill's intentions
8 are there to do, but does no harm.
9 Does no harm. Thank you, Madam
10 Chair.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you,
12 Councilmember. And it seems like
13 the bill sponsor is very willing to
14 continue those conversations.

15 Please state your name for
16 the record and proceed with your
17 testimony.

18 MR. KRAVINSKY: Good
19 afternoon. My name is Lev
20 Kravinsky. I am here representing
21 the Pennsylvania Apartment
22 Association, an association of
23 property management companies
24 representing over 300,000 apartments

1 in Pennsylvania. Thank you Chairman
2 Gauthier and thank you, bill
3 sponsor, Nicolas O'Rourke for both
4 having this hearing and Nick in
5 particular for proposing this bill,
6 which I think truly has the best of
7 intents and if properly amended
8 should have tremendous positive
9 effects on our city.

10 To be clear, the Apartment
11 Association is firmly committed to
12 promoting safe, well-maintained
13 housing for every resident. We
14 believe achieving that goal requires
15 policies that are clear, enforceable
16 and balanced, ensuring resident
17 protections while enabling
18 responsible housing providers to
19 continue to build and manage housing
20 in our communities. Nonetheless,
21 our association continues to have
22 serious concerns with this bill, and
23 I will lay out three particular
24 clear issues.

1 One, as the bill currently
2 reads, any resident can request a
3 certificate of rental suitability at
4 any time during the tenancy. And if
5 the housing provider cannot provide
6 one within 10 business days, they
7 cannot collect rent. Yet obtaining
8 a certificate of rental suitability
9 is not possible if there are any
10 violations on the rental license, no
11 matter how small or tactical in
12 nature. And note that rental
13 licenses are linked to entire
14 buildings, not apartments.

15 So a single tactical
16 violation, for instance, an
17 overflowing dumpster, a baby
18 carriage -- a stroller which is left
19 in a hallway, which is a fire code
20 violation. A single violation of
21 that nature would allow every
22 resident, let's say for example, of
23 a hundred-unit apartment building to
24 request a CRS, which is not possible

1 to obtain. And then when the CRS is
2 not supplied, not pay rent. That's
3 a major, major concern.

4 And I think it's not the
5 intent of the bill, but I think it's
6 a practical effect. And I believe
7 that there are tactical amendments
8 you could make, which would improve
9 that issue.

10 The second example, and
11 this is an example that I've talked
12 about quite a bit with Councilmember
13 O'Rourke's office, the bill as it
14 currently reads, requires that
15 housing providers comply with HUD,
16 EPA, and ANSI regulations concerning
17 dust, mold, lead paint, asbestos,
18 and other building materials.

19 I have not seen much
20 discussion of this clause, but I
21 think it is an important one. HUD,
22 EPA, and ANSI regulations are
23 hundreds of pages of regulations not
24 currently contained in the

1 Philadelphia Property Maintenance
2 Code. In many cases, there are
3 contradictory regulations with
4 different methods of remediation for
5 the building materials they cover.

6 And in the case of ANSI,
7 they're not even freely available
8 regulations. You cannot access them
9 online. You must pay ANSI a
10 subscription fee to access the
11 regulations that are shoe horned
12 into this bill.

13 Finally, I'll make a point
14 on safe harbors. And I think Mo
15 touched on this a bit with his
16 comment on cure periods. Our intent
17 here is not to lessen penalties or
18 punishments for those truly bad
19 actors who are taking advantage of
20 the power imbalance in the tenant's
21 relationship with their housing
22 provider. But I do believe that
23 housing providers require safe
24 harbors for legitimate good faith

1 situations beyond their control.

2 For instance, did you know
3 that only 25 percent of L&I
4 violations are cleared within 30
5 days largely due to L&I's scheduling
6 constraints. Seventy-five percent
7 of violations take more than a month
8 to clear. In my opinion, a housing
9 provider who is acting in good faith
10 to remedy issues that have caused a
11 violation, meaning that they have
12 engaged a contractor, they're
13 working with a city to identify
14 solutions to the problem.

15 Those folks should not be
16 penalized with significant fines and
17 penalties as laid out in this bill.

18 In summary, these bills
19 require serious good faith
20 amendments to address the issues
21 that I have raised and others that
22 the association has raised. For
23 this reason, I urge the
24 Councilmembers present today to hold

1 these bills until they can be
2 amended so as to not upend the
3 property management industry. I
4 truly believe that protecting
5 tenants is not at odds with
6 regulating property management. I
7 do not believe that those two are
8 mutually exclusive.

9 And I think that with good
10 faith tactical amendments to these
11 bills, the housing industry can get
12 behind them and support
13 Councilmember O'Rourke's admiral
14 goals. I appreciate the opportunity
15 to testify today and look forward to
16 continued dialogues with the
17 committee and the sponsor. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 Please state your name for
22 the record and proceed with your
23 testimony.

24 MS. HOWELL: My name is

1 Teresa Howell. Good morning,
2 members of the housing committee,
3 our Chair, Councilmember Gauthier
4 and Vice Chair, Councilmember Rue
5 Landau. Reaching this point require
6 considerable effort and support,
7 including from Councilmembers
8 present here today.

9 We know you heard us and we
10 appreciate that. We are not here to
11 take up all your time. I just want
12 to clarify a few things. These
13 bills are the bare minimum for
14 landlords to follow. Living in
15 unsafe conditions, even for one day,
16 is traumatic for tenants. If you
17 ever had experienced it, you know
18 how hard it is to go even one day
19 without heat, with no water to drink
20 or wash, no working stove to cook or
21 fire hazards or the leaks in your
22 bathroom. It seemed like 30 days is
23 too much time to wait to have these
24 things fixed and now they want 60

1 days.

2 I had to deal with
3 infestation of rats, raccoons,
4 leaks, mold, and the child in my
5 home ended up with lead poisoning.
6 My kitchen is currently leaking
7 right now, but my rent is paid and
8 owe the landlord nothing. Even one
9 day with these conditions can impact
10 our family's health. To have to
11 survive for 30 days seems
12 unreasonable.

13 So these bills are the --
14 these bills are the bare minimum to
15 protect human rights to a safe and
16 healthy home. If a landlord is
17 illegally collecting rent without
18 providing a safe home, they should
19 not be able to keep our money. They
20 should not be able to -- they should
21 not -- we should not have to pay for
22 our own demise.

23 Renters are afraid to speak
24 up for fear of retaliation. Many of

1 us are terrified to report dangerous
2 conditions because right now,
3 landlords can make us homeless
4 without even a cause. They don't
5 even have to have a call to evict
6 us. Now you imagine a family that's
7 been living in a home for 10 years.
8 Children are honorable students,
9 they are invested in their
10 community, and then the landlord
11 says with no reason at all, I want
12 to uproot your family and make you
13 move. There is nothing on the book
14 that can stop him from doing that.
15 Okay. So the parents can recover.

16 What happens to those
17 children? Will they ever recover?
18 You take a child out of their
19 environment after they've been
20 raising that environment, it changed
21 the child forever. And they may not
22 never get back to that A-one status
23 that they were when they were in the
24 home that was safe and healthy that

1 the landlord decided without a cause
2 to just put them out of. I don't
3 think landlords should have that
4 much power.

5 I am not the only one that
6 has lived with these conditions. I
7 need the people in here that have
8 lived with these conditions to just
9 raise their hand. I'm going to
10 raise mine because I have lived with
11 some horrible conditions. Have you
12 ever lived without heat, hot water,
13 leaks, mold, pest, unable to get
14 repairs from your landlord? We've
15 all lived without that.

16 Councilmembers, we
17 appreciate you hearing us, our cries
18 about our egregious landlords, but
19 it's a shame that we have to reach
20 out to our council people in order
21 to get results when the laws on the
22 books are supposed to protect us.
23 This is why we need the Safe and
24 Healthy Homes Act. The time is now.

1 I ask Council to follow through and
2 pass the legislation out of
3 committee today. Thank you.

4 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
5 so much for your testimony.

6 Please state your name for
7 the record and proceed with your
8 testimony.

9 MS. ASHBY: Hello. My name
10 is Katie Ashby and I want to thank
11 you for the opportunity to speak
12 again today. I will reiterate my
13 testimony from a few weeks ago
14 because I want you to again see the
15 realities of these bills. I want
16 you to see what tenants are actually
17 living with currently, and I want
18 you to understand that this is not
19 an abstract discussion.

20 We need these bills passed
21 for a reason. Shortly after I moved
22 into my current apartment, I
23 discovered that what I believed to
24 be a larger section of water damage

1 on my bedroom ceiling was actually
2 an active leak that my landlord had
3 simply painted over. I notified my
4 landlord as soon as I noticed and
5 when they ignored my initial
6 maintenance request, I notified them
7 again and then again.

8 Eventually, black mold
9 began to form and rapidly took over
10 my carpet, walls, ceiling, and
11 baseboards. The plaster on my
12 ceiling started buckling under the
13 leak and began falling off in
14 chunks, which exposed even more mold
15 as well as open holes that
16 centipedes would crawl out of. Over
17 months I begged my landlord to
18 remediate the mold and fix the leak.
19 I explained that I was an asthmatic,
20 I was experiencing health issues due
21 to the mold, but continually my
22 request fell on deaf ears.

23 Three months after my
24 initial maintenance request with

1 mold still covering my bedroom and
2 no end in sight, I was forced to
3 hire a lawyer. Suddenly, the issues
4 were repaired. Had there been a
5 proactive inspection program at the
6 time, I wouldn't have been forced to
7 spend money I didn't have in order
8 to have a lawyer advocate on my
9 behalf.

10 After this experience, I
11 connected with my neighbors and
12 realized that I was not unique. In
13 addition to leaks and mold, my
14 neighbors are dealing with bricks
15 and concrete falling off of the
16 facade, heat and hot water that
17 would sometimes be out for months,
18 roaches and mice infesting their
19 apartments and if management
20 bothered to respond to resident
21 complaints at all, it was often
22 insufficient.

23 Last year alone, our
24 landlord was handed 50 violations

1 from L&I, and the city even placed a
2 lien on the property for unpaid work
3 relating to one of these violations.
4 Despite all of this, they've been
5 allowed to renew their rental
6 license. They have continued to
7 sign certificates of rental
8 suitability with these open
9 violations and new -- and they
10 maintain the highest eviction rate
11 in the city.

12 Together, my neighbors and
13 I decided the only way to advocate
14 for ourselves against these absentee
15 landlords was collectively. And
16 early last year, we formed a tenant
17 union. Unfortunately, due to this
18 organizing effort, my landlord is
19 now retaliating against me by
20 refusing to renew my lease, forcing
21 me to leave my home and my
22 community.

23 I'm lucky enough to know my
24 rights and to have friends in this

1 city who have provided me with more
2 help than I can describe, but most
3 Philadelphians don't have this
4 luxury. So without this
5 legislation, where are they in my
6 situation? For too long, we've
7 allowed negligent absentee corporate
8 landlords to use Philadelphians as a
9 stepping stone to increase their
10 already substantial personal profit.

11 It's long past time to
12 prioritize our communities and focus
13 our attention and empathy on your
14 constituents.

15 Despite the transparent
16 lies of the landlord lobby, there
17 are no downsides to these bills. If
18 you are in any way negatively
19 impacted by these bills, then your
20 property is unsafe, and your poor
21 business practices should not be
22 allowed to affect tenants. Diluting
23 these bills only protects landlords
24 and negatively impacts tenants. We

1 previously heard L&I state that
2 their proactive rental inspection
3 program has already been created and
4 will move forward regardless. Now
5 we need you to ensure the remainder
6 of this legislation will become a
7 reality. Thank you.

8 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
9 all for your testimony. Are there
10 questions or comments from the panel
11 -- from the committee members for
12 this panel? Councilmember O'Rourke.

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
14 Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to
15 wait till all the panelists spoke
16 before providing just a few points
17 of clarification from some previous
18 testimony if I may. Responding
19 first to Mr. -- what Mr. Kravinsky
20 said and to clarify the actual
21 language of the bills and how they
22 would apply.

23 First, a stroller in the
24 hallway is a fire code violation,

1 it's also something that could be
2 fixed in five minutes. There's no
3 reason why it would hold up a
4 licensing process. And so I want to
5 make sure that we are, like, adding
6 some context to what we mean when we
7 say this.

8 Second, Mr. Kravinsky
9 mentioned that 25 percent of L&I
10 violations are cured on time. This
11 is exactly why we created a safe
12 harbor that protects landlords from
13 consequences when L&I delays are the
14 reason why they can't comply. It
15 was for that reason. Both of these
16 concerns are not relevant to our
17 bills, but thank you for raising
18 them.

19 And I think thirdly,
20 Mr. Kravinsky brought up the
21 challenge of meeting HUD
22 regulations, which are referenced in
23 the bill. And we talked about this
24 twice in the last two weeks, I

1 think, in particular. I want to be
2 clear that I added mention of HUD
3 and EPA regulations at
4 Mr. Kravinsky's request, and he has
5 acknowledged that already.

6 And I know that they're
7 asking us to make changes again to
8 revert back to a previous version of
9 the bills. I've been working in
10 good faith and this feels like a
11 little bit of whiplash if I'm being
12 honest. I just want to note how
13 some of these requests really just
14 feel like delay tactics to impede us
15 from passing tenant protections.

16 But, you know, we will
17 continue to engage, as I have said
18 from before as I'm saying today, in
19 good faith to make sure that we
20 remove any unintended harm and make
21 sure that we are getting the actual
22 goal of the bills. Thank you so
23 much.

24 MR. KRAVINSKY: Can I get

1 --

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Briefly.

3 MR. KRAVINSKY: -- a couple
4 of seconds to respond. Yeah. So I
5 -- I'll just make the point on the
6 bill requiring housing providers to
7 comply with HUD, EPA, and ANSI
8 regulations. I think it's a slight
9 mischaracterization to say that I
10 requested that language and that I'm
11 now requesting it be taken out.

12 The original bill stated
13 that housing providers would comply
14 with all applicable industry
15 standards. I pointed out that there
16 are no clear applicable industry
17 standards that would apply in this
18 situation. And the sponsor put in
19 the standards of HUD, EPA, and ANSI,
20 which are three separate conflicting
21 regulatory bodies with hundreds of
22 pages of regulation on these
23 matters. So I don't agree with that
24 statement.

