

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
AND THE HOMELESS

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Tuesday, September 29, 2020
9:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTION: 200408

1 - - -

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
3 understand that state law currently
4 requires that the following
5 announcement be made at the beginning
6 of every remote public hearing as
7 follows: Due to the public health
8 emergency, City Council Committees are
9 currently meeting remotely. We are
10 using Microsoft Teams to make these
11 remote hearings possible. Instructions
12 for how the public may view and offer
13 public testimony at public hearings of
14 Council Committees are included in the
15 public hearing notices that are
16 published in the Daily News, Inquirer
17 and Legal Intelligencer prior to the
18 hearings and can also be found on
19 phlcouncil.com.

20 I now note that the hour has
21 come. Mr. Weiss, will you please call
22 the roll to take attendance.

23 Members that are in
24 attendance will please indicate that
25 you are present when your name is

1 called. Also, please say a few brief
2 words when responding so that your
3 image will be displayed on screen when
4 you speak.

5 THE CLERK: Councilmember
6 Brooks.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Good
8 morning, everyone.

9 THE CLERK: Councilmember
10 Bass.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
12 morning. Looking forward to today's
13 hearing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 THE CLERK: Councilmember
15 Quinones-Sanchez.

16 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
17 SANCHEZ: Good morning. Good morning.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 Gilmore Richardson.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
21 RICHARDSON: Good morning, Madam Chair.
22 Good morning, colleagues.

23 THE CLERK: Councilmember
24 Domb.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Good

1 morning, everyone.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember

3 Squilla.

4 Councilmember Jones.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

6 you. A quorum of the Committee is

7 present and this hearing is now called

8 to order. This is the public hearing

9 of the Committee on Housing,

10 Neighborhood and the Homeless regarding

11 Resolution No. 200408. Good morning,

12 everyone. Thank you to the members of

13 this Committee, to Liz Hersh and her

14 team at the Office of Homeless Services

15 and to everyone watching at home for

16 joining us for this important

17 conversation.

18 Homelessness, housing

19 insecurity and affordable housing are

20 some of the most pressing issues facing

21 our City today. We were already facing

22 a housing crisis even before the

23 pandemic. Prior to COVID-19, 55

24 percent of renters in West and

25 Southwest Philly were cost-burdened,

1 which means they spend more than 30
2 percent of their income on housing cost
3 each month, but it's not just my
4 District.

5 Renters across the City are
6 facing the stress on their finances and
7 their day-to-day lives. To give you a
8 sense of the scale of this problem, it
9 would cost \$74 million each month to
10 eliminate the cost burden for all
11 renters across the City. And clearly,
12 these statistics suggest that there's
13 just not enough affordable housing
14 units in our City.

15 To use the 3rd District as an
16 example, the supply of affordable
17 housing only meets 25 percent of the
18 affordable housing demand. But now as
19 a result of the severe impact the
20 pandemic has had on our economy, even
21 more Philadelphia residents are at risk
22 of losing their homes. Sectors that
23 tend to have low wages like leisure and
24 hospitality have been the hardest hit
25 by the job losses.

1 This mean that Philadelphians
2 who already have to hustle to make ends
3 meet are at increased risk of losing
4 their homes. Without additional
5 interventions like extending
6 eligibility for the PHFA Rental
7 Assistance Program and extending the
8 protections in the Emergency Housing
9 Protection Act, which Council enacted
10 this past June with the support of this
11 Committee, more people will need help
12 and will end up on a friend or family
13 member's couch or at OHS's front door.
14 That is one of the reasons why today
15 we'll be focusing on homelessness,
16 which has been a serious challenge in
17 Philadelphia for many years.

18 Both the City government and
19 the City Council have worked diligently
20 in recent years to prevent
21 homelessness, to serve the homeless
22 population and to offer people
23 experiencing homelessness a path
24 towards long-term housing. As I
25 mentioned earlier, we are joined today

1 by Liz Hersh, the Director of the
2 City's Office of Homeless Services.

3 We look forward to her
4 insights about the impact that COVID-19
5 has had on the state of homelessness in
6 Philadelphia, including how state and
7 federal COVID relief funds are being
8 used and to get a more in-depth
9 understanding of OHS's operation and
10 outcomes. And I'm glad to share that
11 today's hearing is the first in a
12 series that this Committee will host on
13 the topics of homelessness and
14 affordable housing over the coming
15 months.

16 We'll be hearing from a
17 variety of City departments and
18 stakeholders about the state of housing
19 in Philadelphia, and what opportunities
20 and challenges may arise from the
21 current precarious situation we find
22 ourselves in. Because ultimately as
23 COVID-19 has very clearly demonstrated,
24 housing is health care. A stable home
25 is at the foundation of a stable life.

1 And so, it's critical that housing
2 policy is front and center as our City
3 recovers from this crisis. Thank you
4 so much.

5 This is the public hearing
6 of -- wait a minute. Sorry. Lost my
7 place a little bit. Mr. Weiss, will
8 you please read the titles of the
9 bills.

10 THE CLERK: Resolution No.
11 200408, a Resolution authorizing the
12 Philadelphia City Council Committee on
13 Housing, Neighborhood Development and
14 the Homeless to hold public hearings on
15 the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness,
16 evictions and residential foreclosures
17 and the City's effort to combat
18 homelessness, evictions and residential
19 foreclosures.

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

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

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

16 Mr. Weiss, will you please
17 call the first panel or witness we have
18 to testify this morning.

19 THE CLERK: Liz Hersh.

20 MS. HERSH: Good morning. My
21 name is Liz Hersh. I'm the Director of
22 the City's Office of Homeless Services.
23 I am joined here today by David
24 Holloman, Chief of Staff for the Office
25 of Homeless Services and Beth Gonzalez,

1 Deputy Director for Planning,
2 Performance and Policy.

3 I submitted testimony to
4 Council and I will run through that
5 briefly and then be available to answer
6 whatever questions you may have. First
7 of all, thank you so much,
8 Councilmember Gauthier, for this
9 hearing and thank you to the Committee
10 for your interest in homelessness. It
11 is an ongoing crisis that has been
12 exacerbated by COVID.

13 COVID I think has really laid
14 bare the stark realities of extreme
15 poverty experienced by so many
16 Philadelphians, especially people of
17 color who have been disproportionately
18 hurt by the pandemic. In Philadelphia
19 while African-American people comprise
20 44 percent of the City's population,
21 they comprise 75 percent of those who
22 experience homelessness.

23 And as Jamie said, never has
24 it been clear that housing was health
25 care. When the stay-at-home order was

1 issued, the general public saw what we
2 all knew to be true. Thousands of
3 Philadelphians, in fact millions of
4 Americans, have no permanent home.
5 They lack the most basic human
6 protection. Our City homelessness
7 services system has responded to this
8 crisis.

9 And before talking briefly
10 about some of the steps we have taken
11 and their effectiveness, I would like
12 to recognize the extreme dedication and
13 selflessness of the hundreds of
14 homeless service staff who work for the
15 City and for the not-for-profits who
16 have come to work day in and day out
17 throughout the pandemic to take care of
18 people who had nowhere to go. Their
19 care saved many lives.

20 As of mid-September, our
21 network of nonprofit providers had
22 served over 7,300 participants in our
23 shelter system with a total of only 161
24 known COVID cases, about a third of
25 whom were staffed. Let me repeat that.

1 7300 participants, 161 cases. We have
2 largely succeeded in keeping people
3 safe to date contrary to myths and
4 stereotypes. We de-densified beds. We
5 went to grab-and-go meals. We
6 instituted social distancing. We
7 require use of masks indoors. We
8 provided more handwashing and
9 encouraged it, added bed barriers.

10 We basically did all the same
11 things that all of us are doing in our
12 own homes, but in our sites in spite of
13 the extreme supply shortages that, as
14 you recall, we had in the first few
15 months. Our intake sites have remained
16 throughout. We instituted COVID
17 screenings and intake to reduce the
18 likelihood that people who are positive
19 would enter shelter. We moved to
20 remote assessment interviews rather
21 in-person to protect participants and
22 staff.

23 One of the silver linings of
24 COVID has been the close working
25 partnership between the Philadelphia

1 Department of Public Health and
2 Homeless Services. Through the
3 Emergency Operation Center which was
4 activated in March, we've worked
5 hand-in-hand throughout the pandemic on
6 screening response, testing, managing
7 and guidance for services for people
8 who are homeless.

9 The City, in addition to
10 instituting these steps, established a
11 quarantine and isolation site at a
12 downtown hotel. Other purpose of this
13 site is to provide quarantine space for
14 people who don't have any place else to
15 safely await test results who are
16 symptomatic but whose symptoms don't
17 rise to the level of hospitalization or
18 who have tested positive and need to
19 wait out the 14 days.

20 We're going to continue the
21 Q&I site until the pandemic is over.
22 We need to have that essential service.
23 It's one of the ways that we keep
24 people safe. We also established two
25 COVID-prevention spaces at downtown

1 hotels with a total of 260 rooms. This
2 has allowed us to move people who are
3 most vulnerable to COVID to live in
4 their own rooms where they can stay
5 safe.

6 Eligibility for these two
7 sites is based on the CDC criteria for
8 most at risk, those over the age of 65
9 or with certain underlying health
10 conditions. It is funded by federal
11 FEMA dollars and CARES money and not by
12 the City. To date, we have served
13 nearly 200 people, half of whom have
14 come from the street. And of those, 70
15 percent are 60 or older, so this is a
16 very old and very disabled population
17 of people. This has also been one of
18 the silver linings, is to see them come
19 inside and to be able to have a warm
20 soft bed, a hot shower and their own
21 remote control to the T.V. And it's
22 just really been one of the gifts
23 that's come out of this very difficult
24 situation.

25 One of the other things that

1 happened with COVID was that it has
2 really exacerbated hunger among those
3 who are homeless. When the
4 stay-at-home order went into effect in
5 March, one of the immediate and
6 dramatic impacts was that the people
7 who were unsheltered were very hungry.
8 We started to get literally dozens of
9 calls from security guards, police,
10 Center City District saying that people
11 were saying that they were hungry.

12 We have had to close our
13 daytime sites in the short term,
14 they've now reopened, because of social
15 distancing. And Broad Street Ministry,
16 one of our stalworth providers,
17 launched a program called Step Up To
18 The Plate, which is a partnership with
19 Project HOME and Prevention Point. And
20 they raised \$2.5 million in
21 philanthropic money, hired out-of-work
22 caterers to make food that volunteers
23 then distribute daily through
24 grab-and-go bags in Center City, South
25 Philly, Kensington, Germantown and near

1 North Philly.

2 As of last week, 320,000
3 meals had been served to hungry people.
4 We're now trying to figure out what the
5 plan looks like for winter when we can
6 no longer serve outdoor meals. In
7 addition during this time, the shelter
8 system served over 1 million meals to
9 the people we house. Today we're very
10 closely monitoring the economic impact
11 of COVID on those with extremely low
12 incomes, those who have lost income and
13 those who are homeless are extremely
14 housing and secure. And we have been
15 able to expand our prevention services
16 with funding that came from CARES.
17 That's called HAP or the Homeless
18 Assistance Program.

19 We've also gotten some
20 prevention funds from the City's
21 Housing Trust Fund, Home4Good which
22 comes from the Federal Home Loan Bank
23 and PHFA. In addition, I know that you
24 are all very interested in the CARES
25 ESG or Emergency Solutions Grant money,

1 so let me talk about that for a minute.
2 ESG or Emergency Solutions Grant money
3 is restricted funding in its use. It
4 can only be used for homelessness
5 prevention, rapid re-housing, outreach
6 and shelter.

7 This money sunsets on
8 September 30, 2022. It's not fundable
9 with City General Funds, generally
10 speaking. It's restricted to people
11 whose income is 30 percent of area
12 median income and generally speaking,
13 meet the definition of virtually
14 homeless. About half of this funding,
15 about a little over \$17 million, is
16 going directly to backfill programs
17 that would have been cut due to the
18 loss of City General Funds.

19 Without this backfill, we
20 would have had to lay off about 17
21 people and take offline about 2500
22 shelter beds among other impacts. This
23 means that OHS will be facing a funding
24 cliff in FY22, representing the
25 potential loss of over \$17 million and

1 similarly, dire impacts in the loss of
2 essential crisis services if that
3 funding is not replaced next year.

4 Of the remaining CARES funds,
5 we are implementing a housing surge.
6 Housing cures homelessness. Together
7 with existing long-term programs, we
8 project creating at least 900 housing
9 opportunities. These are estimates.
10 They're subject to change based on real
11 cost and availability. We are going to
12 pilot a tiny house village of 10 to 12
13 units. This will be one of two Tiny
14 House pilots. This one is not the
15 Liberation homes model that you may
16 have read about. This is a Seattle
17 model or what we call the Seattle
18 model. Each unit is actually 10 by 12.
19 It's basically a bedroom that has
20 electricity and heat, and then there's
21 communal bathroom, suite and kitchen
22 and we do have City land available for
23 that.