1 Second comment on
2 strollers, you could say it's easy
3 to correct. Unfortunately, in the
4 current bill, there is no safe
5 harbor for tenant obstruction. So
6 if we get a violation because --
7 fire code violation because somebody
8 has left their stroller in the
9 hallway, we tell them to remove it
10 or we even, you know, put it in
11 their apartment ourselves - one of
12 our maintenance guys does. If they
13 put it back out, doesn't matter.

14 There's no safe harbor in
15 the bill currently, that's still an
16 active violation. We can't collect
17 rent; if we collect rent, we have to
18 return that rent. So I want to
19 engage in, you know, good-faith
20 dialogue here. And again, I think
21 we can cover these issues with minor
22 tactical changes, but I don't think
23 it's accurate to construe my words
24 in the way that the Councilmember

1 has.

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.

3 Thank you for your response. These

4 sound like the type of issues that

5 could be talked about after today.

6 I believe that the bill sponsor said

7 that he was willing -- very briefly,

8 and then I would like to move on.

9 MR. RUSHDY: Right. Madam

10 Chair, thank you so much. So to

11 Councilmember O'Rourke, for the

12 testimonies we just heard now and

13 these examples of people living with

14 mold and people living with leaks,

15 I'm a hundred percent on your side.

16 I am -- unfortunately, I know it's a

17 perception issue, but I am. Okay?

18 So no one should live in that. And

19 if you have informed the landlord

20 and they are not taught -- taking

21 these procedures to fix that, okay,

22 that is wrong. Okay? It is wrong

23 and we do not support landlords.

24 We don't -- we do not

1 support. You don't know me, so I'm
2 telling you we don't. Okay. So we
3 do not support -- sure. I was just
4 responding to Councilmember
5 O'Rourke's bill. So I just want you
6 to know that we're truly not going
7 after the intent of the bill at all.
8 We're talking about technical
9 differences, changes that we
10 understand the city we live in, we
11 understand the limitations, okay, of
12 some of the agencies and the
13 limitations and what the unintended
14 consequences especially are on the
15 smaller guys.

16 I have built over 2,000
17 units. When I have a problem, we
18 attend to it the same day because I
19 run the risk of someone leaving and
20 never coming and leasing again.
21 It's the exact opposite problem.
22 The issue is going to be with a lot
23 of the smaller guys that do not have
24 the means, okay, to get on that.

1 And for the most part, believe it or
2 not, they're not members of ours,
3 but we understand the industry and
4 what it can cause, an -- unintended
5 consequences. Thank you for the
6 time.

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
8 all for your testimony.

9 We are now going to move on
10 to the public comment list. We ask
11 that all commenters limit their
12 testimony to two minutes. and if
13 you have submitted written
14 testimony, please summarize.

15 Ms. Jones, can you please
16 call the names of the first three
17 commenters?

18 THE CLERK: Diane Thompson,
19 Bill Vargas, Leonard Bony.

20 MS. THOMPSON: Good
21 afternoon. Thanks for having me
22 today. I just want to say a couple
23 --

24 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please

1 state your name for the record.

2 MS. THOMPSON: Oh, Diane
3 Thompson. Okay. Again, thanks for
4 having me. Real quickly, I am a
5 landlord and I'm also a tenant. So
6 I understand from both sides. When
7 the young lady said things that
8 happened to her with the ceiling
9 falling in, that's terrible. But I
10 can honestly say that this bill
11 affects people who were not bad
12 landlords.

13 And I had an infestation in
14 one of my buildings, I didn't know
15 about it until it was already full
16 blown. My tenant agreed that she
17 didn't call and let me know in time.
18 As I was in the midst of dealing
19 with it, I had an inspection -- an
20 inspection, of course, I failed the
21 inspection.

22 Now had that been a
23 license, you know, L&I inspection,
24 she would've been able to withhold

1 rent and who -- and that particular
2 thing was going to take longer than
3 30 days to fix. So in the meantime,
4 fines could have been sued and
5 everything else. And I was in good
6 faith dealing with that and did not
7 even know about it until after the
8 fact. So this can affect good
9 landlords as well, and I just want
10 you guys to understand that.

11 Secondly, as a tenant, I
12 had lived in apartment -- just
13 recently in February. We had the
14 coldest February in 10 years, and
15 the heat broke. And I did not have
16 any heat in my apartment for almost
17 two weeks. Because I'm a landlord,
18 I understand this was not
19 negligence. Sometimes things break,
20 and just because you have a leak, it
21 doesn't mean that you're a bad
22 person. And just because you have a
23 failure in a utility, it doesn't
24 mean you're a bad landlord.

1 Now, that was -- and the
2 landlord remediated the rent without
3 any kind of legal action necessary.
4 So what I'm saying is sometimes you
5 can work something out, you don't
6 need to have legal action happen
7 immediately. And as a landlord, I
8 appreciated the fact that my tenant
9 allowed me the time to work out that
10 infestation. And I appreciated the
11 fact that my landlord remediated
12 rent and negotiated with us --
13 without us having to take legal
14 action as well. So I just wanted to
15 make that comment. Thank you.

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
17 for your comment.

18 Please state your name for
19 the record and proceed with your
20 comment.

21 MR. VARGAS: Bill Vargas,
22 I'm a landlord. Thank you all for
23 being here today. When I testified
24 against this bill back on March 4th,

1 I talked about how I went into a
2 property with a -- with a lead paint
3 guy so we could renew my license.
4 And we were surrounded and
5 threatened by people who came to the
6 house for that very purpose, to keep
7 us from getting that test done. And
8 my testimony went viral on social
9 media. I heard from so many
10 landlords who have had situations
11 where they've either been threatened
12 or physically assaulted while trying
13 to do what the city mandates that
14 they should do. That's not the part
15 that Mr. O'Rourke tells you about.

16 In -- under the current
17 situation, you could be actually
18 assaulted and prevented from doing
19 what you need to do. And then the
20 tenant can go into court and say,
21 well, he didn't have his rental
22 license, and the judge will buy it.
23 Under his bill, it'll be even worse.
24 Tenants won't want you to make

1 repairs.

2 They will prevent you from
3 making repairs and then they will
4 turn around -- thank you, thank you.

5 They will physically present --
6 prevent you, and then they'll go
7 into court, because now L&I will not
8 revoke your license. They'll go
9 into court and they'll sue you.

10 They will physically assault you,
11 then they'll be able to sue you.

12 That's how crazy this bill is.

13 Now, I know -- I know a
14 landlord who everywhere he goes,
15 whenever he goes on one of his
16 properties, he carries a gun because
17 one time he was innocently
18 collecting rent. There was six guys
19 in the back room, they jumped him,
20 they beat him so badly, he was in
21 the hospital for six months and
22 almost died. So now wherever he
23 goes, he carries the gun.

24 So you pass this bill,

1 that's the kind of thing that's
2 going to become commonplace. And so
3 therefore, if you pass this bill,
4 someone will get killed. So if you
5 don't want someone killed, you need
6 to kill this bill. And -- thank
7 you. Listen, I'm not -- I'm not
8 trying to -- I'm not trying to paint
9 with a broad brush. I'm not saying
10 that all tenants are bad.

11 Thanks. Thank you, sir.
12 I'm not -- I'm not saying that all
13 tenants are bad--

14 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
15 for your comment. Please wrap up.

16 MR. VARGAS: Most tenants
17 are good --

18 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Your two
19 minutes is completed --

20 MR. VARGAS: -- but --

21 CHAIR GAUTHIER: -- thank
22 you for your comments.

23 MR. VARGAS: Okay. Thank
24 you.

1 THE CLERK: Okay.

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Okay.

3 Will the clerk please call the name
4 of the next three commenters?

5 THE CLERK: Gareth Evans,
6 German Yaskava, and Reverend Greg
7 Holson.

8 CHAIR GAUTHIER: If you are
9 in the room and you heard your name
10 called, please come up to the desk.

11 MR. HOLSTON: Good
12 afternoon. My name is Reverend
13 Gregory Holston. I'm the Executive
14 Director of Destination. I have
15 some remarks, but I'm confused by
16 what I've been hearing. If the
17 realtors cared so much about this
18 issue, why wouldn't they have put
19 their own legislation in years ago?
20 Why do they want to stop something
21 now that this council person has put
22 in and this committee wants to move
23 forward with when they had years to
24 try to address this issue?

1 I would think the real --
2 the realtor association or the
3 renters' association -- I mean, not
4 renter association, the property
5 owners have the legal means and the
6 legal knowledge to be able to
7 address this issue years ago. But
8 also I'm concerned because yes, I
9 hear about the small landlords and
10 what they're going through, and we
11 do need to do something about that
12 kind of situation that Bill Vargas
13 just described. But we can go
14 forward with this piece of
15 legislation and address that with
16 some support and some help. But the
17 problem is he's worried about who --
18 what people may get killed and not
19 enough about the people who are
20 already dying.

21 The reality is that child
22 lead paint, which he was going to
23 correct, and I give him credit for
24 trying to correct it, most landlords

1 are not correcting. And we are
2 seeing that poison toxin in our
3 children for year after year after
4 year after year. We have all done
5 studies of those on Street Road who
6 have been involved in gun violence
7 and found out that many of them had
8 the toxin of lead paint in their
9 bodies that affected -- that caused
10 permanent brain damage to them.

11 And on some of the reasons
12 we have the violence in our
13 community today that we have, we
14 have never effectively addressed
15 lead paint in our homes, in our
16 communities. And if this bill will
17 allow some folk to be able to say I
18 -- without retaliation, with a sense
19 that they are a remediation can be
20 done, a safe -- a place where they
21 can be able to go while it's being
22 taken care of.

23 If this will give them the
24 courage to say, landlord, get this

1 lead paint out of my apartment, then
2 I'm a hundred percent for it because
3 I'm trying to save some children and
4 some babies that are in our schools
5 today.

6 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.
7 Please wrap up your comment. I need
8 you to wrap up your comment. Thank
9 you so much.

10 MR. HOLSTON: Thank you.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Will the
12 clerk please call the next three
13 public commenters?

14 THE CLERK: Nate Roundtree,
15 Federica Lightfoot, Sue Rocksandich.

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
17 afternoon. Please state your name
18 for the record and proceed with your
19 comment.

20 MS. LIGHTFOOT: Hi, my name
21 is Frederica Lightfoot. Rich rising
22 everyone. I'd like to share a
23 quote, maybe one or two. An empty
24 barrel makes the most noise, and a

1 guilty conscience needs no accuser.
2 The Safety Homes Act has definitely
3 ruffled some feathers, which shows
4 how complacent they have become.
5 Stand in your discomfort.

6 Thanks to Councilman Member
7 O'Rourke and all the other parties
8 involved for initiating this act, it
9 is so long overdue. And I am
10 speaking from experience, I have
11 shared this years ago about how the
12 landlords are negligent and -- when
13 it comes to repairs. It's needed
14 for the oppressed people. Tenants,
15 let's stand up. Let's get up.
16 Let's stand up for our rights.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
19 for your comments. Proceed. State
20 -- please state your name and
21 proceed.

22 MS. ROCKSANDICH: Hi, I'm
23 Sue RockSandich, everybody calls me
24 Rocky. I am a landlord. I'm a

1 small landlord. I'm a retired nurse
2 after 46 years of it, and I've
3 probably been a landlord longer than
4 some of these people in here have
5 ever been on the earth. Anyway,
6 first off, I love my tenants and
7 what I want to know from Council as
8 a small landlord is, what have you
9 done for me lately? I have my
10 tenants -- my tenants are all,
11 frankly, I -- they're under market
12 in terms of what they're paying.
13 And I love a clean home.

14 I tell the tenants when I
15 -- when I first interview someone, I
16 say - and when I get my places
17 ready, I personally I am on my hands
18 and knees cleaning it with every --
19 with my -- with my people, and I'm
20 there to do a turnover. First off,
21 there is no incentive for a small
22 landlord or self-managing landlord.

23 There is no incentive to
24 evict a patient -- tenant, I'm

1 sorry, patient, back to nursing --
2 to evict a tenant. Because I'm not
3 -- a turnover cost a ton of money.
4 And as a small landlord, I don't own
5 an apartment complex with 30 units,
6 each one being a one bedroom. I own
7 a three-bedroom rural home, which
8 was dilapidated; I bought,
9 renovated, and I make nice for my --
10 for my tenants. I appreciate a
11 safe, healthy home.

12 But years ago, you all got
13 rid of a mediation program. And I
14 think frankly, if you want to help
15 out with regard to the small
16 landlords, remove us from all these
17 little got-you's that you're doing
18 and aiming at the large consortiums
19 that have people who are not vested
20 in their neighborhood. I had a
21 tenant years ago, I -- when --
22 before I knew how to screen, she let
23 25 feral cats into the basement of
24 the home. And --

1 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
2 wrap up your comment.

3 MS. ROCKSANDICH: Pardon
4 me?

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Two
6 minutes is up. Can you please wrap
7 your comment.

8 MS. ROCKSANDICH: Okay.
9 Basically, what I'm saying is what
10 we need is something where we can
11 call and get immediate action when
12 we go into one of our properties and
13 the tenant is living in there in a
14 filthy manner, so that we can
15 address it before it becomes an
16 absolute, absolute disgrace.

17 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
18 --

19 MS. ROCKSANDICH: We need
20 that backup --

21 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
22 so much for your comment --

23 MS. ROCKSANDICH: And as
24 far as lead is concerned, it's a

1 small thing, but lead; we already
2 need that to get our rental license.
3 Why does it have to be --

4 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
5 for your comment today.

6 Will the clerk please call
7 the next few public commenters?

8 THE CLERK: Eileen Gray,
9 Brenda Simons, Ethan Kalathil, Brown
10 Colburn.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
12 afternoon. Please state your name
13 for the record and proceed with your
14 comment.

15 MS. SIMONS: Good
16 afternoon. My name is Brenda
17 Simons, and I am a Philadelphia
18 resident, a block captain, and a
19 small business landlord. Thank you
20 for the opportunity to speak today.

21 First, let -- give me one
22 moment because I did want to say
23 something specific. First, I need
24 to thank the staff of Councilman

1 Curtis Jones' office for their
2 valuable assistance whenever called
3 upon. Josh Cohen and Gail Young
4 have been very responsive to me as a
5 small business landlord.

6 I want to begin by saying
7 clearly that safe and healthy
8 housing is important to all of us.
9 Good landlords want safe homes just
10 as much as good tenants do. We all
11 share the same goals; stable
12 housing, safe communities, and
13 strong neighborhoods.

14 However, I respectfully
15 want to share the perspective of
16 small landlords, many of whom are
17 not large corporations. Many of us
18 are seniors, retirees, or working
19 families who own one or two
20 properties and rely on that income
21 simply to maintain those homes and
22 support ourselves. And even before
23 the new legislation, navigating the
24 system is already very challenging.

1 For example, I have been a small
2 business landlord for more than 25
3 years.

4 However, this year, it took
5 me months to renew my business
6 license. I was bounced between 311,
7 eCLIPSE, L&I, and the Revenue
8 Department and back to the same
9 departments repeatedly. I have the
10 dates, names, and emails and the
11 departments to prove it. Only when
12 I called Councilman Curtis Jones'
13 office and spoke with Josh Cohen
14 were these things, these problems
15 finally addressed. That experience
16 demonstrates how time consuming and
17 difficult compliance can be,
18 especially for small landlords --

19 CHAIR GAUTHIER: I'm sorry.
20 Thank you for your comment. If you
21 could please wrap, your two minutes
22 is up. I can give you like 10
23 seconds, but please wrap up.

24 MS. SIMONS: Okay. Let me

1 just --

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: We also do
3 have your full written testimony --

4 MS. SIMONS: I know --

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: -- here.

6 MS. SIMONS: I know, but
7 there's something that I did want to
8 say, okay? Unfortunately, those
9 landlords that have -- whose tenants
10 have good things to say are not
11 adequately represented here and in
12 this legislation. Okay? I want the
13 just share, for the record, okay?
14 One of my -- I just want to share
15 something because we can't --

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Very
17 briefly please so that everyone can
18 have a chance to comment.

19 MS. SIMONS: One of my
20 tenants said my landlord was the
21 best landlord and we were blessed to
22 have her as a landlord. My other
23 tenant who was the current tenant
24 said small --

1 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.

2 Everyone was eligible to come here
3 and comment. Tenants could have
4 come and said good things about
5 their landlords, too. Thank you so
6 much.

7 Please state your name for
8 the record and proceed with your
9 comment.

10 MS. GRAY: My name is
11 Eileen Gray, and I thank you for
12 letting me testify today. I've been
13 a landlord for 37 years. I've lived
14 in - so I'm also a realtor for 25
15 years, and I've lived in
16 Philadelphia and voted in
17 Philadelphia my entire life.

18 I just wanted to let you
19 know that over 37 years of being a
20 landlord, I finally have gotten a
21 team of people that can repair
22 things in a pretty timely manner.
23 That's our -- one of our -- one of
24 the main -- one of the problems with

1 our existence as landlords is
2 getting -- get contractors out in a
3 timely manner. And that's what my
4 concern is about this bill.

5 The other thing is, and I
6 know everybody wants to blame
7 landlords, but my tenants know I
8 love my tenants, and I've had them
9 for a very long time. And they
10 basically get their repairs done. I
11 get them done as timely as I can.
12 Oftentimes it's not on my time --
13 timeframe, the contractors do it
14 their own way.

15 But I just wanted to state
16 that this bill that's being
17 proposed, it's not really helping to
18 solve the problem with bad
19 landlords. We have a lot of bad
20 landlords in the city, and I think
21 the tenants have the power to
22 correct this. You have the power
23 right now without this bill.

24 You should be -- your

1 leases should be 75 plus pages. If
2 you don't have 75 pages in your
3 leases, you have an illegal landlord
4 and you should definitely demand
5 that. You should have all the forms
6 that are required already by the
7 laws of the City of Philadelphia.
8 You really need to do that. If you
9 do, your landlord will have to abide
10 by the laws and will be able to
11 present you with decent housing.
12 And that's the goal of every
13 landlord. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

14 Yes. So I just -- as I
15 said, by addressing the illegal
16 landlord, since they're not
17 licensed, the City of Philadelphia
18 is, I estimate at low 10,000, I'd
19 say, landlords in City of
20 Philadelphia are not licensed right
21 now. That's \$690,000 that could be
22 put back in the city's pocket. I
23 mean, we need to police the
24 landlords, and the only people who

1 can police them are the tenants.

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
3 for your comment.

4 MS. GRAY: Okay.

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
6 state your name for the record and
7 proceed with your comment.

8 MR. KALATHIL: I'm Ethan
9 Kalathil. I was here, testified
10 last time. I've been a landlord for
11 30 years. Bought my building from
12 my landlord; it's a triplex, I've
13 been staying in there for 30 years.

14 In 2025, I was surprised to
15 see my taxes go up by \$6,000, 230
16 percent increase, you know, and it's
17 really hard for people to adjust to
18 those kind of things. I'm talking
19 to many landlords who can't be here.
20 And in the past 20 years, my taxes
21 with the other buildings,
22 everything, I've seen going up 500
23 percent.

24 Same with insurance,

1 utilities, labor, building
2 materials, inspection, all have
3 increased 200 to 300 percent. And
4 what I'm struggling to understand
5 is, if I'm struggling to offer
6 affordable housing by having all
7 these regulations, paperwork,
8 constantly changing rules, and
9 complex regulation, it's going to
10 make compliance so hard for
11 landlords. Even who have been there
12 for 37 years like this lady over
13 here.

14 So again, I'm really
15 confused how regulations that kill
16 affordability for landlords, trying
17 to provide decent housing, can lead
18 to affordable housing for tenants.
19 You know, they -- this is a pass for
20 overregulation and destroying
21 affordable housing. Only large
22 landlords can spread the high
23 operating costs over many units and
24 figure out how to gain the system

1 and will survive. The result is
2 removing all the smaller landlords,
3 no more smaller landlords just come
4 in because they -- it's so much
5 harder to deal with the bureaucracy.
6 So I'm basically --

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.
8 Could you please wrap -- thank you
9 for your comments.

10 MR. KALATHIL: So I'm
11 basically would like to say that
12 there are bad landlords and bad
13 tenants. Expanding the right of bad
14 tenants is not solving the problem.
15 And overregulating the good
16 landlords is not solving the
17 problem.

18 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
19 for your comment today. Please
20 state -- move closer to the mic or
21 pull the mic closer and state your
22 name for the record and proceed.

23 MS. COLBURN: Thank you.
24 Good morning. My name is Dawn

1 Colburn. Good morning,
2 Councilmembers, spectators, and
3 participators. I live in Councilman
4 Phillips' District. I also want to
5 thank you for bringing us this far
6 for the vote.

7 And before joining Renters
8 United PA, my stinking thinking told
9 me it was okay for others to fight
10 my legal battles, mainly because
11 growing up in the streets, battles
12 were fought differently. I aged
13 gracefully and part of me still
14 carried that stinking thinking. I
15 noticed there were particular
16 members of today's society that
17 wasn't mentioned too much regarding
18 housing.

19 Maybe it didn't pertain to
20 me at the time, so I didn't hear it.
21 But since then, gracefully aged, I
22 feel different. Mental illness and
23 autism is a very big part of society
24 today. They no longer have to live

1 in a back room of their family
2 homes; they can live independently.

3 For this, we need landlords
4 to provide safe, healthy
5 environments and for them to be
6 accountable for their property. For
7 example, don't paint over mold and
8 properly treat it, don't put a band
9 aid over a gunshot. Holes need to
10 be attended to correctly, so mold
11 won't come back and holes don't get
12 bigger. Landlords follow with, it
13 wasn't like that before they moved
14 in.

15 I plead for you
16 Councilmembers to vote yesterday for
17 Safe, Healthy Homes. Some of us
18 don't know how to correctly use our
19 words or scared if we do the
20 repercussions that followed, I
21 believe in my God's grace and mercy,
22 you will vote yes today. Thank you.

23 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
24 for your comment. Thanks to all of

1 you.

2 Will the clerk please call
3 the next few public commenters?

4 THE CLERK: Brian Bachman,
5 Greg Workman, Seth Floyd, Brian
6 Jackson.

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
8 afternoon. Please state your name
9 for the record and proceed with your
10 comment.

11 MR. FLOYD: Good afternoon,
12 everyone. For the record, my name
13 is Seth Floyd. I'm here to testify
14 in regards to the Safe, Healthy
15 Homes Bill. I'm a homeowner, a
16 constituent of Councilman Jones'
17 district. I'm an experienced
18 landlord, 25 years, licensed real
19 estate broker for 21 years. I
20 mostly represent tenants
21 transitioning from home -- from
22 rental into home ownership. I also
23 represent tenants who want to move
24 into rental properties.

1 I also have the pleasure of
2 representing landlords. My
3 question; what are we doing here?
4 With the intention of the bill being
5 safe, healthy homes and there being
6 no opposition to actually having
7 safe, healthy homes, passing this
8 type of legislation seem like it
9 would be a layup. Hit the easy
10 button.

11 There is not one person in
12 this room, I mean, no one that
13 doesn't want safe homes for
14 Philadelphia. Nobody. Yet somehow
15 this committee was able to motivate
16 all the subject matter experts and
17 stakeholders out from their busy
18 days to come here today at City Hall
19 for almost the last year. How is
20 that? I'm going to tell you very
21 briefly.

22 First, the title of this
23 bill is great, but the language
24 needs work. We've been here three

1 times for a reason, is that we spend
2 a lot of time with the bill sponsor
3 and the committee members about
4 trying to get these amendments in,
5 every time to not have them amended.

6 Every time come here with
7 the same thing that we got with
8 response from Councilman Curtis's
9 request. Every time, the response
10 is, we are going to work on that,
11 hey, we're going to implement that.
12 Hey, give us a little time. Hey,
13 those are great talking points,
14 let's talk about it.

15 I'm going to tell you this,
16 I've met with O'Rourke more times
17 than I can count. I've met with
18 Kate more times than I can count.
19 I've walked in City Hall the last
20 few months, more times than I can
21 count. You know how many amendments
22 came from all the attorneys and GPCA
23 and the Association of Realtors and
24 HAPCO and the PP -- and the PAA?

1 How very little, almost nothing of
2 substance. The reason that we're
3 here is not because we want to, it's
4 because we have to. There is a risk
5 to our business. And --

6 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
7 --

8 MR. FLOYD: -- what I'm
9 saying to you is --

10 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
11 take a few seconds and wrap up, but
12 the two minutes is up.

13 MR. FLOYD: We are -- we
14 are here to keep the balance of the
15 ecosystem. That is our job. We
16 have licenses; we have a career. We
17 work in this space for a living. We
18 protect the tenant, we make this
19 process work. And if you don't
20 listen to us, I don't know who you
21 will listen to.

22 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
23 for your comment.

24 Please state your name for

1 the record and proceed with your
2 comment.

3 MR. BRODMAN: Hi, my name
4 is Brian Brodman. Thank you for
5 giving me an opportunity to speak
6 about this law. I have 15 years
7 experience as a handyman and rental
8 manager. I became alert of the law
9 after I saw it had been delayed in
10 its passage and was alarmed by some
11 of the more punitive penalties that
12 are in it, and that were outlined
13 earlier on by the renters.

14 My -- based on my
15 experience, I want to warn that this
16 law will have the opposite of the
17 desired effect. In most cases, it
18 will lead to an increase in rent and
19 less affordable apartments. It will
20 only accelerate the selling of units
21 by smaller landlords to larger
22 corporate landlords who can afford
23 to stay on top of the extra
24 paperwork burden and know how to

1 navigate the bureaucracy.

2 I have already seen three
3 of my clients either sell out to
4 larger management companies or make
5 preparations to convert to luxury
6 condos. Smaller landlords who have
7 personal relationships with their
8 customers, smaller landlords who
9 keep rents lower under market value
10 because they value a good tenant
11 over a high margin.

12 In contrast, larger
13 companies of higher operating costs
14 ruthlessly seek the highest market
15 rate and often employ large rent
16 increases after the first year,
17 banking on people's aversion to
18 move. It'll also reward the worst
19 tenants who would take advantage of
20 any loophole in bad faith at the
21 expense of 99 percent of tenants who
22 follow the rules.

23 It'll make landlords more
24 hesitant to rent the people with

1 marginal credit or check a renter's
2 history and bad renters could take
3 advantage. In the end, good people
4 with bad credit will struggle to
5 find housing. So please don't trade
6 our local housing for corporate
7 paperwork. Thank you.

8 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
9 for your comment.

10 Will the clerk please call
11 the next names -- the next few names
12 of the next public commenter?

13 THE CLERK: Tyrese Rogers,
14 Erica Hadley, Kevin Wright, Mark
15 Roche.

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
17 afternoon. Please state your name
18 for the record and proceed with your
19 comment.

20 MR. WRIGHT: My name is
21 Kevin Wright. And my comment is
22 that the City of Philadelphia, in my
23 opinion, creating these rules or
24 weaponizing license and inspection

1 will drive the small landlord out of
2 business. We are -- we are over --
3 we are overregulated before; we're
4 going to be overregulated now.

5 We have high taxes, high
6 insurance costs, trash fees, and we
7 will be out of business soon. And
8 as a result, we will be out of
9 business, and we will sell our
10 properties to people who can afford
11 these onerous bills.

12 We try to rent the people.
13 We don't want tenants leaving. When
14 we rent the people and they don't
15 pay our rent, we go to -- we go to
16 tenant court -- Landlord-Tenant
17 Court. It takes six to nine months
18 to get somebody out of your
19 property. In my mind, there is no
20 incentive for some tenants to pay
21 their rent. We -- we're older and
22 we have mortgages on our properties,
23 we have mortgages on the rental
24 properties. We are -- we do the

1 maintenance; we do the rentals. We
2 do everything necessary to make our
3 tenants -- most of us, make our
4 tenants happy.

5 And my -- it seems to me
6 that the City of Philadelphia hates
7 small business. And I know the
8 people here, the tenant groups; they
9 believe this is a good thing. And I
10 understand that. But when you --
11 when you -- when we get out of the
12 business, because we are -- we -- I
13 think we rent to maybe the smaller
14 landlord --

15 CHAIR GAUTHIER: And I'm
16 going to have to ask that you wrap
17 up your --

18 MR. WRIGHT: Okay. I'll
19 wrap it up. But the wrap up is the
20 city -- the city doesn't help us at
21 all. Never. They -- they've never
22 helped us, they never try to help
23 us. And the city has a reputation
24 of being a bad -- being bad for

1 business. It is difficult to do
2 business in the City of
3 Philadelphia.