24 We also launched a shared
25 housing program. What we did was to

1 take vacant PHA scattered site units
2 that had subsidy attached to them. We
3 renovated them to meet housing quality
4 standards. We cannot pay rent to
5 anybody for anything if they don't meet
6 housing quality standards and these
7 units will house families and some
8 unrelated adults, and City zoning as
9 you know allows three unrelated adults.

10 This is an attempt to do two
11 things -- well, actually three. First,
12 it's reactivating vacant scattered site
13 units so that's better for
14 neighborhoods. It is providing an
15 option for people who would rather not
16 live alone and it's an attempt to
17 provide a much less costly alternative
18 for long-term housing. Because as you
19 know, rental assistance has a price
20 tag.

21 We are also expanding our
22 Shallow Rent Program. Again, this is a
23 little different than the Planning and
24 Development Shallow Rent. This is a
25 pilot that we started nearly three

1 years ago. It is intended, it's
2 designed to house at a less costly way
3 people who have permanent disabilities,
4 so they live on a fixed low income,
5 extremely low income.

6 If we were really serious
7 about ending homelessness as a nation,
8 the first thing we could do would be to
9 increase disability income from the
10 \$700 or \$800 it is a month now and
11 double or triple that so it's actually
12 a living amount of money. Many of the
13 people who experience unsheltered
14 homelessness are, in fact, disabled and
15 have a very small, modest income.

16 And so, the Shallow Rent
17 Program enables them to live stably for
18 just less than paying less than a third
19 of their income every month for rent
20 and it does have wraparound services.
21 Rapid Re-housing we've talked about a
22 lot. This is a program that's very
23 much promoted through HUD. It is a
24 12-to-24 month subsidy with housing
25 case management. It is a light touch

1 program. It's monthly meetings with
2 the housing case manager.

3 In the Hispanic community, we
4 do make this suite of services
5 available without becoming homeless.
6 That was one of the real concerns of
7 that community so we've responded by
8 piloting a different model. As we have
9 now just launched a rapid re-housing
10 from the Street program, this is brand
11 new. This is one of the things that
12 came out of the encampment negotiations
13 over the last several months. So far
14 we have 32 people enrolled. Four
15 people have already signed leases and
16 four are waiting lease signings and
17 three are waiting inspections, so these
18 are very encouraging early results.

19 One of the aspects of our
20 program that sometimes people find
21 challenging is that there aren't as
22 many different kinds of front doors as
23 they would look. And so, this is
24 really an attempt to respond to the
25 interests of some people to find easier

1 access into an actual unit, so we'll
2 see how it works. And then we are
3 piloting single room occupancies. We,
4 as you all know, have a lot of
5 buildings in this City, old convents
6 and group homes, et cetera, that
7 have -- they're zoned for multiple
8 people to live. They're shared
9 bathrooms, kitchens, but everybody has
10 their own room. So again, this takes
11 advantage of existing buildings that
12 are vacant. It gives people onsite
13 services. They have their own room so
14 they have privacy, but they're not all
15 alone. And so, we are also putting
16 that on the street.

17 I will say that
18 prioritization for all housing
19 opportunities through Homeless Services
20 is based on vulnerability. We do an
21 assessment with everybody. This is a
22 HUD requirement. It's also a way of
23 ensuring fairness for everybody. It
24 used to be that the person that yelled
25 the loudest or had the most aggressive

1 advocate got access to housing and we
2 have tried to make this a system that
3 is fairer.

4 The top priority today is for
5 people over the age of 65 or with
6 chronic underlying health conditions
7 who are most vulnerable to COVID
8 followed by those who have significant
9 disabilities and long-term
10 homelessness, and this applies both to
11 families and individuals.

12 So with that -- oh, I just
13 wanted to also mention that the ESG
14 programs that I mentioned above, there
15 are requests for proposals on our
16 website. We are encouraging new
17 providers. We've gotten new proposals
18 from some providers we've never worked
19 with before. And as part of the
20 continuing commitment of the City to
21 increase diversity, inclusion and
22 equity and our investment of public
23 dollars, we're trying to make these as
24 accessible as possible. So if someone
25 has -- if an organization has a little

1 piece of property they would like to
2 try something, we encourage them to
3 send us a proposal and we will work
4 with them, we will -- to try and be
5 able to use the funds that we have
6 available to house people. So with
7 that, I'll conclude my testimony and
8 return the floor to you, Councilmember.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you for your testimony, Liz, and for
11 all of the work that you and your staff
12 have done to respond to (inaudible).
13 I'm going to start off with some
14 questions and then I will turn to
15 questions from my colleagues. Before I
16 get into my questions, I wanted to
17 raise a point from last week's hearing
18 before the Committee on Fiscal
19 Stability and Intergovernmental
20 Cooperation.

21 During the hearing, Harvey
22 Rice, the Executive Director of the
23 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
24 Cooperation Authority, said that many
25 City departments did not meet their

1 performance goals for FY20. According
2 to PICA's final City Manager's Report
3 for 2020, the Office of Homeless
4 Services met all of its performance
5 goals for FY2020. So kudos to you and
6 your team, and thank you for working
7 with my office prior to this hearing as
8 well.

9 MS. HERSH: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Based
11 on the number of people that OHS had
12 provided traditional services to thus
13 far in Calendar Year 2020, are you
14 seeing an increase in the number of
15 people accessing OHS services or is OHS
16 on target to serve a similar number of
17 people that you served last year?

18 MS. HERSH: The number of --
19 that's the million dollar question that
20 everybody's asking right now, what's
21 the economic impact of COVID. I would
22 say that prevention services are seeing
23 an uptick and people are calling about
24 rental assistance. Our shelter
25 services are about level.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. HERSH: And family
4 homelessness is actually down and
5 demand for shelter among families is
6 down. We don't know why. We think
7 it's possible that families are just
8 holding tight, but we don't really
9 know. But that's been a trend really
10 since March.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you. During your testimony, you talked
13 about the restrictions on some of the
14 federal money. If these funds were
15 unrestricted, would you spend some of
16 the dollars differently?

17 MS. HERSH: You betcha.
18 There's really two things that make the
19 biggest difference in our estimation in
20 really preventing and ending
21 homelessness. One is I would invest
22 more in prevention. I think there are
23 more individuals -- when you look at
24 the number that over 10,000 people
25 entered shelter, I've got to believe

1 that more of those people could be
2 stabilized with an investment of
3 prevention, that they have resources,
4 that they just can't make ends meet.
5 So I would put more into prevention.
6 And we're not just talking about
7 evictions, because many of the
8 people -- only 20 percent of the people
9 who come to our door are the actual
10 leaseholder. Either they're too young
11 or they've been homeless too long or
12 something in between. They're really
13 people who have much lower incomes and
14 they need a longer runway to take off.
15 So I would put more into prevention.
16 And then the other thing I
17 would do, and this could be done
18 through us or through Planning and
19 Development, is really have a
20 full-fledged City rental assistance
21 program. As I said, the average income
22 of the people in our system is about
23 \$10,000 a year. If you're a senior and
24 you're living on Social Security alone,
25 it's about \$11,000. And if you have a

1 disability, it's less than \$10,000.
2 It's just never going to be enough to
3 pay a market rent.

4 And so, in our view there's
5 only two ways to cut it, right. You
6 either increase incomes so people can
7 afford a market rent or you subsidize
8 the rent in some way, shape or form so
9 that people can stay stable. And so,
10 if I had the wherewithal, I believe we
11 need a City rental assistance program,
12 a long-term program, for those people
13 who will never be able to pay a market
14 rent.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
16 Great. Thank you. I also want to take
17 a moment to recognize that
18 Councilmember Squilla is in attendance
19 as well as Councilmember Gym. Good
20 morning. Okay. Let's stay on
21 prevention --

22 COUNCILMAN JONES:
23 Councilmember Jones as well.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
25 Councilmember Jones, good morning, my

1 Vice-Chair. Thank you.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Let's

4 stay on prevention for a little bit.

5 Over 1400 households in FY20 received

6 prevention and diversion assistance.

7 We understand that OHS was only able to

8 meet about 25 percent of the demand for

9 rent assistance in FY20 due to lack of

10 funding. Can you give a brief

11 description on prevention and diversion

12 services, elaborate on the

13 effectiveness of prevention and

14 diversion in terms of preventing

15 homelessness and estimate how much OHS

16 saves for every dollar of investment

17 into prevention and diverse?

18 MS. HERSH: Yup. So

19 actually, we served closer than 1900

20 people. But about 450 people didn't

21 require financial assistance. It was

22 mediation, you know, my sister kicked

23 me out, you know, my mother's going to

24 kick me out or something like that and

25 try to help them figure out how to

1 navigate stabilizing their housing
2 situation.

3 In a two-year lookback, no
4 one who has received our services has
5 entered shelter which just gives you, I
6 think, a window into just how resilient
7 people are, that a very small amount of
8 money helps them stabilize and how
9 motivated people can be to avoid
10 becoming homeless. It always just
11 amazes me how scrappy people really
12 are, and then as few people become
13 homeless in a city like ours as they
14 do.

15 So the main thing that we do
16 in addition to the mediation and
17 conflict resolution problem-solving
18 that our team does is actual rental
19 assistance. In the past, we focused
20 mostly on one-time rental assistance
21 with a small portion on multi-month.
22 But with the eviction crisis and the
23 really much more robust suite of
24 services that the City is now providing
25 around eviction, we have a new kind of

1 division of labor where Planning and
2 Development is doing much more in the
3 eviction prevention, the Philadelphia
4 Eviction Prevention pilot is operating,
5 all of the rental assistance is really
6 working with them because we believe it
7 really needs to be nested ultimately in
8 the housing counseling agencies.

9 And then the homelessness
10 prevention, which is again people who
11 have much smaller incomes who may not
12 be the leaseholders, we are working
13 much more with them. And we are moving
14 much more towards multi-month
15 assistance so that they really can
16 stabilize, get a better income and get
17 their housing situation to be less
18 secure.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: And
20 in your --

21 MS. HERSH: I'm sorry. More
22 secure, less insecure. Sorry about
23 that.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Got
25 it. In your estimation, how much are

1 we saving for every dollar of
2 investment that we're putting into
3 prevention and diversion?

4 MS. HERSH: So there's not a
5 lot of data about what prevention
6 actually saves because the question is
7 if you're successful, you can't measure
8 it, right, because people never enter
9 shelter. So the question is would they
10 have entered shelter anyway or are you
11 basically overserving people, which is
12 fine with me, but that's not purpose.
13 So the best data that exists nationally
14 suggests that about 20 percent of those
15 you serve through prevention would have
16 become homeless. And so, we estimate
17 that we save about \$4 for every dollar
18 that we spend.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you. I would like to ask you about the
21 emergency and temporary housing that
22 you provide, because about 56 percent
23 of OHS's overall expenditures fall into
24 this category of services. Can you
25 give a brief description of the types

1 of emergency and temporary housing
2 options that OHS provides for the
3 record?

4 MS. HERSH: Yes, of course.
5 We operate between 43 and 46 emergency
6 sites. It used to be that those sites
7 are shelters. We're very large. We've
8 really tried to move to much smaller
9 sites. They work better. They're
10 better for people. We get better
11 outcomes and it really spreads them
12 around. Our family sites all have
13 individual rooms. Our single sites are
14 largely congregate. They're all over
15 the City.

16 When we did our housing
17 inventory count last January, we had
18 about 3800 beds. We have somewhat
19 fewer than that at this time, although
20 we do have beds available. These are
21 generally speaking very low demands.
22 We do not do drug testing for entry,
23 although you may not bring in weapons.
24 We do have curfews in all of our sites,
25 mostly because people are sleeping and

1 because they're in neighborhoods and
2 it's just darn rude to be coming in and
3 out at all hours, so we do that.

4 We did provide case
5 management, one case manager for every
6 20 people. Everyone does have a
7 housing plan. They do work with their
8 case manager on a housing plan. In
9 addition, we have no time limits,
10 although our average stay in shelters
11 is 86 days. So we turn over our beds
12 on average four times a year. There
13 are some exceptions to that. By and
14 large, our longest stayers are Megan's
15 Law offenders because they have the
16 hardest time finding employment and
17 permanent housing, although we do see a
18 cycling through in that population that
19 I was talking about who has very low
20 fixed income who's disabled.

21 We have about 1,000 units of
22 transitional housing. That's a net
23 reduction over the last several years
24 that has to do with HUD policy.
25 Transitional housing is no longer

1 recognized as an evidence-based
2 practice or a data-informed practice,
3 because the results that you get in
4 terms of long-term housing and
5 stability and prevention in return to
6 homelessness are about the same as
7 rapid re-housing which is about half
8 the price.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

10 Thank you. Your FY20 numbers show
11 close to 15,000 people using less than
12 4500 beds of emergency housing. Can
13 you discuss the utilization rate of
14 emergency shelter beds and how links of
15 stay can vary among shelter options?

16 MS. HERSH: Yes. I think I
17 did sort of just touch on that. Is
18 there something more that you wanted to
19 know about it?

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Did
21 you discuss the utilization rate?