4 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
5 for your comment. Thank you so
6 much.

7 Please state your name for
8 the record and proceed with your
9 comment.

10 MS. HADLEY: Good
11 afternoon, Councilmembers. My name
12 is Erica Hadley. I am a small
13 landlord here in Philadelphia. I'm
14 a Black woman and a mother trying to
15 raise -- to build a suitable future
16 for my children. I didn't come into
17 this with a big company behind me.

18 I started with my family,
19 one property at a time, to create
20 something suitable, not just for me,
21 but for my children. I'm not a big
22 multimillion dollar business. I'm
23 not a small, corrupt, deep pocket
24 billionaire. I am what 73 percent

1 of landlords in the City of
2 Philadelphia actually look like. I
3 care about my tenants. I try to
4 work with people. I try to get
5 second chances when I can. But I'm
6 here today because I need you to
7 understand what this really looks
8 like for someone like me.

9 I've had tenants who cost
10 me thousands of dollars, not because
11 I neglected my responsibility, but
12 because the system allowed
13 situations to spiral out of control.
14 And in one case, I had accepted a
15 tenant through a program to help her
16 and her children transition out of a
17 shelter. I wanted -- I wanted to
18 help. I believe in giving a chance
19 -- someone a chance.

20 At first, things were fine,
21 then the problem started. There
22 were constant complaints from my
23 other tenants. There were
24 unoccupied -- unauthorized

1 occupants, and repeated
2 disturbances. I addressed every
3 issue the tenants raised. Every
4 maintenance concern was handled
5 promptly when she complained of were
6 pets -- pests in the property, I had
7 professional help come immediately.
8 Despite that, she stopped paying
9 rent.

10 Then the real problems
11 began. She filed repeated
12 complaints with License and
13 Inspection and Fair Housing, often
14 right before court dates and before
15 inspections. Access to the property
16 was blocked. New claims were --
17 came up to the property listing like
18 glass leak -- gas leak that turned
19 out to be minor or unfounded, but
20 still delayed everything. This went
21 on for over a year.

22 Even after I went in court,
23 she appealed, and delays continued.
24 During that time, I still -- I was

1 still paying my mortgage, utilities,
2 repairs, and legal fees across
3 multiple attorneys. I lost a year
4 of rent and ultimately had to pay
5 her to leave my property just to get
6 it back.

7 In another situation, I had
8 a tenant who caused repeated
9 disruptions, made complaints of the
10 building and other residents. At
11 one point --

12 CHAIR GAUTHIER: And I'm
13 going to have to ask you briefly
14 wrap up.

15 MS. HADLEY: Okay. I tried
16 to be patient, I tried to be
17 understanding. And this is -- this
18 is what happens for people like me.
19 Good people, I try to be someone --

20 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
21 so much for coming today and for
22 your comment.

23 Please state your name for
24 the record and proceed with your

1 comment. Go ahead.

2 MR. ROCHE: My name is Mark
3 Roche. I'm a small landlord. After
4 the last meeting, one of the
5 tenants' representatives asked me to
6 rent from me, and she's a tenant of
7 me now. My rent are about \$1000, I
8 have seven units. I built them --
9 the block. I said it last time, I
10 could not sleep at night, if there
11 would be conditions like there has
12 been brought up here, that would
13 never happen in my housing. Never.

14 I am fully for Safe and
15 Healthy Homes. Let's get bad
16 landlords out of the city and out of
17 business. Period. Yeah. However,
18 Mr. O'Rourke, you used the term
19 "trapped," and I'm my deepest and
20 confound knowledge of housing 24
21 years, this bill will trap tenants
22 the most. This bill will trap
23 people looking for housing the most.

24 And it's very simple why

1 over the past, many, many years
2 longer than I'm here, regulations
3 increased, bureaucracy increased,
4 and the city agencies and the
5 sheriff don't do their job as they
6 are supposed to.

7 And if this bill passes,
8 again, more people will leave.
9 Lenders leave the city already, all
10 of you will have to pay more.
11 Insurances has left the city
12 already. Stop this; make it bad for
13 bad landlords and help the good
14 landlords to finally solve this
15 issue. If this bill passes, the
16 large corporate guys from New York
17 City, they will be in business way
18 and way more. This can be done so
19 much better, please talk to us.

20 Please maybe take the small
21 landlords out of all of this. But
22 if it goes the way it's presented
23 here, the tenants and the most
24 vulnerable people will suffer the

1 most. Yeah.

2 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
3 for your comment.

4 MR. ROCHE: And my -- and
5 my last sentence is, if small
6 landlords leave the city, go to the
7 other counties or give their money
8 to Fidelity and Charles Schwab, and
9 others, nobody, nobody wins. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
12 for your comment.

13 Please state your name for
14 the record and proceed with your
15 comment.

16 MR. ROGERS: Okay. Good
17 morning, everyone. My name is
18 Tyrese Rogers. My zip code is
19 19124. And for the smaller
20 landlords or anybody, I'm sorry if
21 you are having issues trying to get
22 rid of bad tenants, but for the most
23 part, this is a very small portion
24 of people that have issues with the

1 landowners. But like, no, this is
2 not -- it is time for this to stop.
3 We're going to pass this bill.
4 Safe, Healthy Homes for everybody.

5 I woke up last November
6 living 60 years, and landlords have
7 been here longer than I have been
8 alive. It's time for this to stop.
9 Safe, Healthy Homes for all. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
12 for your comment.

13 Will the clerk please call
14 the names of the next few public
15 commenters?

16 THE CLERK: Camille
17 Pearsall, Victor Hireman, Melissa
18 Moss. Jacob Domi, Holanda --

19 MR. DOMI: Good afternoon.
20 My name is Jacob Domi. I'm a
21 responsible landlord and I have been
22 operating in Philadelphia for about
23 20 years. Throughout the time, I
24 have run my business in full

1 compliance with the city and federal
2 regulations. When I learned about
3 this proposed bill, I became very
4 concerned.

5 Being a landlord lately
6 comes with many challenges. The
7 eviction process alone can take up
8 to six months, followed by
9 additional time, often about two
10 months for repair for the property.
11 I believe this bill may -- this bill
12 might place an unfair burden to the
13 landlord, potentially discouraging
14 responsible property owners from
15 continuing on this business.

16 In the long term, that
17 could negatively impact the quality
18 of housing in our city. I have a
19 question for the Councilmember. Do
20 you direct experience with landlord-
21 tenant relationship, especially the
22 challenges landlords face in
23 maintaining the property and
24 enforcing lease agreement?

1 Regarding automatic rent
2 abatement, I had a situation where I
3 was in the process of a evicting a
4 tenant. During that time, the
5 tenant intentionally caused the
6 damage by leaving the water running
7 upstairs in the bathroom, which
8 damaged the kitchen ceiling and
9 removing the -- all the outlet
10 covers in the living room. I was
11 never notified for this.

12 Instead, the tenant
13 contacted L&I, which resulted in a
14 \$300 violation issued to me.
15 Because the violation was attached
16 to the property, I was unable to
17 renew my rental license. That
18 tenant made it very difficult for me
19 to access the property to make
20 repairs; changing locks, and
21 refusing the entry. Even I had
22 pulled L&I and they came out three
23 times to get inside the property,
24 they couldn't get in. But meantime,

1 I couldn't renew my license.

2 In this situation like
3 this, Councilmember, what would you
4 expect the landlord to do?

5 Regarding posting the violation and
6 inspections, I also received the
7 violation notice in mail for \$75
8 couple days ago --

9 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
10 take -- please wrap up your comment.

11 MR. ROGERS: Yes. For the
12 violation, \$25 late fee, which I
13 never received any mail before. So
14 in this case, you say that we have
15 to let the tenant know 48 hours
16 before. Where can I get this 48
17 hours before? When I receive this
18 violation month and a half or two
19 months late. Thank you for
20 understanding. Thank you.

21 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.
22 Thank you. And I'm sure that bill
23 sponsor is willing to talk more with
24 you.

1 Please state your name for
2 the record and proceed with your
3 comment.

4 MS. PEARSALL: Camille
5 Pearsall. Good afternoon, chair and
6 members of the Housing committee.
7 My name is Camille Pearsall. I'm a
8 Philadelphia native, current
9 resident. I don't live rich on the
10 hill somewhere. In fact, I'm a
11 constituent of Councilmember Bass's
12 District 8 and an affordable housing
13 provider here in Philadelphia.

14 I take pride in providing
15 safe, high-quality housing. In
16 fact, part of what led me into this
17 work was witnessing my own neighbors
18 living in substandard conditions.
19 Conditions very similar to what some
20 tenants have testified here. No one
21 should have to live like that.

22 And I want to be clear, I
23 do not support bad landlords. Get
24 them out of here. There should

1 absolutely be sanctions and
2 accountability for those who fail to
3 provide safe housing.

4 However, I am here today
5 because I believe the current form
6 of these bills is not balanced, and
7 it does not distinguish between bad
8 actors and responsible housing
9 providers. Many of us are small
10 business owners, not large
11 corporations. We already operate
12 within standard ethics and
13 accountability, and we are committed
14 to maintaining safe and habitable
15 properties.

16 One of my primary concerns
17 is the vagueness and the
18 inconsistency in enforcement within
19 this proposed regulation. When
20 policies are unclear, enforcement
21 becomes uneven, creating confusion
22 and unnecessary risk even for those
23 who are already compliant.

24 There are also due process

1 concerns: shifting burdens,
2 limiting timelines, and enforcing
3 penalties before appeals are fully
4 resolved putting responsible housing
5 providers at a disadvantage, even
6 when they're acting in good faith.

7 Additionally, I would like
8 -- I would be remiss not to mention
9 the Sunshine Act concerns raised
10 after the previous hearing. It
11 appeared, when I walked in this
12 room, decisions had already been
13 made prior to fully hearing from
14 housing providers. This process
15 should be a reflection of genuine
16 balance consideration for all
17 stakeholders and not just here to do
18 it because we all have to.

19 The practical impact of
20 these bills will be increased
21 delays, operational strain, and
22 higher costs. I'm wrapping up.
23 Many of us are balancing full-time
24 responsibilities while managing

1 properties and additional
2 administrative burdens will make it
3 more difficult to continue providing
4 housing in this city. What would
5 you do when --

6 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
7 wrap up.

8 MS. PEARSALL: -- a small
9 land -- I am. What would you do
10 when that small landlords are gone
11 --

12 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
13 so much --

14 MS. PEARSALL: What we need
15 is --

16 CHAIR GAUTHIER: -- for
17 your comment today. Thank you for
18 your comment.

19 Please state your name for
20 the record and proceed with your
21 comment.

22 MS. MOSS: Good afternoon.
23 My name is Melissa Moss. I
24 apologize for my voice; it's not one

1 of my better days. I am here to
2 support the bills that are in
3 question today. And the reason for
4 that is, this is not just creating a
5 housing crisis; this is creating a
6 health crisis. Because I was not
7 this sick prior to living in my
8 infested home, that created the
9 pulmonary condition and then
10 subsequently a heart condition.

11 I had lived homeless, I've
12 left -- I've lived in storage units
13 and slept under a loading docks and
14 have never contracted the illnesses
15 that I have. And so I'm here to say
16 that these bills are incredibly
17 important now; not tomorrow, not
18 next week, not next month. Nicolas
19 -- Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke
20 mentioned the young lady who has
21 actually died living in these
22 conditions.

23 We have to stop it. The
24 other piece is you're not noting

1 there is a mental toll that this
2 takes, the fight to come down here
3 when you're sick, when your day --
4 you're struggling that day and you
5 really just need to stay in bed and
6 rest. When you find out that all
7 your hard work has been thrown to
8 the side. The mental toll is
9 incredible. As the pastor said
10 months ago in church, one Sabbath
11 morning, life be licensed.

12 So we have so many other
13 things that we're dealing with, and
14 when you throw this at us like our
15 health and our wellbeing doesn't
16 matter, that's a lot. Please,
17 Council, pass these bills. Thank
18 you so much.

19 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
20 so much for being here today and for
21 your comment. Will the clerk please
22 call the names of the next few
23 public commenters.

24 THE CLERK: Alexis

1 Lanausse, Arnold Bryant, Algernong
2 Allen, David Lipscomb.

3 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
4 afternoon. Please state your name
5 for the record and proceed with your
6 comment.

7 MR. ALLEN: Good afternoon.
8 My name is Algernong Allen. I'm
9 representing the Greater
10 Philadelphia Association of
11 Realtors. Thank you Chair and
12 members of the committee for taking
13 the time. I'm with the Greater
14 Philadelphia Association of
15 Realtors, which advocates for
16 licensed real estate professionals,
17 property owners and housing
18 consumers across Philadelphia.

19 GPAR fully supports policy
20 designed to ensure fair treatment,
21 safe housing, and the reduction of
22 unjust eviction. Our members are
23 fully committed to compliance,
24 professional standards, and the

1 wellbeing of both property owners
2 and tenants. But we raised two key
3 concerns about these bills.

4 First on implementation.
5 GPAR asked that the city delay the
6 effective dates long enough to
7 create clear FAQs and checklists for
8 property owners and tenants. We all
9 want compliance, and clear guidance
10 would help prevent costly mistakes
11 from the start. Second, Bill 250330
12 does not fully reflect how housing
13 works for many ordinary
14 Philadelphians.

15 Many owners are not large
16 investors. They're people who kept
17 a former home, inherited a property
18 or bought a small rental to build
19 financial stability. Over time,
20 circumstances sometimes change. For
21 example, an owner may retire, face
22 illness or financial pressure, go
23 through a family transition or
24 decide they can no longer be a

1 landlord and need to end rental use,
2 recover possession, and sell the
3 property vacant, often to another
4 owner occupant.

5 Without that option, the
6 property may be harder to sell,
7 worth less and less useful to the
8 person who owns it. The bill should
9 recognize withdrawal from rental use
10 or sale to an owner occupant as a
11 valid basis for non-renewal with
12 clear notice and tenant safeguards.
13 Because clarity is a friend of
14 compliance.

15 We appreciate Council's
16 commitment to tenants protection and
17 welcome the opportunity to work
18 towards solutions that are fair,
19 workable, and clearly defined.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
22 for your comment. And I know the
23 bill sponsor is willing to help
24 further with GPAR. Thank you.

1 Please state your name for
2 the record and proceed with your
3 comment.

4 MR. LIPSCOMB: Good
5 afternoon. My name is David
6 Lipscomb. And I would like to say
7 that, good afternoon, Chairwoman
8 Jamie Gauthier and Vice-chairwoman
9 Rue Landau and members of the
10 Philadelphia City Council Housing
11 Committee. Thank you for the
12 opportunity to speak today.

13 You know, at the outset, I
14 want to be clear, I'm not in support
15 of these bills as currently written:
16 Bill No. 250330 and also Bill No.
17 250329. Not because the goals are
18 wrong; safe housing matters, but
19 because how we get there matters
20 just as much. I'm here today
21 because I'm trying to understand how
22 accountability has come to be
23 labeled as bad faith. History gives
24 us some guidance.

1 Martin Luther King was
2 criticized for pushing too hard.
3 Thurgood Marshall working through
4 the NAACP, challenged the courts
5 that weren't working, leading to
6 decisions like Brown v. Board of
7 Education. That wasn't bad faith,
8 that was accountability in action.

9 Today when small landlords
10 raise concerns about due process,
11 about transparency, about
12 implementation, and yes, sometimes
13 go to court, it's labeled bad faith.

14 Respectfully, that's not an
15 obstruction, that's participation.
16 And where there are concerns about
17 the Sunshine Act and adherence to
18 Council procedures, raising those
19 issues isn't disruptive, it's
20 responsible. On a safe and healthy
21 homes framework, we all agree on the
22 goal, safe housing matters. But
23 execution, that's where the strain
24 shows. For small landlords this

1 often means more compliance layers,
2 longer timelines, overlapping
3 requirements, greater financial and
4 legal exposure.

5 In real terms, that can
6 look like months without rent,
7 raising repair costs and no clear
8 path to resolution. That's not
9 theoretical. So I just want to
10 finish it up. These frustrations
11 have been voiced publicly, including
12 by Bill Vargas who highlighted how
13 difficult it was. I would like to
14 say to Councilmember Nicolas
15 O'Rourke, you know, one thing going
16 the civil rights era, Reverend
17 Dr. King said --

18 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.
19 Please wrap -- please wrap.

20 MR. LIPSCOMB: I'm wrapping
21 it up. "I feared I let my people
22 into a burning house," and I said
23 with this legislation, I fear that
24 you're leading your people into

1 being homeless because once you get
2 rid of the small landlord, you got
3 corporate people to take care of.
4 So thank you very much.

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
6 for your comment. Will the clerk
7 please call the names of the next
8 few public commenters.

9 THE CLERK: Brenda Otto,
10 Timothy Lewis, Avram Oslik, Jimmy
11 Dyllan.

12 MS. WILSON: Good
13 afternoon.

14 THE CLERK: Good afternoon.

15 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
16 state your name for the record and
17 proceed with your comment.

18 MR. WILSON: My name is
19 Rylanda Wilson. Okay. Thank you.
20 My name is synonymous with
21 affordable housing in Philadelphia.
22 I was a principal planner for the
23 city's Office of Housing and
24 Community Development, and I was the

1 principal planner for the
2 Philadelphia Housing Authority. I
3 wrote the nation's original housing
4 policy statement that elevated
5 housing in Philadelphia to a cabinet
6 level position.

7 Now, I'm a small landlord;
8 and by small, I mean very small.
9 This law seems like a great idea,
10 but every time you legislate, it
11 comes with a cost burden. I'm
12 asking Council to please
13 differentiate between want and need.
14 Do we really need this bill? Is
15 there a cost neutral solution? Have
16 someone who understands numbers run
17 the cost benefit scenarios.

18 My only recourse is to
19 raise rent. I live on a pension and
20 Social Security. I can't afford to
21 subsidize tenants. So my tenants
22 are regular working-class
23 Philadelphians. They're not rich.
24 I'm not rich. I ask you to

1 reconsider legislating yet one more
2 cost burden. Thank you so much.

3 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
4 for your public service and for your
5 comment today. Please state your
6 name for the record and proceed with
7 your comment.

8 MR. LEWIS: Good afternoon,
9 Councilmembers. My name is Timothy
10 Lewis. I live in Mount Airy, and
11 I'm a small housing provider here in
12 Philadelphia. Let me be direct.
13 This bill does not improve housing
14 quality. It incentivizes
15 litigation.

16 You bundled together good
17 cause eviction, expanded retaliation
18 claims, rent abatement criteria, and
19 L&I triggered enforcement and tied
20 them to a municipal court system
21 that is already slow and
22 overburdened. You-all know this. A
23 tenant doesn't need to be merited,
24 they only need to initiate a claim,

1 because once they do, the burden
2 shifts to the housing provider.

3 At the same time, you're
4 dismantling one of the only low
5 conflict tools housing providers
6 have, non-renewal at the end of a
7 lease, and replacing it with vague
8 good cause standards that will be
9 argued case by case in court at
10 significant cost. Instead of
11 resolving issues efficiently, you're
12 inciting escalation. This is not a
13 housing policy, it's a dispute
14 generation framework.

15 What's most troubling is
16 how this bill is marketed as tenant
17 advocacy while the real benefactor
18 remains shrouded. Large
19 institutional investors can absorb
20 compliance expenses, convoluted
21 regulations, delays, and litigation.
22 To them, punitive penalties are the
23 cost of doing business. Small
24 housing providers, family operators,

1 do not have this luxury.

2 Safe, Healthy Homes carries
3 with it a palpable irony. You're
4 not siding with working class
5 Philadelphians; you're pricing them
6 out of ownership and reserving
7 housing investment for private
8 equity who are detached from tenant
9 wellbeing and undeterred by
10 municipal punishment. Every sad
11 story we have heard here is a
12 failure of the city and L&I to
13 enforce current regulations.

14 Let's get results not chase
15 headlines. This bill is well
16 intentioned, but it is structurally
17 flawed in almost every way. I urge
18 you to consider these words. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
21 so much for your comment. Please
22 state your name for the record and
23 proceed with your comment.

24 MS. OTTO: Yes. Brenda

1 Otto. Good afternoon, Chair
2 Gauthier and members of the
3 committee. My name is Brenda Otto.
4 My husband Paul and I own several
5 rental properties in Philadelphia.
6 We are the mom-and-pop landlords and
7 the local investors who provide the
8 backbone of this city's naturally
9 occurring affordable housing. We
10 view our tenants as value partners.
11 They look out for problems with the
12 property and notify us properly
13 regarding any issues. We cannot be
14 successful in this business without
15 them.

16 In turn, we are responsive
17 to any issues that affect their
18 tenancy. I believe that the two
19 housing bills before you will affect
20 our business in the following ways:
21 First, the extensive compliance
22 obligations with associated
23 penalties to cause great financial
24 harm to some small landlords such as

1 ourselves. Our profit margin is
2 much smaller than that of larger and
3 corporate landlords. Rent is not
4 pure profit. It is the lifeblood of
5 the building.

6 When a court orders 100
7 percent abatement over a paperwork
8 error or a minor non-safety
9 violation, it strips the landlord of
10 the exact funds needed to perform
11 the very maintenance the city claims
12 to prioritize.

13 Secondly, automatic rent
14 abatement promoted by these bills
15 could cripple our business as the
16 safety net of an impartial court
17 system is removed. Landlords as
18 well as tenants have a right to due
19 process. We view these bills as
20 punitive and over regulatory. While
21 we agree that every Philadelphian
22 deserves a safe place to live --

23 CHAIR GAUTHIER: I'm going
24 to have to ask that you wrap up your

1 comment.

2 MS. OTTO: Okay. The
3 current push to expand rent
4 abatement is economically reckless.
5 We ask that you consider the adverse
6 effects of these two bills on caring
7 and efficient landlords. Thank you
8 for your time.

9 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
10 so much. Please state your name for
11 the record and proceed.

12 MR. OSLIK: My name -- my
13 name is Avram Oslík. I own and
14 manage affordable rental properties
15 across North Philadelphia. And one
16 building I've owned since 2019, no
17 tenant pays more than \$625 a month.
18 I've not raised rent once, even as
19 taxes, insurance, and utilities have
20 all increased. The tenants in my
21 building are working families,
22 seniors, and people on fixed income.
23 I'm the person providing that
24 housing.

1 I'm not here to oppose the
2 safe housing, I'm here because Bill
3 250329 creates serious financial
4 consequences that have nothing to do
5 with the actual housing conditions.

6 Three concrete examples:

7 First, I hired a certified lead
8 inspector before a license renewal.
9 There is a test and error, not mine.
10 The corrected results came back
11 late. That single documentation
12 failure made an entire six unit
13 building ineligible for renewal.
14 The building was safe, the tenants
15 were safe. Under this bill, that
16 administration gap can expose the
17 entire building to rent abatement.

18 Second bill, 250329
19 requires a freshly issued
20 certificate of rental suitability
21 not just in new tenancies, but every
22 annual lease renewal. You miss that
23 window on the long-term tenant
24 renewal and you face abatement

1 exposure, not because anything
2 changed, not because the unit is
3 unsafe, because of an administrative
4 deadline that resets every year
5 indefinitely.

6 Third, a tenant's window is
7 damaged repeatedly by guests, not by
8 our negligence. We ordered a
9 quality replacement; lead time is
10 four to eight weeks. Under this
11 bill, that supply chain delay, while
12 we are actively making a repair, can
13 expose the entire building to
14 abatement. If a tenant stops paying
15 rent during any of this, the
16 eviction process takes six months or
17 longer. The financial exposure only
18 runs one direction. Meanwhile, cost
19 of materials, labor keeps rising --
20 keeps rising.

21 My margins on some units is
22 1- to \$200 a month. One month of a
23 building-wide abatement erases the
24 entire year of net income. The

1 landlords who survive that are
2 institutional investors. The ones
3 who leave are local operators
4 providing affordable housing in
5 working class neighborhoods.

6 Please amend this bill to
7 require actual and safe conditions
8 before abatement attaches.

9 Establish a cure period and limit
10 building-wide consequences
11 violations that affect the entire
12 building. Thank you.

13 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
14 so much for your comment. Will the
15 clerk please call the names of the
16 next few public commenters.

17 THE CLERK: Julie White,
18 Ugochukwu Opara, Naima Khan, Justin
19 Berry.

20 MR. OPARA: Good afternoon.
21 My name is Ugochukwu Opara. I am a
22 licensed realtor, licensed
23 contractor, certified property
24 manager who takes pride in being a

1 Philadelphia landlord. I currently
2 house about 26 families.

3 And I'm here to say that I
4 am not in opposition of these bills.
5 All of my properties are completely
6 renovated from the top to bottom
7 with my bare hands. And the only
8 issue I have with these bills is the
9 implementation of it.

10 Perfect example, I have a
11 property right now, it's a four unit
12 that I'm not able to get a rental
13 license for. Not because it wasn't
14 properly renovated, not because
15 there's something wrong with it, but
16 because the tenant knows how to
17 skirt around the rental license
18 process. If you call L&I and they
19 come out to give you a violation,
20 you now have to rectify the
21 violation before you can get the
22 rental license. All it does is
23 stall and makes it so that when I do
24 file the eviction, it makes it even

1 longer.

2 I have no problem with this
3 bill, but the only issue I have is
4 that it's one sided. There is no
5 penalty for the tenant. There is no
6 grace for true grace. I hear what
7 he's saying, but there's no actual
8 true grace when you put it into
9 practice. And I would like for
10 you-all to just take the time to
11 really understand that no one
12 benefits from ugly houses.

13 The landlord doesn't
14 benefit from ugly house because now
15 you can't collect rent, and the
16 tenants don't benefit from an ugly
17 house because it's unsafe and it's
18 uninhabitable. We are all on the
19 same page. And I really want
20 everyone to just sit down, Kumbaya,
21 because this can be figured out.
22 And there are other states and
23 municipalities that have rules and
24 regulations that fairly accommodate

1 not just the tenants, which is
2 what's happening here, but also take
3 into account the landlords'
4 operational expenses as well. That
5 is all I'm here to say. Thank you
6 for your time.

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
8 so much for your comment. Please
9 state your name for the record and
10 proceed with your comment.

11 MS. KHAN: Hi, my name's
12 Naima Khan. Good afternoon. I am a
13 resident of Philadelphia, a
14 homeowner for the last 15 years in
15 the Overbrook section of
16 Philadelphia. And I 100 percent
17 agree with Safe, Healthy Homes. I'm
18 in agreeance with it. I think it's
19 a wonderful thing, and I think that
20 we should move forward with it.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
23 for your comment. Please state your
24 name for the record and proceed with

1 your comment.

2 MS. WHITE: My name is
3 Julie White. I am a landlord in the
4 city of Philadelphia. I'm a part
5 owner of Tower Property Management.
6 We manage 469 properties in
7 Philadelphia and Chester. We have
8 no mold situations right now. We
9 have no violations on a single
10 property right now, and I represent
11 about 50 landlords, and I should be
12 here saying, yes, this all has to
13 stop.

14 But this is the reason I'm
15 in business, because a person with a
16 single home who's never been a
17 landlord cannot possibly figure out
18 how to be one on their own anymore.
19 And I started when I was 26 years
20 old. I bought my grandmother's
21 illegal duplex, had to get it
22 legalized, had to go to City Hall,
23 had to do all those things back in
24 the day. And I've been doing things

1 legitimately ever since.

2 I understand people have
3 issues. They come to me to rent our
4 properties and they tell me why, my
5 ceiling fell in. My landlord won't
6 fix things. My -- you know, you're
7 actually keeping me in business by
8 passing these bills and laws.

9 However, I will tell you the taxes
10 went up. No landlord can get a
11 rental license without paying the
12 real estate taxes by not having
13 appropriate lead certifications.

14 And anybody that I
15 represent in the city as their
16 property manager, we don't even fool
17 with people like that. We will not
18 take their business on. I have a
19 lawyer that handles the evictions in
20 the city of Philadelphia because I
21 can't, it's too complicated. I can
22 do them in Chester and evict a
23 tenant in a year -- in a month and a
24 half. Now, every tenant that needs

1 rental assistance, I fill out
2 paperwork to get them that
3 assistance. It's a cooperative
4 effort.