22 MS. HERSH: Mostly we run at
23 about 90 percent utilization in our
24 singles. We are seeing family
25 homelessness go down. It's dropped by

1 25 percent since 2017, so we are
2 looking to take two-family shelters
3 offline and convert them into rapid
4 re-housing rather than shelter this
5 year. So we are evaluating at this
6 point in time what we -- Philadelphia
7 doesn't have families on the street.

8 As soon as there is a family,
9 we swoop in and get them housed, and we
10 house families together. And if it's
11 two parents of the same gender, if it's
12 a father only, it doesn't matter. We
13 house them together. We are an equal
14 access system. And so, we are looking
15 at our family shelter supply. But at
16 this point in time until we see the
17 economic impact of COVID, we're very
18 reluctant to take dramatic action in
19 reducing the supply of crisis beds that
20 are available.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
22 you. I have a few questions about
23 outcomes in this area. Roughly 30
24 percent of consumers who utilize
25 emergency or temporary housing in FY20

1 exited to permanent affordable housing.
2 First, can you give us context for this
3 data and then can you talk about
4 whether there are difficulties tracking
5 all of the exits from emergency housing
6 and what are other possible outcomes
7 for consumers?

8 MS. HERSH: Well, I think the
9 context is exactly the information that
10 you provided in your introduction,
11 Councilmember. It's the shortage of
12 affordable housing, that if everybody
13 had a place to live in the first place
14 that they could afford and an adequate
15 income, they likely wouldn't become
16 homeless or we would certainly be
17 seeing much smaller numbers.

18 We don't control the supply
19 of affordable housing. And so, our
20 ability to help people exit has to do
21 with either the resources we're able to
22 get from the City or HUD or the
23 resources that are available through
24 the affordable housing system or to
25 whatever extent people are able to

1 increase their incomes, so we're
2 working in the same environment as
3 everybody else.

4 In terms of your second
5 question around data, completeness and
6 quality, this has been something that's
7 been very important to us. It is one
8 of our performance measures. It's
9 data, quality and completeness and our
10 numbers have gotten to be very good.
11 We're at about 90 percent, but I would
12 say we still have some -- we always
13 have a way to go. It's hard to sit
14 down at your computer and write down,
15 you know, when you're trying to help
16 somebody.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
18 Great. Thank you for that context.
19 I'd like to dig a little more deeply
20 here. Can you explain OHS's specific
21 role in helping consumers to obtain
22 permanent housing and let us know if
23 there are any barriers for affordable
24 housing that consumers leaving the
25 shelter system encounter aside from a

1 general shortage of supply in the low
2 incomes of consumers?

3 MS. HERSH: Yes. So our
4 housing case managers work with
5 everybody on a housing plan. As I said
6 earlier, we do an assessment of
7 everybody and those who are most
8 vulnerable we match with whatever
9 available housing we have. In this
10 Administration, we have invested for
11 the first time in the City's history
12 City general funds on permanent
13 supportive housing to try and reduce
14 the numbers of people on the street,
15 which we have done. The numbers have
16 gone down.

17 I think one of the real
18 obstacles is really the nature of
19 affordable housing. Over the last 20
20 years or so, the supply of affordable
21 housing and the production has really
22 dwindled as you know. And by and large
23 what's available is affordable only to
24 people who are higher incomes. So in
25 order to get into a low-income housing

1 tax credit development, you have to
2 have a decent credit history, no
3 criminal background.

4 People who have a lot of
5 problems coming out of our system, it's
6 a leap of faith. They can be very good
7 tenants, but they do require services.
8 And the way the cash flow for tax
9 credit developments work makes it very,
10 very hard. So I think that's really
11 one big obstacle, is just the nature of
12 the affordable housing system.

13 And frankly, the other big
14 issues are the feeder systems. You
15 know, the criminal justice system is
16 probably one of our big feeder systems.
17 It's not at all unusual for people to
18 exit the criminal justice system and
19 come right to shelter. I think that's
20 probably one of the big issues.
21 Hospitals and healthcare systems also
22 are one of our big feeders.

23 And so, I think the
24 homelessness system is really absorbing
25 a lot of the shortfalls of other

1 systems, which are some of the things
2 that we know to be systemic drivers of
3 poverty and homelessness, and we're
4 trying to address them with inadequate
5 supply of affordable housing.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: And
7 then I have one more question before I
8 open it up to members of the Committee.
9 Are there ways that you think the
10 public sector could be better in
11 reaching out to the private landlord
12 community to either incentivize them or
13 push them to take on Philadelphians
14 coming out of supportive or emergency
15 housing as tenants?

16 MS. HERSH: Yes, absolutely.
17 I'm glad you asked. We'll be putting
18 together a packet of information in the
19 next couple of weeks asking just that,
20 for private landlords to help us. We
21 do get a lot of calls from them. Often
22 they need money. They're trying to
23 make ends meet. They're working in the
24 same economy as we are. But, yes, that
25 will be very, very helpful.

1 And I also think that if you
2 could help us in really looking at the
3 criminal justice system and how and
4 when people exit and where they exit to
5 and finding other ways to help people
6 successfully transition, returning
7 citizens. We know that when people
8 have housing, they are much less likely
9 to recidivate. And also bringing the
10 health insurance companies to the
11 table, we save them money. When people
12 are housed, they cost less to care for
13 in the health systems. And so,
14 bringing those managed care
15 organizations to the table would be
16 extremely helpful. So those are some
17 direct places, intervention places,
18 that I think would be helpful.

19 I just -- if you don't mind,
20 Councilmember, I'm going to ask Dave
21 Holloman if there's anything that he
22 might want to add to what I've said
23 that maybe we glossed over or needs to
24 be elaborated on.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Sure.

1 Good morning, Dave.

2 MR. HOLLOMAN: Hi. Good
3 morning, everyone. I think, Liz, you
4 covered a lot of information. I
5 appreciate the questions that you've
6 asked, Councilwoman. And I think one
7 of the things that we deal with as a
8 crisis response system is that we deal
9 with some serious complexity, not only
10 with behavioral health challenges, but
11 traumatic issues, loss of income, fire
12 disasters.

13 So the individuals that do
14 come to our front door, we're dealing
15 with the extreme poor population that
16 really comes to our front door. I
17 think one of the things you talked
18 about earlier and one of your questions
19 was about funding around prevention.
20 We really would have to do some type of
21 study or dictate some type of study of
22 what that would look like in terms of
23 how long do you extend that funding,
24 whether it's three to six months,
25 whether it's a year, to a person to

1 increase their income.

2 Philadelphia is still dealing
3 with income and quality, large poverty
4 rate so you would have to calculate all
5 of those things to really try to get a
6 more accurate reflection on how much
7 funding you would dedicate to
8 prevention care. But I think, Liz, you
9 did a really good job in really
10 displaying and covering the majority of
11 the things that we need. Of course, if
12 there were least restrictions on the
13 dollars, we could be more flexible
14 around there.

15 Philadelphia is a unique
16 place where there's still pockets of
17 what we consider to be affordable
18 housing compared to our neighbors like
19 D.C. and New York, but it would help if
20 we had a communication strategy also to
21 really recruit these landlords to help
22 be better landlords that would take on
23 people who were dealing with some of
24 the problems that we are seeing that
25 are coming to our front door.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
2 you.

3 And, Councilmember Quinones-
4 Sanchez, I know you have a question.

5 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
6 SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so much
7 for the entire team. And thank you,
8 Madam Chair, for pulling this together.

9 I think it's important that
10 we do kind of a reset around what
11 services we're offering. I think one
12 of the things that has come out of
13 COVID is this need for us to be very
14 intentional and focused around these
15 historical disparities that have
16 existed.

17 But, Liz, you mentioned
18 something earlier that caught my
19 attention before I get to a couple of
20 my questions, around the transitional
21 housing no longer being considered
22 evidence-based. How much of your
23 portfolio is in transitional housings?
24 When and if are you moving away from
25 that? And what is the cost per person

1 and family in those product lines that
2 are harder to fund? And do you also
3 believe that they're no longer
4 evidence-based, is it that they're
5 unsuccessful or how would you advocate
6 or articulate that?

7 MS. HERSH: Those are really
8 good questions. We have about 1,000
9 transitional housing beds. That's
10 about half of what we used to have.
11 The way HUD continuum of care funding
12 comes, Councilmember, is that there's a
13 set amount. And the only way you can
14 expand the supply of units is to reduce
15 nonperforming providers. It's very
16 hunger games. So that's what we've
17 been doing over the last several years
18 since they implemented this system.

19 We actually do a competitive
20 lined competition and our lowest
21 performers are defunded over time and
22 then that money goes into permanent
23 housing. I think that rapid
24 re-housing, you know, it's a decent
25 proxy. It's 12 to 24 months. It's

1 about 10,500 year. So it's less costly
2 than transitional.

3 Transitional is very good for
4 veterans, young mothers or young
5 parents with their children because
6 it's very service-riched. It's mostly
7 congregate, although people have their
8 own rooms. So I think that Rapid does
9 a lot for people. I think it's a
10 decent program. I think that really
11 it's distinguishing between people who
12 with a little bit of help can go back
13 into the private market, that they
14 could work, get an adequate income and
15 then move off of subsidy all together
16 versus the people who are older, have
17 been disabled a long time, have low
18 fixed incomes or very complicated
19 family situations. So I think it's
20 really trying to match the right
21 housing strategy with the individual
22 and I think that's where the art form
23 comes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
25 SANCHEZ: How much of your portfolio is

1 still within this product line?

2 MS. HERSH: Transitional,
3 it's 1,000 units. And these are all
4 psych-based --

5 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

6 SANCHEZ: What is the --

7 MS. HERSH: 1,000 beds. I
8 don't know exactly how many buildings.
9 It's all psych-based. For example,
10 Drueding Center, People's Emergency
11 Center, those are some. I believe
12 there's some veterans housing. Those
13 are the kinds of transitional housing,
14 and they're all -- I think GLEC up in
15 Germantown I think has some
16 transitional. They're largely health-
17 funded.

18 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

19 SANCHEZ: How would you transition
20 these into -- when you look at the cost
21 factor of \$10,000 a year, the average
22 client and families to my understanding
23 takes a little bit longer, between 12
24 and 24 months. You're talking about
25 potentially an investment of \$20,000 to

1 \$30,000 per family.

2 How can we best transition
3 this to the shallow rent, some of the
4 other product lines that you're talking
5 about that you say are more productive
6 and give people more independence, more
7 decency in living in light of the fact
8 that they're going to be -- we can't
9 increase their income, but we can
10 improve their quality of live if they
11 have more stable housing?

12 MS. HERSH: Yes. So I may
13 have misled you a little bit. Some of
14 these are -- what HUD has determined is
15 that transitional housing is
16 appropriate for certain "populations."
17 So young parents being one, I think
18 domestic violence is another, veterans
19 who have a history of trauma is
20 another.

21 And so, most of our
22 transitional housing at this point
23 really is -- we don't really have a
24 transition plan for it because the way
25 the HUD rules are, we would have to

1 figure out a way to do place-based
2 subsidy of some sort and we really
3 can't do that. We wouldn't want to
4 have Drueding or GLEC or PBC be empty,
5 right. So what we've tried to do is
6 really tailor it, match the funding and
7 the model with the people who can
8 benefit.

9 All that being said, we are
10 happy to take a look and see if there's
11 any flexibility. I don't know if Eva
12 or Dave or Beth has anything to add on
13 this topic. It's something we spent a
14 lot of time worrying about frankly.

15 MR. HOLLOWMAN: Yes. I think
16 the one thing that we're constantly in
17 that area trying to find out is what is
18 the right size of our system. I think
19 one of the things that we have which is
20 unique in Philadelphia is we have just
21 about every model there is. To
22 determine what is the right amount has
23 always been a major challenge.

24 And I think one of the things
25 that COVID has allowed us to see is,

1 one, it has peeled back the band-aid
2 off a lot of other social factors that
3 goes into some of these housing as Liz
4 indicated earlier. HUD a few years
5 back was really, really pushing
6 strongly to reduce transitional housing
7 to turn more of these programs into
8 more permanent housing.

9 I think what they're starting
10 to see is that as cost of living start
11 to increase in many of these different
12 areas, I think they have started to
13 slow down also on that approach. But
14 we would love to partner with you on
15 trying to figure out what is the right
16 size for some of these models we have
17 in Philadelphia, but it's a million
18 dollar question that we just don't have
19 an exact answer to at the moment.

20 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
21 SANCHEZ: I know. This is just --
22 sometimes we become embedded with
23 programs and agencies and, look, these
24 agencies do really good work but in a
25 post-COVID world, things have changed

1 and we want to get people to
2 permanency. And so, when --

3 MR. HOLLOWMAN: Absolutely.

4 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

5 SANCHEZ: -- you let a system lag for
6 12, 24, 36 months at a very high cost,
7 we're better off giving people those
8 resources so that they can get to that
9 permanency. We've been really
10 reluctant to look at this space and how
11 do we get some of these providers to
12 create the permanency we need versus
13 creating these transitional models that
14 are pretty costly. And I just want us
15 to remain open.