5 So to make these laws where
6 no retaliation, if you're not paying
7 your rent and you're destroying the
8 property, you should not have your
9 lease renewed. If you have a
10 problem with that, I don't really
11 care. Like that's just -- that's
12 not appropriate at any time.

13 So I work with legitimate
14 landlords that pay their taxes, that
15 correct their properties because I
16 don't want endless phone calls for
17 maintenance. Think this is too
18 much. It has to be like reigned in.
19 That's all I have.

20 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
21 so much for your comment.

22 MS. WHITE: Thanks.

23 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
24 state your name for the record and

1 proceed with your comment.

2 MR. JUSTIN: How you doing?

3 My name is Justin. Thank you,
4 Councilmember Curtis. Thank you,
5 Jamie, bill sponsor, Councilmember
6 Nicolas O'Rourke, and the rest of
7 Council. My name is Justin. I'm a
8 tenant living in Philadelphia. I
9 have lived through terrible
10 conditions such as mold, leaks; you
11 know, leaks that started as simple
12 leaks and instantly got worse and
13 caused financial strains on myself
14 and my family.

15 For this reason and many,
16 many more, that two minutes does not
17 give me time to express. For this
18 reason, I urgently urge all
19 Councilmembers to vote yes and
20 support Safe, Healthy Homes. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
23 for your comment. Will the clerk
24 please call the next few public

1 commenters.

2 THE CLERK: Coretta Martin,
3 Zena Williams, Jamille Price, Carlos
4 Sibbu Sr.

5 MS. MARTIN: Hello. My
6 name is Coretta Martin. Thank you
7 so much for having me. I appreciate
8 this. I must be really brief. My
9 situation is that I moved into my
10 apartment in September. We had a
11 small electrical fire around
12 December.

13 I actually had to move,
14 vacate the premises because my
15 landlord would not fix the property,
16 stating that it was some issues with
17 insurance-wise. My thing is there
18 was no electricity in the apartment,
19 no heat in the apartment. My
20 daughter lost her ESA animal, her
21 animal for her services due to there
22 not being any heat, because we
23 couldn't take her where we were
24 living at. So we were at my

1 sister's for -- from December to
2 February when I first moved out,
3 when I moved out, broke my lease and
4 was able to move.

5 Those are not conditions
6 that somebody should have to live
7 in. I don't care how old you are,
8 how young you are, what the
9 situation is. I've been a renter in
10 Philadelphia for some time and
11 unfortunately, I have not had any
12 good experiences.

13 My first rental apartment,
14 my son contracted lead poisoning.
15 He was only one and a half to two
16 years old at that time. And the
17 city of Philadelphia helped through
18 a program, through CHOP, to get that
19 property renovated -- not renovated,
20 but cleaned. It wasn't due to
21 anything that the landlord did. It
22 was through the city of Philadelphia
23 and CHOP. So this legislation
24 definitely needs to be passed.

1 Children need to have a
2 safe, healthy home. Elderly need to
3 have a safe, healthy home. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
6 so much for your comment. Please
7 state your name for the record and
8 proceed with your comment.

9 MR. SIBU: Good afternoon,
10 everyone. My name is Carlos Sibü,
11 Sr. Good afternoon, Council and
12 residence of Philadelphia. For the
13 record, first thing I want to state
14 is I'm not here to praise nor
15 condemn landlord to developers. I'm
16 here to stand up with all who
17 support tenants' rights, safeties,
18 freedom.

19 Now, we have all kind of
20 numbers for bills. But the bill I'm
21 standing up for today is with the
22 unknown bill recognition. It's
23 called P-E-O-P-L-E. See, that's
24 what counts, the people. All this

1 other stuff, no. Now, what's going
2 on is arguments over this, that and
3 the other. Why do we have to argue
4 over what's right? It just doesn't
5 make any sense.

6 You know that if something
7 is wrong, that the simplicity of it
8 all, you'll call and tell your
9 landlord or developer, "Hey, there's
10 a problem." They respond back to
11 you. But go beyond responding.
12 Stop doing what's allowed and do
13 what's right.

14 See, it makes a difference.
15 I don't need you to respond to
16 things. Now, even in my own current
17 life, I don't have problems where I
18 live, but I'm fighting right now
19 with my son. His landlord is an
20 incredible person. I'll just say it
21 that way, violations as unreported
22 just yet. But she's going to find
23 out. This gas leak, gas company
24 came out because I happened to go by

1 my son's house and said I smelled
2 something. Gas company came out and
3 said, Hey, here's a gas leak. They
4 found two gas leaks. So there are
5 issues.

6 Now, it's not an individual
7 thing. You can't just point the
8 finger at one person, say it's them.
9 You can't point the finger at a
10 tenant and say it's them. It's both
11 sides that need to work with each
12 other and make these things right.

13 Now, there's nothing wrong
14 with having laws to protect both
15 sides. One doesn't get to the point
16 of -- without the other. So these
17 things aren't necessary. In 1969,
18 and somebody quoted earlier and I
19 was glad to hear it, but in 1969,
20 Martin Luther King led a protest
21 that spoke about safety, housing and
22 economics.

23 CHAIR GAUTHIER: I'm sorry,
24 I'm going to have to ask you to

1 wrap.

2 MR. SIBU: Okay. I
3 certainly will. Thank you. Now,
4 this was known as the People's Poor
5 Campaign. And over six decades
6 we're still fighting for the same
7 thing: safety, housing and
8 economics. Something going on. We
9 didn't learn from history, we
10 repeated it.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
12 for your comment. Thank you
13 everyone. Good afternoon. Please
14 state your name for the record and
15 proceed with your comment.

16 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, I'm Zena
17 Williams. I am a tenant and I've
18 lived through a horrific situation.
19 This is one of the reasons why this
20 bill needs to be passed. We need to
21 live in safe housing. Thank you.

22 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
23 for your comment. Will the clerk
24 please call the names of the next

1 few public commenters.

2 THE CLERK: Jamille Price,
3 Debbie Rowe, Jackie Ross, Richard
4 Moore.

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Good
6 afternoon. Please state your name
7 for the record and proceed with your
8 comment.

9 MR. PRICE: Good afternoon,
10 Councilmembers. My name is Jamille
11 Price. I'm here representing a
12 generation tired of being heard
13 without seeing action. We are
14 witnessing economic warfare where
15 luxury boxes are built over the
16 families who built these blocks
17 while developers sit on hundreds of
18 millions of unpaid taxes.

19 This manufactured scarcity
20 is creating a housing crisis that
21 prices us out of our own future and
22 erases our history. Exemplified by
23 the loss of the Philadelphia Stars
24 Memorial, Councilwoman Gauthier,

1 this is your district.

2 How can you let Black
3 excellence and resilience be
4 exploited and removed for profits?
5 We are no longer asking for a seat
6 at the table. We are building our
7 own.

8 Along with this current
9 bill, I demand mandatory permanent
10 affordability and the Community Land
11 Trust Priority Act to turn the land
12 back over to the people.

13 By 2031, my generation will
14 be the most informed voting block
15 the city has seen. If you continue
16 to treat our heritage as an obstacle
17 to profit and apartments many cannot
18 afford, we will become the obstacle
19 to your reelection. Thank you.

20 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
21 for being here. As an FYI, three
22 years ago I did -- I made a law to
23 give community land trusts
24 preferential treatment in the city's

1 Land Bank process. So definitely
2 we're on the same page there.
3 You're welcome to come to my office
4 and we will talk further with you.
5 Thanks so much. Please state your
6 name for the record and proceed with
7 your comment.

8 MR. MOORE: Good afternoon,
9 members of City Council. My name is
10 Richard Moore. I'm a housing
11 provider and been doing so for the
12 last 45 years. I don't call myself
13 a landlord. I don't -- I think
14 that's archaic, medieval,
15 disgusting. I call myself a
16 property provider. My tenants are
17 not tenants, they are residents of
18 the buildings. So that's the way I
19 refer to them.

20 A lot of good suggestions
21 have gone back and forth here today,
22 but there's one thing I just haven't
23 heard. Why isn't there a
24 Philadelphia only lease agreement?

1 A lot of these issues could be
2 covered if there was a Philadelphia
3 only lease agreement. I mean, it's
4 a simple idea. I just don't know
5 why it can't be enacted. That's all
6 I have to say.

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
8 so much. And happy to talk further
9 or you can send information to our
10 offices about what that would
11 entail.

12 MR. MOORE: Thank you.

13 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
14 very much. Please state your name
15 for the record and proceed with your
16 comment.

17 Good afternoon.

18 MS. ROWE: Me?

19 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Yes.

20 MS. ROWE: Oh, okay. My
21 name is Debbie Rowe, and I am a
22 small business landlord, and I'm a
23 good landlord. You know, I wouldn't
24 want anyone to live in a property

1 that I would not live in. And so, I
2 maintain my property. I obey by the
3 laws, the lead laws, and then I pass
4 the lead laws in order to get my
5 license. But my problem is, you
6 know, tenants. I think you guys
7 should hold the tenants accountable
8 as well.

9 There's no laws for the
10 tenants. You know, they can come in
11 from work, construction work and
12 just leave their things and
13 accumulate dust, don't clean up, and
14 then you are holding me accountable
15 for something that they should be,
16 you know, cleaning up after their
17 stuff. So that's what I don't
18 understand. I think that the laws
19 that you have for healthy homes may
20 be good, but I think you need to
21 incorporate, you know, putting the
22 tenants in there and holding them
23 accountable as well.

24 Because these tenants, they

1 know the laws and they manipulate
2 the laws to be in their favor. You
3 know, they do things, they'll tear
4 up your property, call L&I and say,
5 "Hey, you know, she doesn't --" I
6 come in, I repair those, and they
7 know, they tear it up again and here
8 come L&I again, you know.

9 And then, you know, next
10 thing they're saying, Well, we don't
11 have to pay rent because if we keep
12 tearing the place up, we don't have
13 to pay rent. I think it's unfair to
14 put the burden on landlords. A lot
15 of burdens are on landlords because,
16 you know, you have these investors
17 come in and they get these 10-year
18 tax free -- you know, tax free.
19 They don't have to pay taxes for 10
20 years because they built the
21 property.

22 And I think that's unfair
23 because then you put that burden on
24 landlord. You know, you're putting

1 too much burdens on the landlord in
2 order to have housing for your
3 constituents. It makes no sense. I
4 mean, you need to come around and if
5 you want them to have affordable
6 housing, build sum.

7 CHIEF GAUTHIER: I'm going
8 to have to ask you to wrap up your
9 comment. Also, there's nothing in
10 these bills that would protect that
11 type of behavior from tenants, but I
12 know that our colleague is --

13 MS. ROWE: Well, they -- my
14 tenant called L&I on me. They
15 called L&I on me. They destroyed my
16 property, put holes in the wall,
17 tore my house up, and L&I said I had
18 to get something fixed within 30
19 days. You know, I got to fix it
20 within a week. So you -- so the
21 tenants aren't being held
22 accountable for. If you tear it up,
23 you should be held accountable for
24 it. That's why.

1 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
2 so much. Thank you for your comment
3 today. Our Vice Chair Rue Landau is
4 very well versed in this aspect of
5 the law and is willing to talk to
6 you further after the hearing.

7 Thank you so much. Please
8 state your name for the record and
9 proceed with your comment.

10 MS. ROSS: Good afternoon.
11 My name is Jacqueline Ross. I want
12 to thank you Council for taking this
13 testimony today. I am a
14 Neighborhood Restorations tenant and
15 have rented for over 18 years. With
16 that being said, my carpet been
17 there too for 18 years. Have not
18 been moved yet. Okay. But this is
19 -- this is what I guess tenants
20 supposed to do. Okay. I am -- I am
21 calling on the City Council to vote
22 in favor of the Safe, Healthy Homes
23 law to protect tenants like myself
24 and others.

1 I'm ongoing through an
2 eviction currently and wish I had
3 these protections to help guide me
4 through this difficult, overwhelming
5 time I'm going through. Me and my
6 family resort to help with eviction
7 or overburden, and I am struggling
8 to find assistance.

9 Please vote in the favor of
10 the Safe, Healthy Homes to ensure
11 renters get the help they deserve.
12 That goes to these tenants. To the
13 landlords --

14 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
15 so much for your comment.

16 MS. ROSS: To the landlord
17 -- to the landlords, how -- can I
18 ask you a question? I said I've
19 been there for 18 years, so has the
20 carpet. I asked my landlord several
21 times to -- can they move it? They
22 told me no.

23 So how long does a carpet
24 supposed to stay in the unit before

1 they, you know, replace it? Because
2 now I got asthma because of that.
3 Now, I got to wear this retarded
4 mask and can't breathe half of the
5 time. So now what, landlord? What
6 do I do as a tenant? Talk to me.
7 What do I do?

8 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
9 so much for your comment. I would
10 like to -- thank you. I would like
11 to recognize the presence of
12 Councilmember Cindy Bass.

13 Will the clerk please call
14 the names of the next few public
15 commenters?

16 THE CLERK: Katie Glick,
17 Eli Gobe, Levi Toback, Vanessa
18 Raymond-Garcia, Dawn Sanders, Tyrick
19 Murray.

20 MS. GLICK: Hello. My name
21 is Katie Glick. I want to thank all
22 the tenants who have commented
23 today. I'm a Philadelphia nurse,
24 and I'm now a medical student at

1 Drexel. I decided to pursue
2 medicine because I want to help keep
3 Philadelphians healthy. I'm here
4 today because I want to talk about
5 the public health issues that come
6 with living in substandard housing.

7 The medical community
8 recognizes poor housing as a
9 significant social determinant of
10 health, even after controlling for
11 other determinants such as income
12 and smoking. Poor housing
13 conditions are associated with a
14 variety of chronic health issues,
15 including asthma, respiratory
16 infections, cardiovascular disease,
17 lead poisoning, injuries, and
18 worsened mental health.

19 One landlord earlier talked
20 about how her heat was up for two
21 weeks this winter. I wonder how she
22 would have felt about that timeline
23 knowing that she was in an increased
24 risk of heart attacks due to that

1 cold.

2 Here in Philly, we know the
3 violations associated with negative
4 health outcomes are more likely to
5 affect low-income Black communities
6 with North, Southwest and West
7 Philly being hit hardest. Seventy-
8 three percent of hazardous living
9 conditions affecting health and
10 safety were clustered in areas of
11 higher-than-average poverty in the
12 city.

13 And 66 percent were
14 clustered in predominantly Black
15 neighborhoods. Rental advocates
16 have stated that renters are
17 hesitant to report code violations
18 for fear of retaliation or fear that
19 their home may be deemed unsafe and
20 that they'd need to relocate. This
21 leads to renters in substandard
22 housing only reporting once their
23 landlords have already filed their
24 evictions.

1 We heard someone say
2 earlier that renters should protect
3 themselves, but landlords have the
4 power in this relationship. Housing
5 is a basic physiological need, and
6 more than that, it is a basic human
7 right. Philadelphians deserve to be
8 healthy.

9 Being safely housed is
10 instrumental in that goal. I urge
11 everyone on this Committee today to
12 vote to move the Safe and Healthy
13 Homes Act forward to a full vote in
14 Council. Renters should not have to
15 wait one more day for these
16 protections. Thank you for your
17 time.

18 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
19 you very much. Can the next person
20 please state your name? State your
21 name for the record. Thank you.

22 MS. SANDERS: Hi. My name
23 is Sonya Sanders. I wanted to thank
24 Nicolas O'Rourke, Jamie Gauthier and

1 Rue Landau for your help. I am a --
2 I have -- I'm a president of Philly
3 Thrive, and I'm also a tenant that
4 has been abused. I'm recognizing
5 today that I've been abused by
6 landlords.

7 Now, I have been -- had the
8 blessing of having plenty of
9 landlords, but I have one good
10 landlord that I have today. And I'm
11 not -- I'm not opposing against the
12 good landlord. We're not here for
13 that. If you're doing your job, we
14 -- kudos to you. We applaud that.
15 We applaud that. But for the
16 landlord here or anywhere else in
17 Philadelphia that's not doing that
18 job, shame on you, because you're
19 causing bad health. You are taking
20 our health and you are abusing our
21 health. You are leaving people.

22 Anybody would say you're
23 killing us in these homes. And it's
24 not fair. It is not fair. I will

1 not stand for it. My people will
2 not stand for it. My community will
3 not stand for it. They will -- my
4 organization will not stand for it.
5 It has to stop. I commend Nicolas
6 O'Rourke. He gives a savior to us.
7 He gave us a voice. You understand?
8 We will not be abused any longer.

9 We still have to go home in
10 our homes and still see roaches
11 crawling. When we call our
12 landlords, they do nothing. They do
13 nothing. You call after the call,
14 you go down and you go down and you
15 try to fight. You tell them what
16 you need. They say you ain't doing
17 enough. How much more can we do?
18 That's why we're here today to say
19 we will not stand for it any longer.
20 Any longer. Bad landlords you are
21 going to stop abusing us. We have a
22 right. We have rights.

23 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
24 you. Can the next person please

1 state your name for the record and
2 proceed with your testimony?

3 MR. MURRAY: Yeah, I've
4 been told I can go next. My name is
5 Tyrick Murray. I'm a resident of
6 the Fern Rock and Olney area. Kind
7 of like right on the median. And I
8 kind of want to talk about this from
9 a public safety standpoint. I hear
10 a lot of people on both sides
11 talking about issues within the
12 home. I did a quick Google today
13 before getting here. I looked up to
14 see how many apartment fires
15 happened last year. And it didn't
16 actually have a number. I actually
17 looked at the totality of
18 Philadelphia. It couldn't give me a
19 number until I zoomed in and that
20 number was over 100,000.

21 So a lot of people who
22 should be here to talk cannot talk
23 because they probably are not alive
24 anymore, right? So there's a lot of

1 issues I have. I'm a marketing and
2 management person.

3 I heard a lot of people
4 here talk about business and how
5 it's not profitable to have this,
6 I'm going to say be a better
7 business person. All right? Right.
8 If you can't operate a business
9 without keeping your tenants alive,
10 healthy without getting illnesses,
11 you should not have that business.

12 I don't care if you are a
13 millionaire or I have a hundred
14 thousand dollars salary, you should
15 not have that business at the cost
16 of another person's life. I
17 apologize. I'm just going to be
18 blunt with you. I'm trying to think
19 if there was anything else to say.
20 Oh, yeah, the bill. You-all got to
21 read the bill. I've heard so many
22 people gaslight this bill, bring up
23 things that are not in it. They
24 talking about how it allowed tenants

1 to abuse them. It does not allow
2 that. Retaliation is talking about
3 retaliation in the form of a
4 retaliation against protection of
5 themselves.

6 As the last person stated,
7 she was talking about abuse.

8 Retaliation -- let me collect my
9 words. Let me collect my words. If
10 I'm being abused and I retaliate
11 against that abuse as a tenant, for
12 you to retaliate against that is
13 further abuse. You are the
14 oppressor in that situation and you
15 are continuing your oppression when
16 I'm trying to end that. That should
17 be something criminal. But we're
18 not even saying that. All right?

19 So just to end it, I
20 believe this bill should be passed
21 and it should have been passed a
22 while ago. If you have complaints,
23 bring up something specific. If
24 you're going to talk about L&I,

1 bring up something specific from
2 L&I. Otherwise, why are we here?

3 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Please
4 state your name and proceed with
5 your testimony.

6 MR. GABAY: Good afternoon
7 to everyone. My name is Eli Gabay.
8 I'm an attorney in the city and
9 county of Philadelphia for 43 years.
10 I'm also the recipient of the Pro
11 Bono Award on behalf of tenants in
12 the Philadelphia Housing Authority
13 in 2010.

14 I'm here on behalf of
15 responsible landlords and
16 responsible tenants. I believe that
17 we've -- one of the greatest assets
18 the city has are landlords who are
19 trying their best and doing their
20 best. And if the lives of tenants
21 are extremely important, obviously
22 their living conditions, et cetera.

23 However, I feel that this
24 bill is premature. It's premature

1 in its presentation. It needs to be
2 reviewed on both sides as you've
3 heard today. If anything, the bill
4 should not be used as a sword by
5 either side, but rather as a shield,
6 but rather in a responsible manner.

7 We are not here to repeat
8 the attempt in Pittsburgh, which was
9 found -- which the Supreme Court of
10 Pennsylvania found unconstitutional.
11 Let's not waste our time. I think
12 we need more time to sit down on
13 both sides and to make sure that
14 everyone is safe and everyone is
15 heard.

16 And that may take time, but
17 that time will be well spent because
18 we will not repeat the mistakes of
19 places like Pottstown, and as I
20 said, Pittsburgh, which then had
21 constitutional challenges that went
22 up to the Supreme Court, and it went
23 all the way down, and we are going
24 to be here in three years back.

1 Let's make a difference.
2 And that difference can only be made
3 by both sides sitting down and
4 communicating. Every side here has
5 a valid point -- valid points, and
6 the safety of all of us should be
7 the paramount concern. Thank you so
8 much.

9 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
10 so much for your comment. Please
11 state your name for the record and
12 proceed with your comment.

13 MS. SANDERS: Hello. How
14 you-all doing today? I'm a little
15 nervous. My name is Dawn Sanders.
16 I'm here today because my problem's
17 been going on right before the
18 pandemic.

19 CHAIR GAUTHIER: I'm sorry,
20 can you get a little closer to the
21 microphone? Thank you.

22 MS. SANDERS: Sure.

23 My problem's been going on
24 since the pandemic. I asked my

1 landlord through the text messages,
2 mail, emails, everything, about
3 coming and fixing things before it
4 escalated up until today. I'm on my
5 third gas shut off due to the third
6 gas leak. Okay.

7 My son got sick from
8 September all the way up until today
9 because of the mold and everything
10 that's going on with the house.
11 I've been in the home 12 years. He
12 had yet come and really fixed
13 anything. Everything was like --
14 everything is what I'm doing now.
15 Camouflage in the holes. So when my
16 family come over, they don't see it.
17 I don't even have outside people
18 come over no more.

19 Because in 2025 -- in July
20 of 2025, a friend got hurt when the
21 ceiling fell in the house. He said,
22 I'm suing you. Because he assumed I
23 owned the house. I said no. And I
24 had to beg him not to sue because I

1 have nowhere to go. But my landlord
2 has yet came out and fixed anything.

3 I had to beg a neighbor
4 that's a plumber to fix the pipe
5 just so we could get the gas cut
6 back on the last time back in June.
7 This time now we have no hot water.
8 We cannot use the stove. I am
9 living with holes in my floor. My
10 little grandchildren can't come over
11 because I got to make sure they
12 don't step on one of the rugs where
13 I got a plank down to cover the hole
14 and get hurt.

15 Only thing I'm saying is
16 with the landlords that don't want
17 to do right, why you-all in this
18 field? With the landlords that just
19 want to collect money --

20 CHAIR GAUTHIER: And I'm so
21 sorry. I am going to have to ask
22 you to wrap up your comment, but I
23 also wanted to offer that if you --
24 if this is something that you

1 currently need assistance with, many
2 of our offices are willing to talk
3 to you one-on-one. But maybe take a
4 few seconds and wrap your comment
5 up.

6 MS. SANDERS: I need this
7 bill to pass. Because the landlords
8 need to be held accountable, for the
9 ones that's not doing anything with
10 their tenants, with their homes, to
11 keep blaming the tenants. When you
12 already moving into a development
13 that's already been 40, 50 years
14 old, it doesn't make any sense if we
15 don't -- nothing's been updated.
16 This bill needs to pass. We need
17 this bill to pass for us.

18 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you.
19 Thank you for your comment today.
20 Please state your name for the
21 record and proceed with your
22 comment.

23 MS. RAYMOND-GARCIA:
24 Vanessa Raymond-Garcia. Good

1 afternoon, Housing Committee Chair
2 Gauthier, Vice Chair Landau, and all
3 Councilmembers, and thank you for
4 the opportunity to speak today. My
5 name is Vanessa Raymond-Garcia. I
6 come representing Regional Housing
7 Legal Services as their senior
8 policy analyst, and I'm here to
9 voice support for Bills 250329 and
10 250330.

11 RHLS represents nonprofits
12 that develop affordable housing and
13 they are landlords that often want a
14 level playing field for their
15 tenants. Together these bills
16 represent some of the most
17 meaningful steps Philadelphia has
18 taken to ensure safe, stable, and
19 dignified housing for everyone in
20 our city.

21 Bill 250329 addresses a
22 longstanding problem. Too many
23 landlords have been allowed to
24 collect rent while operating without

1 valid licenses or while leaving
2 serious code violations uncorrected.
3 This bill finally gives those rules
4 teeth. It requires landlords to fix
5 outstanding violations before
6 renewing a rental license, prevents
7 rent collection during periods of
8 non-compliance and mandates direct
9 notification to tenants when a
10 license expires or a property is
11 unsafe. It also creates a critical
12 proactive inspection program.

13 This prevention-based
14 approach would enable the city to
15 catch dangerous and unhealthy
16 conditions early before they can
17 harm occupants or cause the property
18 to become blighted. Bill 250330
19 builds on that foundation by
20 strengthening the rights and
21 protections tenants need to live
22 without fear. It expands
23 prohibitions on retaliation, defines
24 and outlaws landlord harassment and

1 establishes a stronger good cause
2 standard for non-renewal.

3 These are important
4 protections, especially for renters
5 who have historically been pushed
6 out simply for asserting their
7 rights or requesting basic repairs.

8 Finally, the bill
9 strengthens the implied warranty of
10 habitability, providing clear
11 pathways for rent abatement when
12 landlords ignore serious repair
13 issues. This ensures tenants aren't
14 paying full rent for unsafe or
15 uninhabitable homes, things that are
16 too often not honored in practice.

17 Thank you Councilmember
18 O'Rourke for your leadership on this
19 issue. And we urge this committee
20 to pass Ordinances 250329 and
21 250330.

22 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
23 for your comment and for your work.
24 Please state your name for the

1 record and proceed with your
2 comment.

3 DR. TOBACK: My name is
4 Dr. Levi Toback. I'm a psychology
5 postdoctoral fellow. I live and
6 work in the city of Philadelphia.
7 And I'm here to speak to the context
8 of these bills and the impact that
9 they have on community members,
10 particularly the patients and
11 families that I serve. And I'm here
12 to advocate for those patients,
13 those families, these local
14 communities. And that includes
15 families who have landlords,
16 includes families who are renters.

17 I have worked both on
18 inpatient and outpatient side of the
19 clinic and worked with a number of
20 patients who have had significant
21 housing problems, and how
22 devastating that is. Not only for
23 physical health, but also for mental
24 health. There are many otherwise

1 stable people who lose access to
2 housing that fall into a cycle of
3 mental health that is incredibly
4 difficult to escape.

5 I hope, and I do believe
6 that these bills will help remediate
7 that problem at a large system
8 level. I understand that this is a
9 complex issue and there are many
10 stakeholders here. And not a single
11 person here, I believe, wants
12 housing to be less safe, as others
13 have mentioned. The question is how
14 best to do that. And it's a
15 difficult task ahead of you. I
16 appreciate you trying to do
17 something about it.

18 I would simply ask again,
19 in the context of thinking about
20 power dynamics and people who most
21 need this bill, and in order to
22 improve the quality of life of the
23 most amount of people and people who
24 are most vulnerable, that we

1 consider, if we do make any changes
2 to this bill, that we consider that
3 the consequences of people who have
4 less power have devastating
5 consequences when they lose housing
6 compared to people who have greater
7 wealth and affordability or access
8 to affordability, who will have
9 comparatively less consequences.

10 So I just wanted to provide
11 that context and thank you again for
12 attempting to address this issue.

13 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
14 so much for your comment. Will the
15 clerk please call the names of the
16 next few public commenters.

17 THE CLERK: Seneca Grant,
18 Tyrone Jones, Amanda Gleason-Mack.

19 MS. GRANT: Good afternoon.
20 My name is Seneca Grant, and I'd
21 like to thank you Madam Chair and
22 the rest of the Housing Committee.
23 And of course, Mr. O'Rourke, our
24 sponsor. We are forever indebted

1 for your sponsorship. You know, my
2 brain is so foggy right now from all
3 the nonsense that's been spewed up
4 here today. From small landlords to
5 corporate landlords to corporate
6 lobbyists.