16 I talked to a lot of these
17 providers. I know them personally. I
18 visited their sites. But if we want to
19 change our methodology and say, certain
20 people at 15, 30 percent AMI are going
21 to need permanent support, then we need
22 to provide those models so that we know
23 we're subsidizing them. When you tell
24 people you're spending \$10,000,
25 \$20,000, \$30,000 on one family in a

1 market where you can potentially buy
2 them a house, people don't understand
3 that. I think we just need to move to
4 models that really promote some level
5 of independence and some level of
6 permanency.

7 Real quick because I don't
8 want to monopolize my time and I
9 appreciate the Chairwoman for allowing
10 me to come since I have to go, one of
11 the challenges for us, as you know, in
12 Kensington has been the reluctance by
13 the Administration to come up with an
14 encampment policy and how to deal with
15 homelessness.

16 I think it's really, really
17 important that in order for us to get
18 people to support additional
19 investments in this, that we let them
20 know what we get for that, right.
21 Nobody wants to see people in the
22 street. What are the lessons learned
23 from the Parkway that have gotten a lot
24 of attention? Kensington, it's been
25 three and a half years and not always

1 as much. What have we learned from the
2 advocate that is pivotal and that you
3 think is going to impact how we move
4 forward in dealing with this portfolio
5 and the work we're doing in this space?

6 MS. HERSH: Well, I think the
7 Parkway is a very different situation
8 because it's not an organic encampment.
9 It was established by a group of people
10 as a protest. They came in one day, I
11 remember the day well, and set up a
12 bunch of tents and then they went and
13 got homeless people and moved them in,
14 so it's a very different situation than
15 Kensington where the drug trade has
16 really, I think, brought people,
17 unfortunately people who are homeless
18 and people who are not homeless to the
19 streets of Kensington.

20 The lessons that we've
21 learned about encampment so far are the
22 ones we've learned by resolving the
23 four encampments in Kensington in 2018
24 and 2019, and that is providing people
25 with the services they need that are

1 tailored to what they want absent the
2 ability to force them off the street.
3 We have to entice them, bringing
4 services to them like mobile drug
5 treatment and making it as easy as
6 possible and setting a time limit and
7 having that time be and then sticking
8 with that deadline. I think those are
9 the things that we learned and did in
10 Kensington.

11 I will have to say to you,
12 Councilmember, that we very much agree
13 that we need an encampment policy. And
14 I think it's very tricky and we are
15 working on it and we hope to work with
16 you on that. As you know, one of the
17 issues that we've had to deal with is
18 that the courts have been very clear
19 that you can't take tents away and you
20 can't move people unless there are real
21 options for them. And so, I think
22 we're still trying very much to figure
23 out how to do this, and it's still a
24 very important question.

25 MR. HOLLOMAN: I think one of

1 the things I would just add to that,
2 Councilwoman, going back to those in
3 Kensington encampment and this
4 encampment, there are some common
5 denominators. The one thing it has
6 shown us and has been evidence-proof is
7 that if you invest in housing
8 opportunity for individuals, you will
9 see people -- people will decide to go
10 in.

11 I think one of the things
12 that has come about from the large
13 encampment that's been on the Parkway,
14 even though it started as a political
15 protest around the need for investing
16 in affordable housing, there is a
17 similar common denominator that goes
18 towards both camps. And again, people
19 can't afford places. There's a lack of
20 affordable housing in the City of
21 Philadelphia where people just want
22 access to.

23 I think going back when we
24 had the PHA relationship where we had a
25 number of housing opportunities through

1 them, we saw direct results and
2 vouchers and less numbers of people on
3 the street. So I think when we pull
4 away both, Kensington has -- the City
5 has been struggling with the opioid
6 crisis. I think that's not just in
7 Kensington. That's all over. But what
8 we're seeing is again people just don't
9 have the economic means in terms of
10 income, and the need for affordable
11 housing, those are the similarities
12 that go across both encampments.

13 I do thank you guys for
14 continuing to look at and coming up
15 with opportunities to invest in
16 housing. I think that is the way how
17 we reduce many of these tents in areas
18 that have gotten a lot of attention,
19 but the constant need for investment in
20 affordable housing and making it more
21 easier and more accessible for people
22 to take will, I think, have greater
23 impact in the future for Philadelphia.

24 MS. HERSH: I did want to add
25 to that, something that I neglected to

1 say, which is last summer thanks to the
2 investment of all of the resources that
3 we had made, we were down to about 200
4 people who were homeless in Kensington
5 and it's been a devastating blow, the
6 pandemic has just been a devastating
7 blow for all of us. But I think the
8 one thing is for people who have less
9 economic resources, like many of the
10 residents in Kensington, they don't
11 have as much of a buffer and for
12 neighborhoods that are highly impacted,
13 that the pandemic has hit them much
14 worse.

15 And it's really -- I think
16 it's fair to say it's really been a
17 setback. We were making progress up
18 until the pandemic hit and it's just
19 been heartbreaking and we do need a new
20 resolve and a new way of tackling it.
21 There's no question about it.

22 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
23 SANCHEZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I
24 look forward to the continuing
25 conversation around this matter. Time

1 sensitivity as we come up with policies
2 is huge.

3 For folks in the Parkway who
4 thought that that was untenable,
5 Kensington is untenable, these
6 encampments are going to pop up in
7 every part of the City. And I don't
8 want to see my colleagues struggling
9 the way we're struggling here in
10 Kensington and explaining why we can't
11 move with a sense of urgency, but I
12 appreciate everyone's effort.

13 Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
15 you, Councilmember.

16 Councilmember Domb.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 Good morning to my colleagues
20 and Liz. I have a few questions to
21 follow up on Councilmember Maria
22 Quinones-Sanchez's line of questioning.
23 And by the way, I'm in support of what
24 she had mentioned about Kensington.
25 I've taken several tours through there,

1 and it's really declined during this
2 pandemic and it's heartbreaking
3 actually to see what's going on there.
4 It's horrible. I can't imagine living
5 there.

6 But here's my questions for
7 today Liz: Can you explain your
8 department, the priorities? Are they
9 for the homeless population? Is it a
10 shelter --

11 (Background Interruption.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

13 Hello? Hello? If you're not speaking,
14 please go on mute. Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
16 Madam Chair. Can you explain your
17 priorities for our homeless population
18 right now? Is it a shelter-first model
19 or wraparound services for everyone?

20 MS. HERSH: Our priority is
21 always getting people in from the
22 street. We don't want anybody living
23 on the street. It's a mortal danger to
24 live on the street, so that's always
25 what's most important to us. All of

1 our services are designed to be low
2 barrier.

3 We are a housing first
4 system, which means that our goal and
5 our top priority, Councilmember, is for
6 people to come in. We try to provide a
7 wide variety of front doors, whether
8 it's the COVID prevention space, the
9 hotels, whether it's a safe haven, a
10 drug treatment program, a shelter or
11 now rapid re-housing from the street,
12 and then we have a very small number of
13 pathways to housing units for people
14 who are most seriously mentally ill or
15 have the most fragile health and have
16 been homeless the longest, so that is
17 our priority.

18 And then our priority is for
19 the most vulnerable people to get into
20 permanent housing. What we try to do,
21 and it's more art than science, is for
22 people who need less, we try to keep as
23 light a touch as possible. So we start
24 with the lightest touch set of services
25 and hope that people succeed before we

1 go to a more intense or expensive or
2 labor-intensive set of services.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. So
4 just in the big picture, I believe the
5 Office of Support of Housing's budget
6 is about \$100 million roughly?

7 MS. HERSH: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And if you
9 were to fund both the housing, the
10 sheltering and the wraparound services
11 for everyone, everyone we're talking
12 about in the City of Philadelphia that
13 we know of, what do you estimate that
14 cost might be of supporting those
15 people at this time?

16 MS. HERSH: \$31 million.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: 31 million
18 on top of the 100?

19 MS. HERSH: I haven't done
20 that math lately. But when we brought
21 in a national consultant to estimate
22 the number of permanent supportive
23 housing units that we needed to prevent
24 and end chronic street homelessness,
25 the number was 2500 units which based

1 on current rents we estimate made to be
2 about \$31 million.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: What do you
4 estimate the current rents to be per
5 bed right now?

6 MS. HERSH: The fair market
7 rent for a one bedroom generally
8 speaking is between \$900 and \$1100
9 depending on which neighborhood. So we
10 estimate -- our costs have gone up
11 slightly. It's a tight rental market
12 surprisingly, so we used to estimate
13 12,500 a year. Now, our latest numbers
14 are closer to 12,900.

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Do
16 you have a sense of what all of the
17 nonprofits or outside agencies that you
18 work with spend on supporting the
19 homeless population in total?

20 MS. HERSH: That would be
21 your \$100 million plus whatever their
22 independent budgets are.

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Do you have
24 any idea of what those budgets are?

25 MS. HERSH: No. It's a great

1 question. I don't have that number.

2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I guess
3 what I'm trying to find out is to get a
4 better understanding of how much the
5 entire City of Philadelphia is, I'm not
6 going to say spending, I'm going to say
7 investing on supporting homeless
8 services and what's the total pool of
9 money, including the nonprofits, the
10 federal, the state and City money and
11 how do we better utilize that money
12 towards all of our goals. If someone
13 could do that analysis, I think we
14 would have a better understanding, like
15 what is the pool of potential money
16 across all departments that we can
17 utilize to achieve these goals.

18 So my question is, do you
19 have these organizations and layers of
20 government where you're convening
21 meetings to bring them together, and
22 can Council help you convene these
23 meetings, maybe through this Committee,
24 to get everyone on the same page with
25 clear and measurable goals that we can

1 move the needle, because now we really
2 need to and see where all of this money
3 is being spent?

4 I'll give you example. We
5 took a tour of modular housing in West
6 Philadelphia, and we were told the cost
7 for modular could be 80,000 to 90,000
8 per unit. And when you look at that
9 cost financed at today's rates, it
10 could be lower. It could be \$600 a
11 month where we can actually save some
12 money here and have a total focus on
13 for every one bed we're providing today
14 with modular, we might be able to
15 provide two beds. So I'm just using
16 that as an example, but there's some
17 probably areas where we can save some
18 money and help you achieve those goals.

19 MS. HERSH: Well, if we can
20 figure out better models, we're totally
21 open to that. I think that's a great
22 idea. I think the homeless system ends
23 up kind of being the course of less
24 resort for people where a lot of other
25 systems fail frankly for people. We

1 have moved the needle though,
2 Councilmember. The rate of family
3 homelessness, the numbers have dropped
4 by 25 percent.

5 As I stated earlier, no one
6 who's gotten homelessness prevention
7 assistance has entered shelter. Our
8 number of people who are unsheltered is
9 at a four-year low after peaking with
10 the opioid crisis a few years ago, so
11 we have moved the needle. Our average
12 length of stay has shrunk in our
13 shelters, so we are moving people out
14 more quickly into permanent housing.

15 We are helping people gain
16 more income through their stays in
17 shelter, so we are moving the needle.
18 It's just not -- the scope is not big
19 enough. I guess the other thing I
20 would encourage everybody to think
21 about is where does the homeless system
22 begin and end and where does the
23 affordable housing system begin and
24 end, and where does the workforce
25 development and employment system begin

1 and end.

2 When the City did its Talent
3 Engine report, it literally did not go
4 as low as people with 0 income. We
5 created a no-barrier employment program
6 through same-day pay. But the homeless
7 system can't do it alone. We are the
8 crisis response system. We have to
9 look at all of these other systems,
10 like I mentioned, health care,
11 corrections and look at what else we
12 can do in those places so that people
13 don't become homeless in the first
14 place or if they do, that they really
15 do have an exit strategy of increased
16 income and a more affordable place to
17 live.

18 So to that end, I think the
19 modular housing would be terrific. We
20 think it's a viable option that's
21 definitely worth looking into and may
22 even be able to largely self-finance,
23 same thing with some of the tiny
24 houses. That's why we're doing all of
25 these pilot programs.

1 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And I will
2 say this, on a modular if you take it
3 over a 15-year term mortgage, you pay
4 it off in 15 years, the payments would
5 be about half of what we're spending
6 now and we would own it in 15 years
7 free and clear. So that's just maybe
8 something we should consider because we
9 can take advantage of those low rates.

10 Let me just mention one other
11 thing. Housing --

12 MS. HERSH: I do want to say
13 one thing, Councilmember, is our
14 shelter beds do turn over four times a
15 year. So the number is not the number
16 when you look at the number of shelter
17 beds. Unless we can stop the churn of
18 people coming through, it's not a
19 one-for-one replacement. And I think
20 that's what's really held us up from
21 making those dollars fungible from beds
22 to units.

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I view
24 housing as a ladder. We always used to
25 say that the first step on the ladder

1 was the first-time home buyer. But
2 maybe we need to look at it now and
3 say, maybe the first step on the ladder
4 is shelter beds, the next step on the
5 ladder might be a nice rental, and then
6 the next step might be going into
7 buying. We should look at that as a
8 Committee maybe in how we advance that
9 ladder to move people up and
10 economically move them up, because what
11 we're talking about today is really a
12 function of the fact that of the top 20
13 cities in the country right now, we're
14 at the bottom basically of job creation
15 and entrepreneurial businesses. So
16 it's the economy to a degree that's
17 causing us to have to deal with this
18 issue, because if people had
19 better-paying jobs and better
20 opportunity and were able to make more
21 money, we wouldn't be in this
22 situation. I don't want to take any
23 more time. I appreciate your time.
24 And thank you, Madam Chair.
25 Thank you very much.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
2 you so much, Councilmember.

3 Councilmember Bass.
4 Councilmember Bass, are you there? Are
5 you on mute?

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
7 after -- or good morning. Good
8 morning. I do apologize. I was having
9 some difficulty coming off of mute.
10 But I want to first start by thanking
11 Liz and her team for all of the hard
12 work that they do. I know that I've
13 met with Liz out at a shelter in my
14 District, and I'm just thoroughly
15 impressed and amazed with the work that
16 they do and can't say enough to support
17 the work that you do.

18 MS. HERSH: Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I just
20 think that you do a phenomenal job with
21 limited resources and I think that you
22 deserve and your department deserves
23 much more, because there's no excuse,
24 there's no reason that anyone should be
25 homeless or houseless in the City of

1 Philadelphia. I don't think there's
2 any excuse for it whatsoever. And I
3 know you do your part, Liz. So again,
4 many thanks and kudos to you and your
5 team and Eva and the whole crew.

6 I had a couple of questions.
7 I had two questions. One was that I
8 noticed earlier in your comments and
9 I'm wondering if you can go back, you
10 said something to the effect that two
11 shelters were underutilized and were
12 likely to close or something to that
13 effect. Can you revisit that for me?

14 MS. HERSH: Yes. We have two
15 shelters, two family shelters that our
16 goal is to repurpose them. Currently,
17 we are working with them. We're
18 converting their shelter funding to
19 rapid re-housing so that the families
20 that are there can move out. And then
21 one of them I think would need to be
22 renovated. We're looking at it as a
23 single-room occupancy or efficiency
24 apartments for use, and the other we're
25 looking at repurposing to be for young

1 parenting families.

2 As I think everybody is
3 really well aware, if there's one thing
4 we can do to end the cycle of poverty
5 and homelessness is to help children
6 and young adults.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

8 MS. HERSH: And so, the more
9 we can take these resources and put
10 them into long-term housing for those
11 really highly vulnerable populations
12 where they're still growing and they're
13 still hopeful and they're still
14 resilient, that's really where we want
15 to create growth. And so, that's what
16 we're looking at in those two
17 instances.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Can you
19 say which shelters those are? Is it
20 confidential or can you say what the
21 locations are?

22 MS. HERSH: It's not
23 confidential, but at this point in time
24 I don't know how widely known it is. I
25 know that we've been discussing it with

1 them. Maybe I can follow up with you
2 afterwards. They're not in your
3 District.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh, okay.
5 That's what I was wondering
6 (inaudible).

7 MS. HERSH: You're breaking
8 up.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
10 Councilmember, we're having a hard time
11 hearing you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is that
13 better?

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
16 And just piggybacking off of your
17 statement, Liz, in terms of housing for
18 young folks, young families in
19 particular, one of my great concerns is
20 about the number of young people who
21 age out of the foster care system and
22 who immediately in many cases become
23 candidates for homelessness in the City
24 of Philadelphia. And so, what is your
25 interaction with DHS to prevent these

1 sorts of occurrences from happening?

2 MS. HERSH: Yes, that's a
3 great question. Let me start with a
4 highlight, and I'll defer to Eva if she
5 wants to add something. We expect to
6 launch in a relatively short time an
7 opportunity for 16 young people who are
8 aging out of the foster care system and
9 who are getting the free tuition at
10 Community College. We expect to be
11 able to provide housing for them, again
12 through this program of renovating two
13 buildings that were PHA housing. So
14 we're really excited about that
15 partnership as one of the again pilot
16 programs that may help us.

17 We have also just funded the
18 Depaul House and they are providing
19 housing for about 20 young people who
20 would otherwise be homeless, who have
21 come out of the foster system by and
22 large and it's really to support them
23 in college because we all know
24 education really matters. Above and
25 beyond that, we work very closely with

1 DHS to try and do everything we can to
2 help those young people secure housing
3 so that they don't end up in the
4 homeless system.

5 We have a youth access point.
6 We meet regularly with DHS on
7 coordinating about who's who. We have
8 youth navigators so we really are
9 trying to work very closely with them.
10 And as with everything else, we still
11 have a long way to go.

12 Let me defer to Eva to see if
13 there's something I missed because she
14 really works with all of us, DHS and
15 OHS, on this.

16 MS. GLADSTEIN: No, I think
17 you covered it. I think there's a
18 daily ongoing interaction between DHS
19 and OHS in terms of particular
20 individual cases. And I guess I would
21 say, Liz, was it three years ago that
22 you first funded kind of the
23 collaborative of youth-serving agencies
24 which came together as a team. And so,
25 some of the work that Liz reflected

1 back was part of that effort about
2 three years ago, and five agencies who
3 served youth came together expressing
4 their ability to play different roles
5 in that system.

6 We are looking forward to the
7 Shared Housing program that will
8 support some of the other work that CCP
9 is doing to provide very low-cost
10 housing for some young people aging out
11 of foster care going to CCP.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
13 Very good. Do we have an idea of how
14 many young people we serve per year in
15 this role, what the number is?

16 MS. HERSH: Let me get back
17 to you on that, Councilmember.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
19 And also, can you give us a sense of
20 how many go uncaptured, if you will?

21 MS. HERSH: Yes, sure.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. So
23 that would be great. The other part to
24 my question was, and I may have missed
25 this, can you tell me what's the total

1 population of folks who are considered
2 homeless in the City of Philadelphia?
3 Do you have a number or a percentage on
4 that?

5 MS. HERSH: I do. We use a
6 point-in-time count, which is -- it's
7 the HUD measure. The last Thursday in
8 January we counted, at last count we
9 were just a little over 5600 people who
10 at that moment in time were homeless.
11 That includes the 950 or so who are
12 unsheltered, that is, literally on the
13 street or in a place unfit for human
14 habitation. And then the remaining
15 5,000 or so who were in emergency or
16 temporary housing, which in
17 Philadelphia includes safe havens which
18 are mental health facilities and
19 recovery houses. They are considered
20 to be part of the homeless system for
21 some folks.

22 Over the course of the year,
23 we've served 19,000 people. So 19,000
24 people experienced homelessness in
25 Fiscal Year 2020, a little over that.

1 So a lot of people who are cycling
2 through our system are touching it for
3 a short time. And that doesn't include
4 the prevention numbers.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

6 Should we be counting people who are
7 waiting for housing through, let's say,
8 PHA or a similar entity who maybe
9 either have a voucher, even though
10 there's no more vouchers right now, but
11 people who are in line and who have
12 been in line, I would say, for years
13 for housing who are living cramped up,
14 let's say they're living with their
15 mom, maybe it's a three-bedroom house,
16 a standard row, and maybe there's
17 multiple families living in that house,
18 they're not homeless, but they're in an
19 untenable situation as well? So is
20 there any consideration of adding those
21 people to our list who are also
22 awaiting housing and who by the grace
23 of God are not sleeping in our shelters
24 or unsheltered completely?

25 MS. HERSH: Right. Well,

1 this is a big debate that goes on. We
2 generally consider our point-in-time
3 count to be an undercount. We believe
4 that there are many more people who are
5 flying below the radar screen who
6 really are homeless. They're just sort
7 of nipping and tucking to pull it
8 together and not actually falling into
9 actual homelessness.

10 We've adopted the HUD
11 definition of being literally homeless
12 and the folks that you described as
13 being couch surfing, living in
14 overcrowded situations, are really by
15 HUD standards considered to be
16 extremely housing insecure or
17 imminently homeless, so it's really a
18 definitional issue. We would consider
19 them to require the intervention of the
20 affordable housing system, so either
21 they would need prevention services or
22 what they really need is affordable
23 housing. And every effort should be
24 made to have them not be homeless. So
25 that's the --

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I agree.

2 MS. HERSH: -- way we look at
3 it. I think you could debate and we
4 can easily debate all sides of that
5 issue with equal passion.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
7 Because it does seem as if we're
8 undercounting significantly. And if
9 there's a way to address that, I think
10 that we should. The last part of that
11 question is if we're looking at 5600
12 people, 950 of whom are unsheltered, my
13 question is for those who are actually
14 sheltered, can you talk about some of
15 the programs and services that are
16 provided in terms of job opportunities,
17 life skills?

18 I think you went over some of
19 these things and some of your partners
20 before, but can you give us a clear
21 picture? Maybe I missed it, but I
22 don't really have a clear picture in
23 terms of when someone comes in, how do
24 we help them sort of get on their feet,
25 knowing how great the need is? How do

1 we really help them as a City? Are we
2 providing as much as we can provide?
3 Do we need to provide more? And if so,
4 what is that? Can you talk about that
5 a little bit?

6 And I'm asking this question
7 because there's a shelter in my
8 District that you and I visited, Liz,
9 and one of the things that they were
10 doing was helping folks with savings,
11 like opening up savings accounts,
12 budgeting, all those kinds of things,
13 the skills that we all need. Listen, I
14 can use some right now, sort of
15 organizing and just staying organized
16 and on top of things. And so, at any
17 given moment any one of us could use
18 the skills and services and the
19 life-training refresher courses that
20 are offered.

21 But I was really disappointed
22 when I found out that those services
23 were taken away, that they were no
24 longer allowed to be provided to these
25 residents because they don't need the

1 skills or they don't need the training
2 or they don't need this, that or
3 whatever and I just thought it was very
4 much a missed opportunity. So can you
5 speak to that?

6 MS. HERSH: Right. I think
7 what you're talking about is mandatory
8 fees and savings that used to exist in
9 the shelter system which we no longer
10 have. It is most certainly --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You said
12 mandatory fees?

13 MS. HERSH: Yes. The City's
14 shelters used to have mandatory fees
15 and mandatory savings and that was
16 discontinued in 2016 in part of the
17 effort to do two things: One, become
18 housing first and lower barriers to
19 entry and people wouldn't come in
20 because they knew that they were going
21 to have to pay fees or have mandatory
22 savings and they didn't want to be told
23 what to do, and also to be housing
24 first and to be trauma-informed.

25 And the idea is that it's

1 really not up to us to tell people how
2 to run their lives, even though they
3 may have very low incomes, they may be
4 really very, very poor and they may be
5 homeless. They still have dignity and
6 agency and they're still people. And
7 so, what we have been working with our
8 providers on to be trauma-informed is
9 to encourage people rather than to
10 dictate to them. And so, that's a
11 philosophical shift.

12 I'll tell you one of the
13 things that really used to help a lot
14 that we don't have anymore, and that's
15 individual savings accounts. There
16 used to be a program, I think it was
17 through the state at one time and
18 through the United Way where if people
19 saved money, that money was matched,
20 and maybe this also gets to
21 Councilmember Domb's question about a
22 ladder up, which is that, you know,
23 just incentivizing savings so that
24 people have a little bit of money.

25 What we found was when people

1 think they're going to move into a
2 place, they're very good at saving
3 money and our shelters I think and
4 transitional housing programs do a
5 great job of helping people structure
6 their job search or going to school,
7 getting child care if that's relevant
8 and also saving money.

9 The other partnership that
10 we've cultivated over the last couple
11 of years is First Step Staffing, which
12 provides -- what's it called,
13 temporary, it's a staffing agency.
14 Basically, there's jobs. If you walk
15 in, pass a drug test and ID, you can
16 get a job. And so, that has I think
17 been a very, very helpful partnership.

18 So all that being said, I
19 think we do put a lot on our shelter
20 staff to try and meet a lot of needs
21 that people have, and people have a lot
22 of challenges in their lives and I
23 think that our providers do a very good
24 job. But I think that if we could beef
25 up employment and training services and

1 job placement for the very lowest
2 income people who maybe have checkered
3 pasts, if we could have savings
4 accounts that could incentivize
5 savings, I think that those things
6 would really -- Universal pre-K or
7 Build pre-K has been a huge help.
8 Those are the things that have really
9 been concrete that people need.

10 MR. HOLLoman: And I would
11 just add to say I know when that came
12 out that was sort of a culture shock.
13 I know there were many people who
14 reached out to many different
15 Councilfolks' offices in regard to that
16 in terms of providers. I think a lot
17 of that came down to training. I think
18 we probably as an agency could have
19 done a better job in terms of
20 communicating what that really meant
21 and also provide better training to
22 individuals.

23 One of the things that we did
24 do was went from having a crisis
25 response center by having housing case

1 managers in each individual shelter,
2 and part of their main job was to
3 really create a treatment plan with the
4 individual tailored to them that talked
5 about savings, talked about what it
6 would look like in terms of where would
7 you want to move from different
8 neighborhoods, whether this
9 neighborhood became a trigger. So I
10 think we still have some work to go in
11 that area, along with providing some
12 technical assistance to our providers.