7 If you have a problem with
8 anything that we're proposing, then
9 you are in the wrong business,
10 period, full stop. There's nothing
11 -- there's nothing really hard about
12 this, and we're asking for basic
13 protections. Things that should
14 already be on the books. Things
15 that should already be on the books.
16 I am in a building that was run by
17 Odin Properties, now it's under
18 Cross Country Management, and
19 they're even worse than Odin was.
20 I've had no heat for three years.

21 I have two tenants here
22 from my building that are with me
23 that have also been without heat for
24 the same amount of time or longer.

1 And it's unacceptable. I paid my
2 rent last week under advisement of
3 my lawyer because I don't want to
4 get evicted. That's nonsense.
5 That's nonsense.

6 So I'm not really here to
7 talk to the Housing Committee,
8 because we've already done this and
9 we appreciate you guys. Thank you
10 very much for your support. This is
11 to you slumlords and lobbyists.
12 You-all need to stop. You should be
13 ashamed of yourselves. You should
14 be ashamed of yourselves.

15 And I don't want to hear
16 the small -- I don't want to hear
17 the small landlord argument because
18 my late uncle, if he was here today,
19 if he was alive and here today, he
20 would be here fighting on behalf of
21 me and the rest of us. He was a
22 small landlord. I used to work with
23 him on the weekends and over the
24 summer keeping his books and helping

1 with repairs. Landlords who do the
2 right thing by their tenants don't
3 have a problem with stuff like this.
4 They don't have a problem with stuff
5 like this. I yield back. Thank
6 you, Madam Chair.

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
8 so much for your comment. Please
9 state your name for the record and
10 proceed with your comment.

11 MS. GLEASON-MACK: Good
12 afternoon. My name is Amanda
13 Gleason-Mack. I am a real estate
14 associate broker, a property manager
15 and a professional housing provider
16 in the city of Philadelphia and
17 Chester.

18 I am here today because as
19 I've stated previous times and many
20 professional housing providers have
21 stated, this law does nothing to
22 create safe homes or healthy homes
23 for the residents of Philadelphia.
24 I do encourage a very long, well

1 thought out inspection period. I
2 encourage that thoroughly.

3 When I work in other
4 municipalities, there's a big
5 inspection. You get all the
6 information out of the way and you
7 find out what's wrong before the
8 tenant moves in. You find out
9 what's wrong every year. As a
10 professional housing provider, I
11 enter my properties four times a
12 year.

13 I don't rely on my tenants
14 to tell me if there's something
15 wrong. I come and I find out for
16 myself. I do the responsible
17 things. But this paperwork burden,
18 these additional complications to
19 paperwork will just slow my business
20 and make it more difficult for
21 professional housing providers to
22 stay in the city of Philadelphia.
23 There is already a process for an
24 L&I violation. There is already a

1

2 process that requires that a tenant
3 -- a landlord cannot renew their
4 license if there's an open
5 violation. There is already a way
6 to legally withhold rent if there's
7 a repair issue. There is already
8 ways to delay eviction due to repair
9 issues or if something that the
10 landlord is doing wrong.

11 I don't see any way that
12 this bill helps any of that. It
13 just makes it more confusing and
14 more difficult. These bills
15 complicate an already confusing
16 process and they do nothing to help
17 these tenants who are living in
18 homes for three years without rent.
19 That's a problem. That house should
20 have been shut down. There's
21 already a process for that. Let's
22 fix what's broken instead of adding
23 to it. Thank you for your time.

24 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you

1

2 for your comment. Good afternoon.

3 Please state your name for the

4 record and proceed with your

5 comment.

6 MR. JONES: Hi, good

7 afternoon. My name is Tyrone. I am

8 from Hartranft and also I'm a tenant

9 in the 19122. And I used to be in

10 the 19124. And I have been through

11 a lot of things that people have

12 already said between living with the

13 roaches and neglecting like tenant

14 -- like work order requests, which

15 was -- which led to a ceiling

16 falling on my -- on my friend's

17 head, and what's caused permanent

18 nerve damage. That's not -- that's

19 not -- that's not a definition of a

20 safe home.

21 A safe -- a healthy home do

22 not have -- you don't have -- do not

23 have -- do not mean you get woken up

24 by the scratches of a rodent.

1

2 Healthy home don't mean to have
3 roaches or anything among those
4 things. So what I'm here to just
5 plea to you guys is just, vote yes
6 for the Safe and Healthy Homes.

7 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
8 so much for your comment.

9 MR. JONES: Thank you.

10 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Will the
11 clerk please call the names of the
12 next few public commenters.

13 THE CLERK: There are no
14 more names on the public comment
15 list. Is there anyone else here
16 that wishes to testify on the bill?
17 Okay. Please come forward.

18 MS. VONA: I don't
19 understand what happened because I
20 put my testimony in through email
21 with Mary Harris three times. So I
22 don't know why my name is --

23 CHAIR GAUTHIER: My
24 apologies. Please state your name

1
2 for the record and proceed with your
3 comment.

4 MS. VONA: Okay. My name
5 is Anna Maria Vona. I am privileged
6 to be a landlord in Philadelphia
7 because I treat my tenants as
8 residents. The minute something
9 happens, the minute their heat is
10 not -- they say they don't have heat
11 or air conditioning, a phone call
12 initiated the very same day. So
13 what I'm testifying about is this
14 bill punishes good landlords. Yes,
15 are there tons of slumlords out
16 there? Yes, absolutely. We don't
17 want -- they need to be punished.
18 They need to have -- the laws need
19 to be here, and that's what this law
20 is; to punish slumlords. But the
21 majority of the people who have
22 testified today who are landlords,
23 we wouldn't be here if we were
24 slumlords.

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We are in favor of this bill. However, there's a lot of amendments that are unfair to landlords, namely weaponizing L&I. And I have a story to share. We're all here today because we comply with the rules, we treat tenants respectfully and lawfully because the repercussions are too great here in Philadelphia to act in any other manner.

But more importantly, all of us here, even without these pernicious laws, we do treat tenants fairly, equitably and respectfully. The laws proposed here today are to severely punish landlords who do not live by the rules, and the tenants win because of it. They win really big. And that shouldn't be.

The law that concerns me the most is allowing tenants to weaponize L&I against us, the people

1

2 who fulfill a very personal
3 obligation, the sanctity of a home
4 that people can call their own even
5 if it is for a short period of time.
6 And even if they do not own it. Let
7 me share a story with you that
8 should shake you to your bones.

9

My family and I were
10 victimized and terrorized by a
11 fearlessly intrepid tenant who did
12 everything in her power to extort
13 money and inflict anguish against
14 us. Started four years ago. And
15 please, I have to finish, this is a
16 very important story.

17

CHAIR GAUTHIER: I'm going
18 to ask you to take, you know, the
19 next 20 seconds or so.

20

MS. VONA: I will.

21

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
22 summarize your testimony and we'll
23 move on.

24

MS. VONA: She moved into a

1
2 three-bedroom, two bath, \$3,500
3 apartment on the entire second floor
4 of a historic dairy building. She
5 even got a free parking spot. At
6 one point, we had an electrical
7 inspection. We gave her six hours
8 notice. She was furious that we
9 gave her six hours notice and not
10 24.

11 She went to L&I in person
12 demanding that our rental license be
13 revoked. We were in possession of
14 an active rental license that had
15 been consecutively renewed for five
16 years. We had no violation.

17 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Please
18 wrap up your comment.

19 MS. VONA: Okay. Thank you
20 so much. She sued -- she's still
21 suing the city of Philadelphia, L&I,
22 the DBA, all because she was allowed
23 to get a rental license revoked for
24 absolutely no reason with no

1

2 violation.

3

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
for your comment today. And you can
also submit your written testimony.
We'll take a look at it. Thank you
so much. Please state your name for
the record and proceed with your
comment.

10

MS. BROWN: Hi, my name is
Patricia Brown. I also live in an
old apartment building, but it's now
Cross Country. This is my problem.
I've been in that unit without no
heat for two years. The rent is
also paid. You have people smoking
crack in the stairwells, doing all
kinds of stuff.

19

And then on top of that, my
thing is with the landlords, you do
patch up work, work that you know
that's already needs to be done.
You go in there and patch it up so
we can be passed and get this free

24

1

2 money. That's not cool either. And
3 then on top of that, I had an issue,
4 a personal issue. I moved in there
5 two years ago, like I said, and the
6 landlord used me and my children's
7 information to get money from the
8 city.

9

10 So now I am blackballed in
11 the system as fraud. They should
12 not get away with that, and I'm not
13 the only one that they do it to. So
14 my thing is where do you get help
15 for that, that the landlord do to
16 tenant? And that's it.

16

17 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
18 for sharing that story. We would be
19 happy to connect you with resources
20 if you still need help with that
21 issue following the hearing. Okay.
22 We're -- you can come to my office,
23 I'm 316, but I know that any of my
24 colleagues would be willing to help
as well. Thank you so much. Please

1

2 state your name for the record and
3 proceed with your comment.

4 MS. WHITE: My name is
5 Janet White. I'm with Philly
6 Thrive. I live in the District 8th,
7 District up in Germantown. I've
8 been living up there for eight
9 years. I went through eviction.
10 I'm still in my home because I
11 fought for -- I fought with my
12 landlord, and they wound up getting
13 10 violations.

14 They fixed the violation,
15 but they still ain't finished the
16 violations. I'm still there. I pay
17 my rent on time. And I want you-all
18 to pass the Safe, Healthy Homes Act,
19 please. My daughter, she lives in
20 the home now. My grandchild, she --
21 he has lead poisoning. You know,
22 it's a shame, but we need it. We
23 need the Safe, Healthy Homes Act.
24 We need that. We need it done now,

1

2 today. And I'm thankful for letting
3 me share.

4

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
5 so much for your comment. Please
6 state your name for the record and
7 proceed with your comment.

8

MR. Blatstein: Hello, City
9 Council. My name's Jeremy
10 Blatstein. The Safe, Healthy Homes
11 bill, it's a great bill in theory,
12 right? Every single tenant deserves
13 a safe, healthy home. I don't think
14 anybody who is a home provider would
15 fight that, but there is a major
16 thing in the system that's broken
17 right now, and that's the evictions,
18 right?

19

The Philadelphia Sheriff's
20 Department office is not holding up
21 their side of their bargain. In
22 order to get an eviction, it's
23 taking 12 to 16 weeks. That doesn't
24 let this circle of how home

1

2 providing works in the city of
3 Philadelphia. Until that is done,
4 you can't pass -- this bill should
5 not be passed.

6

And the last thing that
7 GPAR already brought up is if
8 somebody wants to sell their home
9 with a tenant in it, and it should
10 be allowed that a homeowner who's
11 going to move into the unit should
12 be allowed to move into that unit.
13 Thank you.

14

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Thank you
15 so much for your comment. Okay.
16 Seeing no one else here to testify
17 on the bills, this concludes the
18 public hearing. We will now go into
19 a public meeting to consider the
20 action to be taken on the bills
21 heard today. Can the clerk please
22 call the roll.

23

THE CLERK: Councilmember
24 Driscoll.

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COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

Present.

THE CLERK: Councilmember

Bass.

COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

Present.

THE CLERK: Councilmember

Squilla.

COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

Present.

THE CLERK: Councilmember

Jones.

COUNCILMEMBER JONES:

Present.

THE CLERK: Vice Chair

Landau.

VICE CHAIR LANDAU:

Present.

THE CLERK: Chair Gauthier.

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Present.

The Chair recognizes Councilmember

Landau for a motion on Bill No.

250329-A.

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VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No. 250329-A be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation and further move that the Rules of Council be suspended to permit First Reading of this bill at the next session of Council.

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Is there a second?

MALE VOICE: Second.

CHAIR GAUTHIER: It has been moved and properly seconded that Bill No. 250329-A be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation and further move that the Rules of Council be suspended to permit First Reading of this bill at the next session of Council. All those in favor of the motion will signify by saying aye.

COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR GAUTHIER: Those

1

2 opposed? The Ayes have it and the
3 motion carries. Bill No. 250329-A
4 will be reported from this committee
5 with a favorable recommendation.

6 With the request -- I would ask --

7 we have to get through everything.

8 I know there's a lot of excitement,
9 but please allow us to get through
10 everything properly.

11 Bill No. 250329-A will be
12 reported from this committee with a
13 favorable recommendation with a
14 request that the Rules of Council be
15 suspended to permit First Reading at
16 the next session of Council.

17 The Chair recognizes
18 Councilmember Landau for a motion on
19 Bill No. 250330-A.

20 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
21 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill
22 No. 250330-A be reported from this
23 committee with a favorable
24 recommendation and further move that

1

2 the Rules of Council be suspended to
3 permit First Reading of this bill at
4 the next session of Council.

5 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Is there a
6 second?

7 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Yes.

8 CHAIR GAUTHIER: It has
9 been moved and properly seconded
10 that Bill No. 250330-A be reported
11 from this committee with a favorable
12 recommendation and further move that
13 the Rules of Council be suspended to
14 permit First Reading of this bill at
15 the next session of Council. All
16 those in favor of the motion will
17 signify by saying Aye.

18 COUNCILMEMBER: Aye.

19 CHAIR GAUTHIER: Those
20 opposed? The Ayes have it and the
21 motion carries. Bill No. 250330-A
22 will be reported from this committee
23 with a favorable recommendation with
24 the request that the Rules of

1

2 Council be suspended to permit First
3 Reading at the next session of
4 Council.

5 This concludes the business
6 of the Committee on Housing,
7 Neighborhood Development and the
8 Homeless today. Congratulations.

9 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Madam
10 Chair.

11 CHAIR GAUTHIER: I'd like
12 to recognize Councilmember Jones.

13 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
14 you, Madam Chair. For the record,
15 we pass this out of committee
16 because we believe in the character
17 of our member, and that his earnest
18 willingness to work with the other
19 lobbyists and the other
20 organizations to come up with
21 reasonable amendments. We believe
22 in you Nicolas O'Rourke. And so,
23 until, you know -- at the final
24 count of this, we got to go out to

1
2 the greater body and we want to hold
3 you to that word.

4 CHAIR GAUTHIER:

5 Congratulations, Councilmember
6 O'Rourke, and tell all of the folks
7 who fought for this, thank you so
8 very much.

9 (Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the
10 Homeless hearing concluded at 2:55 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda J. Rios

Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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