13 I do know -- again, that was
14 a culture shock because for years there
15 were mandatory savings and fees. But
16 what we have also found is there have
17 been some providers that have taken on
18 a positive approach that this has
19 really worked, where they have done
20 things to incentivize such as buying
21 kitchen sets for people who wanted to
22 save time when it was their time to
23 move out, so I think we will take any
24 feedback or suggestion on how we can
25 better communicate that to offer

1 training, but I think that is something
2 that is constantly going to be ongoing.
3 And I think the need now is even more
4 where income is just not there, to
5 really talk about what does a savings
6 account look like, what it would look
7 like for when you move when you don't
8 have that safety net, such as some of
9 the shelter providers who go outside of
10 their way to make sure that a person
11 has -- I think a lot of that goes down
12 to the language that we use and the
13 training that we need to implement with
14 our provider community.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. I
16 hear you guys. I was unaware of the
17 mandatory fees. I have no idea what
18 fees were charged or how that worked or
19 where they were charged. But I guess I
20 was specifically speaking of the
21 savings, because I am a big supporter
22 of the need to save. You never know.
23 You never know.

24 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yes.

25 MS. HERSH: You're right.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And I
2 understand that we don't want to tell
3 people what to do, but we tell people
4 what to do all the time. We tell them,
5 you know, this is Philadelphia, don't
6 drink soda, right, all kinds of things
7 we tell people what not to do. And so,
8 the idea that we can't tell people who
9 are utilizing the shelter system that
10 savings is a good thing and that this
11 is something that really should be done
12 and this is going to help get that
13 ladder up, get you back on your feet,
14 get you into a place of permanency that
15 is your very own. So I just think that
16 there might be a lost opportunity. So
17 based on what I know about the former
18 provider who was providing it, they did
19 a great job. That's all I can tell
20 you. They did a great job.

21 MR. HOLLOWMAN: We totally
22 agree with you. We totally agree with
23 you 100 percent in regards to savings.
24 And we also know there are banks that
25 are located in -- neighborhood banks

1 that provide some type of free checking
2 account, savings account for people who
3 are underserved. It's just getting
4 those folks out to come and do some
5 seminars, do some Zoom meetings, to
6 really talk to the community about what
7 neighborhood banks also have to offer,
8 but we're 100 percent in agreement with
9 savings.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
11 All right. Well, very good. Well,
12 thank you so much. Like I said, I
13 think you all do a great job. I think
14 this is a point where we probably
15 disagree. But 99 percent of everything
16 else I think that you all are doing
17 great work. Thank you so much.

18 And thank you, Madam Chair.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you so much, Councilmember.

21 And good morning, Eva. Can I
22 get you to say your name and position
23 for the record?

24 MS. GLADSTEIN: Of course --

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Madam

1 Chair, I have a question.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Oh,
3 no, no. I see you. I just --

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: We went
5 around the Robin. Okay.

6 MS. GLADSTEIN:
7 Councilmember, I won't bogart too much
8 time. Good morning. Eva Gladstein,
9 Deputy Managing Director for Health and
10 Human Services.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you. I wasn't ignoring you,
13 Councilmember. I just wanted to get
14 her name on the record. You got the
15 floor. Councilmember Jones, your turn.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh, thank
17 you. Thank you so much.

18 And, Eva, it's appropriate
19 that you're up to the plate. And I
20 want to thank you particularly, Liz. I
21 remember it was your first week, we met
22 in my office and you were green as
23 grass, you were scared as hell. But
24 you are now battle-tested and seem like
25 a veteran of these issues and I'm very

1 glad that you hung in there with the
2 City of Philadelphia, so thank you.

3 MS. HERSH: Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: My
5 question and concern stems from the
6 Chairwoman and I were on a bizarre call
7 yesterday dealing with a slightly
8 different issue but kind of feeds into
9 your premise that it's cheaper to
10 maintain people in their existing
11 housing as opposed to matriculate them
12 through a system that can tend to have
13 cost-burdens to the City of
14 Philadelphia and then not have all of
15 the positive outcomes at the end of the
16 day.

17 The situation is for
18 multi-unit structures like the Pavilion
19 in my District in the 52nd Ward and the
20 Brith Sholom building. Both of which
21 have about a block and a half distance
22 between them, both of them were built
23 around the same era. Both of whom had
24 nice at the time HUD deals where there
25 were predictable rents and people got

1 in under locked-in rents, somewhere
2 around 750 a month.

3 The mass majority of the
4 people in those units, over 300 units
5 we're talking about are on a fixed
6 income. Most of the people in those
7 units are elderly. Many of the people
8 in those units are veterans. Many of
9 the people in those units have physical
10 disabilities. And what has happened in
11 these cases is that math of those rents
12 versus what it cost to maintain them
13 aren't adding up. And so, deferred
14 maintenance has caught up with many of
15 these facilities and systems are
16 failing.

17 So we have blackouts where
18 during the heat of the summer the
19 electricity goes out. There's no
20 backup generators that can -- we're
21 already using the backup generators and
22 we had seniors going down steps using
23 the lights from their cell phones to
24 get down. To say we were risking a
25 catastrophe in those cases is an

1 understatement. So much so that when
2 L&I inspected, they found out that the
3 building, one of them, was in violation
4 of the sprinkler system law, that they
5 had a dry system versus a wet system
6 which has an additional maintenance
7 cost of maybe somewhere around
8 \$150,000, which the management company
9 and owners have deferred over time and
10 just kicked the can down the road. So
11 much so that it wound up in court and
12 but for the COVID closing of courts, we
13 may have close to 300 homeless people.

14 Now, how that impacts your
15 system under your theory of how we keep
16 them in facilities rent gives me a lot
17 of question. Now, the Chairwoman was
18 on that call dealing with the issue of
19 AMI, area of median income, which
20 impacts them as well, because the
21 increases in rent are predicated on the
22 household incomes of Lower Merion also
23 adjusted to Philadelphia, and the
24 difference might be \$45,000 or so in
25 Philly versus \$82,000 in Merion and its

1 pricing on affordability rents out of
2 the picture.

3 So I think our housing
4 strategy needs to get ahead of the
5 curve and these buildings, these older
6 multi-unit buildings that are leaving
7 off of HUD kinds of contracts are all
8 over the City. They're in Nicetown.
9 They're in North Philly. They're in
10 all parts of the City and we do not
11 have a policy that is going to prevent
12 the wave of homelessness that comes not
13 just because of COVID rent issues, but
14 because of the deteriorating condition
15 of some of these multi-units.

16 What can we do both for AMI
17 to prevent homelessness and adjust that
18 and to deal with the condition of some
19 of these facilities?

20 MS. GLADSTEIN: Do you mind
21 if I try to respond to that? So the
22 AMI question is an underlying one
23 that's a matter of federal policy right
24 now. Now, the City could and you,
25 Council, can take some steps to try to

1 begin to address it. But the way it's
2 calculated is by federal law and it's
3 based on a regional calculation. And
4 so, the AMI for Philly ends up being
5 much higher than it should be.

6 Plus, the way most
7 developments work, if they get tax
8 credit financing or other financing,
9 they're aiming at people who are 40,
10 50, or 60 percent of that AMI, so the
11 people we're talking about are really
12 at 10, 20 or 30 percent of AMI. Now,
13 the City does require a set-aside of 10
14 percent of the new units developed with
15 any City financing. So if 200 units
16 are developed in a year, 20 of them are
17 set aside for very low-income
18 individuals.

19 But what you're really
20 talking about is a preservation issue.
21 And frankly, it's an issue that was
22 raised by the Housing Now protest camp,
23 which I said I would mention in this
24 call but here I am, which is that a lot
25 of these buildings were developed under

1 HUD programs with 15-year requirements
2 or even 30-year requirements and
3 they're coming off of their
4 requirements.

5 I just saw the most recent
6 information from Planning and
7 Development and they're looking at
8 significant investments and
9 preservation, and that's what the need
10 would be in these buildings,
11 preservation. And if you have a
12 responsible nonprofit owner, they would
13 go after that funding and they would
14 put in the money for deferred
15 maintenance, maybe agree to extend the
16 low-income affordability, but in some
17 cases you don't have an owner that
18 meets that designation. But I would
19 encourage -- I think you're going to be
20 looking at some additional CDBG
21 investments to kind of talk to
22 preservation, because for people who
23 are in housing that was developed with
24 federal housing funds and low-income
25 housing tax credits in the City of

1 Philadelphia, you're right, keeping
2 them in the units would be the highest
3 priority and the City does on a routine
4 basis make funds available for
5 preservation of those units, which can
6 involve City financing, could involve
7 going and getting more tax credits of
8 two different varieties, but you need
9 an owner who's willing to do that and
10 has interest in doing that
11 unfortunately.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I would
13 join my skeptical colleagues about
14 gentrification. I would join that
15 whole mindset of you better watch out
16 because they're coming to get our
17 property. I would suggest to you that
18 when you talk about these two
19 facilities, a block away from Fairmount
20 Park, two or three blocks away from
21 City Avenue, two or three blocks away
22 from the expressway that can get
23 anywhere in the region within 20
24 minutes, that there is a wish by some
25 of these owners and managers that we

1 actually do go after them and L&I shut
2 them down, put the people out so that
3 they can then renovate and slickly
4 market to a whole different segment of
5 renters.

6 If you don't believe that,
7 you know, Jones might be paranoid up in
8 the 4th because this only happens in
9 the 5th District and in the 1st
10 District and in the 3rd District,
11 gentrification issues only happen --
12 no, because all you have to do is look
13 at the Penn Wynn scenario and now it's
14 called the Dane, right, same place but
15 almost double the rent and with a
16 different clientele.

17 We developed the good cause
18 legislation because of that growing
19 scenario in not Center City adjacent
20 neighborhoods but in the 9th and the
21 8th and the 4th Districts. And so,
22 we're beginning to see investors out in
23 New York often that are coming in and
24 seeing the value in these structures
25 and scooping them up. So in our

1 affordable housing plan as we move
2 towards budget, I'm going to be looking
3 for programs that specifically address
4 that growing phenomenon. So that's
5 important to me as a District
6 Councilperson who is on the fringes of
7 some of that gentrification.

8 Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you, Councilmember.

11 Councilmember Brooks.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
13 you so much, Madam Chair.

14 I have a series of concerns
15 and questions that I'm going to bring
16 up. I'm going to start with the
17 housing system. I was recently told
18 that there has been a significant
19 number of Black men that it has been
20 hard or for some reason have not been
21 able to be placed in permanent housing.

22 And my concern is leaning to
23 something my Councilmember brought up.
24 We have folks, young men, that are
25 aging out of the foster care system or

1 aging out of the criminal justice
2 system through foster care, whichever
3 way that goes back and forth that
4 continues to add to the large number of
5 young Black men that end up in shelter,
6 and you even also mentioned about the
7 systems aren't aligned, so people that
8 are coming from prison don't have a
9 shelter plan, they end up in our
10 shelter system.

11 What is being done to make
12 sure, is it equity or whatever supports
13 need to be put in place for Black men
14 that are falling into this system?
15 That's my first question.

16 MS. HERSH: We just -- and
17 I'll defer to Beth. She may have a
18 more comprehensive answer. We just
19 completed a racial equity analysis. We
20 did it last year. It's been updated
21 this year and the vast majority of
22 people who access permanent housing are
23 African-American men. So there is no
24 disparity that we've been able to find
25 in that.

1 That being said,
2 Councilmember, there certainly is not
3 enough places for people to go and for
4 people to live and I do think that
5 young adults struggle more. They're
6 energetic and I think that's why we've
7 tried to grow the supply of options for
8 young adults and so, that they have
9 more options. And I think this is a
10 multi-system and this is a more
11 complicated issue because it has to do
12 with the education, employment, right,
13 all of those things so that people not
14 only have a future, but they feel that
15 they have a future.

16 And I think one of the most
17 insidious evils that we have is when
18 young people, especially young Black
19 men, feel that they don't have worth
20 and that they don't have hope. And
21 then they turn to the economy that's
22 available for them in some cases which
23 may be K2, so then you begin to lose
24 them. And so, that is an urgent issue
25 I think for all of us to look at.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Are
2 there any collaborative conversations
3 that are happening to make sure as they
4 transition out of whether it's the
5 criminal justice system and a foster
6 system, that they have access to
7 workforce development or some way to
8 earn a sustainable living either while
9 they're transitioning or once they hit
10 the shelter or is there a collaborative
11 conversation between all of these City
12 agencies to make sure that there's a
13 solid transition or pathway for these
14 young Black men, because we realize we
15 end up with them again when we start
16 talking about violence prevention in
17 neighborhoods and so many other things?

18 MS. HERSH: You're absolutely
19 right. And I hope that you will talk
20 to the correctional system and the
21 child welfare system about these
22 questions also and not just us. And we
23 certainly are in very close dialogue
24 with them. We just worked together
25 with the correctional system. We have

1 two pilot programs. One is called High
2 Five, which is for people who have
3 mental health, have been homeless in
4 and out and been through the
5 correctional system. It's a subsidy
6 with wraparound services. It's an
7 evidence-based practice that's been
8 used nationally and we're getting
9 extraordinary results. They're not
10 going back to into the correctional
11 system.

12 With the Reentry Office now,
13 there's a new program that's just been
14 funded to provide rapid re-housing
15 through a master lease program so that
16 when people are coming out of the
17 correctional system, they have some
18 place to go right away that's not a
19 shelter. So those are some of the
20 collaborative efforts that we are
21 undertaking.

22 I think, for example, the
23 correctional system, just like you're
24 asking us to stretch and look across
25 bounds, I think that the question of

1 what are we releasing people to is a
2 question that other systems are asking
3 and need to look at, and how does that
4 fit together with affordable housing so
5 that people do have real options in
6 their lives to be able to exit to.
7 Dave was going to add something.

8 MR. HOLLOMAN: Liz, I think
9 you're correct. We have had numerous
10 conversations with Commissioner Blanche
11 on the county jails. But I think it's
12 extremely difficult and I think this is
13 something that you probably have to do
14 with your legislative counterparts at
15 the state, but when folks are being
16 discharged from state prisons and don't
17 have a discharge plan or have
18 communication, unfortunately you have a
19 lot of people that are being discharged
20 from state prison, especially
21 particularly Black men that are
22 entering into shelter which we have.
23 That relationship or having that
24 leeway is extremely difficult.

25 I think at the county level

1 we have had conversations with
2 Commissioner Blanche in regards to
3 identifying folks who come in that says
4 they are homeless that have behavioral
5 health challenges, and we kind of can
6 work with them on sort of a discharge
7 plan. But it's that issue where folks
8 that have been doing state time when
9 they're being discharged, unfortunately
10 some of their housing option plan is
11 the shelter system.

12 I know we get a significant
13 amount of letters that come from state
14 social workers and their housing option
15 plan is they still put 1360 Ridge
16 Avenue shelter on there. That just
17 shows how much there's been an
18 out-of-touch point because Ridge Avenue
19 shelter has been closed for years. But
20 unfortunately, some of these state
21 prisons still utilize folks who have
22 been born and raised in Philadelphia
23 and when it's time to be discharged,
24 unfortunately shelter is the only
25 backdoor option. But usually, we get

1 that maybe 30 days out or sometimes
2 less than that and we just don't have a
3 way -- maybe that conversation again
4 needs to happen either at your level
5 with a state rep. that really is
6 engaged in that process around reentry
7 back into society. But again, we would
8 love to be at the table and have a
9 conversation around that.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So when
11 I think of reentry and reunification,
12 this is all the same issue when we're
13 talking about families that may be in
14 the public housing voucher system and
15 men returning back to families. Is it
16 still on the books that they cannot
17 come back into their home if they're
18 receiving public housing? If they live
19 in any public housing or any
20 City-funded housing, that someone
21 coming out of prison cannot return to
22 their families?

23 MS. HERSH: We do not have a
24 prohibition against people with a
25 criminal background in anything that we

1 support, and I don't think HUD does
2 either. The only prohibition I think
3 in PHA federally is if you've been
4 convicted of burning meth or a capital
5 offense like murder. I think other
6 than that -- PHA has a slightly more
7 restrictive policy. That's something
8 you will want to ask them about when
9 you have them talk because they have a
10 slightly more restrictive policy. And
11 so, what we do is we help people appeal
12 if they are turned down for housing.

13 MR. HOLLoman: And I guess
14 they would have to also -- you would
15 have to probably go back to whether
16 they were listed on the lease at the
17 time when they went into PHA housing.
18 Again, I think that's a question for
19 PHA. But I have heard that comment
20 also before on many different
21 occasions, but I think it really goes
22 down to who's listed on that lease.

23 MS. HERSH: And,
24 Councilmember, I just want to affirm
25 your question because I think when we

1 look at homelessness, people usually
2 think about mental health. And a lot
3 of people who are homeless are
4 perfectly mentally healthy. They just
5 don't have money and they don't have
6 opportunities. And I think one of the
7 things that really holds people back is
8 this whole churning through the
9 carceral system and the fact that
10 people end up incarcerated very early
11 on, disproportionately Black men, young
12 Black men especially, and then it's
13 like a ball and chain and they can't
14 move forward in their lives. And so, I
15 think that anything we can do for
16 employment, for housing that reduces
17 discrimination based on your past
18 record would be very helpful for them
19 and for us to be able to help them.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So I'm
21 going to switch gears a little bit and
22 I have a few questions about rapid
23 re-housing. I'm really excited that
24 this is available to folks. But one of
25 the things that we found is how someone

1 talked about incentivizing landlords to
2 do this, so there are some landlords
3 that are willing to do it. But at the
4 end of the 12-month or 24-month lease,
5 they create unreasonable leases for
6 people to stay there and that's not a
7 pathway to permanency.

8 Is there any way that we can
9 secure -- the City is securing funding
10 for two years for a property. Is there
11 something that we can do on the tenant
12 side to ensure that they're still able
13 to stay there once their lease
14 agreement with the City is up, because
15 I've had several complaints about that
16 particular issue? And I think that's
17 problematic when the City has secured a
18 landlord two years' worth of income at
19 probably top dollar rate, and at the
20 end of the day we end up with the same
21 people back in our system after we've
22 already made the investment.

23 MS. HERSH: Yes, in some
24 cases that does happen and I think it's
25 a good point. I think Council has done

1 a lot to try and hold landlords
2 accountable in general. Once we stop
3 paying them, then that becomes a legal
4 issue of whether it's a legal lease and
5 whether people know how to negotiate.
6 What we try to do is really work with
7 people on what are their rights. We
8 try to work with a model lease, so they
9 know this is what a lease should really
10 look like, you can't sign away your
11 rights. You can go to the Philadelphia
12 Eviction Prevention Program if you
13 think you're being treated unfairly.
14 You can go to TURN and you can get help
15 and you can fight for yourself. I
16 think what we do or what we try to do
17 is to help people feel empowered to
18 advocate for themselves if they are
19 treated unfairly.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: And to
21 that, when I think about pathway to
22 permanent housing, we realize that some
23 of these landlords will gladly take
24 City money but give independent or
25 folks that we're trying -- I'm saying

1 we're, in terms of the homelessness and
2 trying to find housing for folks,
3 housing discrimination exists and it's
4 really hard to find folks that are
5 willing to not just take the City
6 vouchers, but just regular PHA vouchers
7 or whatever. Is there any way we
8 can or do you see any pathway that we
9 have to secure long-term housing for
10 tenants around this particular issue
11 because we know it exists?

12 MS. HERSH: Well, you're
13 right, housing discrimination
14 absolutely exists. And the City
15 actually has source of income
16 protection which has a higher bar than
17 the federal law and I believe than the
18 state, so that step has been taken.
19 I'll tell you one thing -- there's two
20 things that have made a difference for
21 us. When we did the Eviction Task
22 Force a couple of years ago, one of the
23 things that was loud and clear is that
24 landlords hate risk and they need money
25 and they want a steady stream -- a

1 turnover in units is one of their
2 highest costs so they don't want that.

3 And so, one of the things
4 that we've done in our programs, it's
5 very helpful, is to screen tenants and
6 then stand behind our tenant so it
7 reduces the risk and it reduces the
8 cost of turnover. The one thing that I
9 think would really help is if we could
10 help more of the mom-and-pop landlords
11 fix up their places, because when you
12 get a subsidy, it's enough to cover
13 your operating costs month-to-month,
14 day-to-day, your property taxes,
15 whatever your repairs, your current
16 costs. But it's really not enough to
17 make major capital investments, like
18 your heater, your boiler, your roof,
19 your windows. If those things go, even
20 if you're on a program where you get a
21 rent subsidy, it's really not enough.

22 And I think one of the things
23 that we've tried to pilot but still I
24 think very much is needed is some kind
25 of lost reserve fund or some kind of

1 loan or grant program, especially for
2 those mom-and-pop landlords. Philly is
3 a city of mom-and-mop landlords. Most
4 landlords own one, two, three, four
5 units. They're not mostly the high-
6 rises, although we have that. And
7 they're really scraping by. And so,
8 those are the folks I think where
9 there's really an opportunity if we
10 could help them with loans or grants to
11 make major capital improvements so that
12 they can -- and with some strings
13 attached so they have to continue to
14 make it affordable to somebody at a low
15 income. I think that's an opportunity
16 we can look at that, that would make a
17 difference.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Eva, it
19 looks like you wanted to say something?

20 MS. GLADSTEIN: Yes. I just
21 wanted to say that there's a pilot
22 program in the Kensington lower
23 Northeast focused on doing this. It's
24 a loan program, not a grant program
25 where we got some state Housing Trust

1 Fund money and then Planning and
2 Development put in some resources.
3 Impact Services is operating it, but it
4 would enable landlords to make all of
5 the repairs, particularly for
6 properties that have some lead issues
7 in them and then hold them to certain
8 lease terms and terms around rent for a
9 period of time because of the City
10 investment. So that probably only
11 kicked off maybe three or four months
12 ago, but I think we can look at that
13 pilot and see what we can learn from
14 it.

15 MS. HERSH: Yes, I think they
16 were called rental repair programs.
17 HUD used to have a product many, many
18 years ago. But I think that's the
19 idea.

20 MS. GLADSTEIN: And the City
21 had a product called the Men Program
22 and (inaudible), but it's been long
23 gone.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: My last
25 thoughts around this issue, when we

1 think in terms of the rental assistance
2 and the programs that the City has
3 already set up to help low-income
4 renters, do we have any rent
5 stabilization measures in place for
6 properties of landlords or realtors
7 that we continue to invest in towards
8 housing, because we realize that we are
9 spending taxpayers' money? And rental
10 assistance is wonderful for renters and
11 it's also wonderful for landlords.
12 It's guaranteed income. But long-term,
13 it's important that if the City is
14 making an investment in good faith,
15 landlords are doing the same.

16 So regardless of what you
17 want to call it, rent stabilization,
18 rent control or whatever, if the City
19 is funding these programs, is there any
20 way or things that you think will be
21 best suited for us to provide as much
22 housing as possible at low costs and
23 get as many people housed? And I think
24 moving towards some kind of rent
25 stabilization or whatever someone wants

1 to call it would be a smart move. Have
2 you guys thought of any programs or are
3 there any situations where those types
4 of stipulations are within contracts
5 with landlords?

6 MS. HERSH: Yes, there is.
7 And I'm just laughing because both Eva
8 and I worked for the Tenants Action
9 Group for many years and this is
10 something we've thought about and
11 talked about for, I don't know, 30 or
12 40 years, something like that. But to
13 answer your question, our Shallow Rent
14 Program that the Office of Homeless
15 Services runs is a set amount of money.
16 We pay \$600 a month, the individual
17 pays \$200 and the rent -- the total nut
18 is \$800 a month. And so, essentially
19 through that program it does function
20 essentially like a rent stabilization
21 program.

22 The trade-off is then there's
23 no turnover in the unit. It reduces
24 the risk for the landlord. So we have
25 had very good participation in that

1 program. The wild card is if you end
2 up having a low vacancy rate in your
3 rental market, then landlords will
4 gravitate towards higher rents, just
5 like Councilmember Jones was talking
6 about, or if they think they can get
7 the PHA subsidy which may be higher,
8 then they may pick and choose. They
9 may cherry-pick their rental assistance
10 program. But our Shallow Rent Program
11 is a set amount for the duration of the
12 lease which is renewed annually. So it
13 is a de facto rent stabilization, a
14 voluntary rent stabilization program.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So can
16 we have some uniformity in this between
17 PHA and the City?

18 MS. HERSH: No, we can't
19 without changing federal law. Because
20 the way the housing choice voucher
21 works is that you pay 30 percent of
22 your income towards housing cost and
23 it's based on what is considered to be
24 the fair market rent for the geography.
25 That's what Councilmember Jones was

1 talking about, whatever that number is.
2 And so, it's basically indexed based on
3 the market. Whereas the shallow rent
4 that we do, we've basically tailored it
5 so it would require some kind of
6 adjustment through PHA.

7 Now, whether or not they
8 could do it -- they're moving to work
9 agency. Whether or not there's any
10 flexibility there, I don't know. But I
11 don't believe without changing federal
12 law that that could be done. It would
13 have to be purely voluntary. It
14 basically would have to be
15 incentivized, I think.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Madam
17 Chair, I have one more thing just to
18 that. When we think about the rent
19 assistance that came out in reference
20 to COVID, I had a significant number of
21 applicants on the tenant side that had
22 landlords that refused to do it on
23 their side, for whatever odd reason,
24 whether they didn't want to take the
25 original \$750 that was offered, whether

1 they weren't in line with their own
2 property taxes or had L&I violations.
3 And I know that the City was working
4 really hard to help the landlords on
5 that side as well.

6 So I'm thinking in terms of
7 we're saying that landlords like
8 consistency, and through COVID the City
9 has stepped in and offered that level
10 of consistency through rental
11 assistance and they refused to take it.
12 I'm not really sure what else we can do
13 moving forward, even though I know that
14 subsidy was increased because we were
15 able to add federal funds. But it
16 still was only for three months. COVID
17 has yet to end and the concern is
18 what's going to happen for the duration
19 until people are 100 percent back to
20 work.

21 Do we have any idea of what
22 could be put in place or any idea what
23 we can do for the next few months to
24 secure tenants and also to
25 incentivize -- I don't know what else,

1 we're giving landlords money -- to keep
2 the tenants in those houses or units to
3 prevent the homelessness that we
4 anticipate due to this pandemic?

5 MS. HERSH: Well, I think
6 again Council really deserves a lot of
7 credit for all the steps you've taken.
8 With the eviction moratorium, with the
9 Diversion Program, with the Eviction
10 Prevention Program, all of these steps
11 that have been taken are the right
12 things to do and that's what we know
13 works.

14 Above and beyond those
15 things, I don't know. I'll defer to
16 Eva on this. Sometimes landlords don't
17 participate because they don't have
18 rental licenses and they want to fly
19 below the radar screen because they
20 don't want to be known as a rental
21 property because then it's more of
22 like, I'm going to overstate this, but
23 like a black market among certain
24 landlords so they don't want to
25 participate because they don't want to

1 be held accountable for the standards,
2 and they prey on people who don't have
3 a lot of choices, and we know that
4 that's a big issue.

5 And so, we understand that
6 and sometimes they're scared.
7 Sometimes it's too hard. Who knows
8 what other reasons they have. But I
9 think probably continuing to get that
10 money into rental assistance and
11 continuing to not have evictions and
12 provide that assistance to tenants so
13 that they can fight if they are being
14 unlawfully or unfairly evicted, those
15 are the things -- they're very
16 labor-intensive -- but those are the
17 things that worked.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: One
19 other thing. This is more of a comment
20 than a statement. One of my pet peeves
21 and has been my pet peeves even prior
22 to becoming an elected official is how
23 we use affordable housing
24 interchangeably. And we realize when
25 we talk about AMI, we're talking about

1 folks who qualify for affordable
2 housing work in our offices, right.
3 When we're talking about folks that are
4 at 10 percent, that is low income and
5 we can't use it interchangeably because
6 the systems that will keep them in
7 place are not the same, and the
8 availability and access to housing are
9 not the same, because people will
10 gladly allow affordable housing in
11 their community.

12 When we start talking about
13 low-income housing, we start talking
14 about discrimination and we have to be
15 able to articulate that in a way that
16 everyone understands. And I'm excited
17 about the Tiny House program and
18 Councilman Domb talked about these
19 modular programs that are all good, but
20 I do not want the City to really be
21 invested in new and improved public
22 housing that in the long-term will end
23 up neglecting and divesting in and they
24 end up becoming slums all over again.

25 We need to find better ways

1 to invest in our citizens, whether
2 they're low income, affordable housing
3 or newcomers coming into the City.
4 Everyone deserves quality housing. And
5 I think we need to find a way to look
6 at it that does not segregate people,
7 because that's what we have done
8 historically and that's what we
9 continue to do and we have to find a
10 better way to do it.

11 So we don't want a new and
12 improved public housing system. We
13 need to find a way to provide housing
14 for all citizens in a way that
15 Philadelphia becomes, you know, an
16 example of what it is to be a city that
17 cares about its folks, the City of
18 Brotherly Love, our name, how about
19 that. Thank you, guys.

20 MS. HERSH: Thank you,
21 Councilmember. Very well said.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
23 Thanks, Councilmember.

24 Councilmember Gym.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you

1 so much. And again, I want to echo
2 many people's comments about expressing
3 gratitude to Liz Hersh, to Eva
4 Gladstein and both of you for your
5 advocacy. I'll be quick because I know
6 this has been a long time and I also
7 want to thank the Chair of the
8 Committee for allowing me to ask
9 questions. I'm not a member of the
10 Committee, but have been very deeply
11 appreciative of this Committee's work
12 and believe it's one of our most
13 important committees right now.

14 So, Liz, I think you had
15 mentioned that there was not a ton of
16 overlap that you saw between evictions
17 and homelessness; is that right? I
18 don't want to mischaracterize you.

19 MS. HERSH: What I said was
20 that our numbers indicate that 20
21 percent of those who entered our
22 shelter, and I believe this was FY19,
23 had been evicted. The vast majority of
24 people -- and so, we were sending them
25 now to PEP and to the eviction

1 prevention, the rental assistance
2 program. The vast majority of people
3 who come into the homeless system are
4 not leaseholders, current leaseholders.
5 It doesn't mean that they may not have
6 been evicted some time ago, but often
7 they're young and they're just leaving
8 a family house of some sort or a system
9 or if they were leaseholders, it's not
10 within the recent past.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then
12 of the ones that do come in who are
13 leaseholders, would you characterize
14 them as women or family members? Are
15 children involved with those?

16 MS. HERSH: I don't have that
17 data in front of me to be honest with
18 you, Councilmember, but I'm guessing
19 that they're families. Generally
20 speaking, what we see is a young
21 parent, when the second child shows up
22 or when the child gets to be a certain
23 age and the place becomes overcrowded
24 or there's a job interruption, all the
25 usual reasons that people lose their

1 housing. They don't have enough money
2 to pay their rent, that kind of thing.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I
4 think you said that you've seen a
5 decline in the number of families
6 currently seeking shelter, is that
7 correct, that --

8 MS. HERSH: That's correct,
9 25 percent from 2017 to 2020.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. And
11 I'm curious about whether you've seen
12 more, you know, obviously as you know
13 since March, and I thought I heard you
14 say something about March, but since
15 March we've had an eviction moratorium
16 in effect. It had meant that they are
17 no current lockouts, legal lockouts
18 that is. There might be illegal
19 lockouts. But there are no current
20 legal lockouts since March. And I'm
21 wondering if it's possible that that
22 has something to do with not seeing as
23 many families and children in
24 particular coming through our shelter
25 system?

1 MS. HERSH: Yes, I think
2 that's quite possible. That's why
3 we're so scared of what's going to
4 happen next if people don't have the
5 assistance they need, either income or
6 rental assistance or eviction
7 prevention, what's going to happen.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And we are
9 currently discussing -- the CDC has
10 issued a statement that they want a
11 nationwide eviction ban, especially on
12 anybody who earns less than -- actually
13 it's \$198,000 per household --

14 MS. HERSH: Wow.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: -- so it's
16 a significantly high number or \$99,000
17 per individual, but in part because
18 they see mass evictions as a threat to
19 the public health, including if
20 shelters are to get packed or if people
21 were to go to the streets. We're
22 obviously debating whether the
23 extension of a local Philadelphia-based
24 eviction moratorium would help
25 strengthen and clarify things for

1 landlords and I'm wondering if you have
2 an opinion on that?

3 MS. HERSH: I agree.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: With a
5 reinstatement or a local eviction
6 moratorium that clarifies until
7 December 31st?

8 MS. HERSH: Yes. The
9 pandemic is still raging.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.
11 I know that Councilmember Brooks had
12 asked this, but it would help to hear
13 if you can get specific about numbers.
14 How much in rent subsidies through the
15 CARES Act money has gone into rent
16 subsidies from March until now and do
17 you have those numbers from --

18 MS. HERSH: Yes.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I know
20 that Eva has some as well. So I'm not
21 sure how the CARES Act money gets
22 clearly distributed. But I don't know
23 if you have an aggregate, if you have a
24 subset or how it functions.

25 MS. HERSH: Well, the answer

1 is 0. The CARES money didn't come to
2 us. We got the grant agreement in
3 July. The ESG money actually runs
4 through DHCD, they're the grantee. And
5 we did not get a grant agreement. As
6 you recall, Council passed the
7 substantial amendment to the
8 consolidated plan, which is the trigger
9 for getting the grant agreement which
10 we got.

11 Then the next step is that
12 all of the billing systems and the
13 categories have to be set up in the HUD
14 system in order to begin to draw down
15 money, so at this point in time, that's
16 still what's in process so we have not
17 actually received any money yet.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So there's
19 0 dollars of CARES Act money that has
20 gone into -- I think my question is
21 that has gone into the rent subsidies
22 that were provided between March and up
23 to now?

24 MS. HERSH: No, no CARES
25 money.

1 MS. GLADSTEIN: From the
2 Office Homeless of Services, no.

3 MS. HERSH: Homeless
4 Services, no.

5 MS. GLADSTEIN: So the two
6 traunches that were run by -- I'm not
7 going to get this exactly correct, but
8 by the Redevelopment Authority I think
9 that they used CDBG CARES for the first
10 one and for the second one, obviously
11 it's -- they have used multiple sources
12 for the first one frankly, but that's
13 one source I'm relatively confident of.

14 For the current one,
15 obviously there's state CARES dollars
16 and they're putting on top of that some
17 of the CRF dollars, right, the
18 Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars on top
19 of that.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: But that
21 is not CARES Act money? The Relief
22 Fund is not CARES Act money; is that
23 correct, Eva?

24 MS. GLADSTEIN: You know, I
25 don't know how to characterize it. I'm

1 not 100 percent sure, Councilmember.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay.

3 MS. HERSH: We do have a
4 budget and a spending plan that we're
5 working from so once we start to draw
6 down money, we will track how much is
7 going into rents versus other costs.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I think
9 that was my next question. As we take
10 a look at the fact that the Municipal
11 Courts intend to resume lockouts
12 starting October 7th, is there a plan
13 or do you have an amount that we can
14 discuss about whether any CARES money
15 or additional funds can go into the
16 next few months to either provide money
17 at point of diversion so we can avoid
18 eviction as opposed into a general rent
19 subsidy kind of pool?

20 MS. GLADSTEIN: There are
21 active conversations going on with the
22 Recovery Office about that, but I think
23 there's also a little bit of a
24 wait-and-see game to see whether or
25 not -- because the state rental

1 assistance funds have not by any
2 stretch of the imagination been totally
3 used given the restrictions on that
4 program and kind of the artificial
5 deadline of September 30th, which I
6 know is tomorrow. But since the state
7 legislature is looking at amending it
8 and one of the amendments would be to
9 extend the deadline until October 30th.
10 So I think other folks in the City that
11 are managing these funds are trying to
12 pay attention to what's happening at
13 the state before we put local dollars
14 in. But I think that they're really is
15 a desire to have some resources beyond
16 this week to rental assistance.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: All right.
18 That's very helpful. Okay. I think
19 that there are a couple of quick
20 questions. Liz, what is the number of
21 occupied beds versus available beds in
22 our shelter system right now?

23 MS. HERSH: I haven't looked
24 at the -- the numbers would have come
25 through to me today. On the single

1 side, yesterday I think we had about 40
2 beds available. On the family side,
3 oh, I think we have quite a few beds.
4 I would say maybe 200, something like
5 that. We could open up more beds.
6 We've been very careful because we're
7 trying to make sure that we don't spark
8 a COVID outbreak, so we're trying to
9 keep them as sparsely, not as sparsely
10 filled, but keep social distancing in
11 place. And also as the weather gets
12 colder, our numbers always go up. But
13 I would be happy to provide you with
14 those numbers today later on. But I
15 think the single side, we're about 90
16 percent and the family side, we're at
17 about 80 percent right now.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And
19 good thing --

20 MS. GLADSTEIN: And -- I'm
21 sorry.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Oh, go
23 ahead, please.

24 MS. GLADSTEIN: I just got an
25 email clarifying the answer to the

1 question was that it's all considered
2 CARES Act funding because different
3 pots came down with different names on
4 it, but everything was authorized under
5 the CARES Act.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. All
7 right. Thank you. And then, Liz, just
8 for a little bit of clarity, you say
9 currently there are 200 available beds
10 or is it 240 available beds? I think
11 you said 40 on the family side, 200
12 that are available. So I didn't know
13 if that was one number or two.

14 MS. HERSH: Of one amount. I
15 think there's about 200 family beds
16 because our family shelter numbers as I
17 mentioned are down. On the single
18 side, we've been running at about 30 or
19 40 available beds for singles on a
20 daily basis.

21 MR. HOLLoman: Yes, it's
22 about 148 family beds available. 36
23 single men and 79 single women.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And
25 then in terms of programs and services

1 for women, particularly those who are
2 heads of household who have children
3 involved, what's the availability for
4 that?

5 MS. HERSH: That would be the
6 family units.

7 MR. HOLLoman: That's the
8 families.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay.

10 MS. HERSH: And it's not just
11 mothers. It's also fathers or
12 guardians or caregivers, however the
13 family defines itself as a family.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. And
15 I think a little bit of what we're
16 saying is that what we're seeing
17 through our eviction data is that the
18 overwhelming impact is on single female
19 heads of household in particular. And
20 then --

21 MS. HERSH: Well, I think as
22 we know, Councilmember, that when Matt
23 Desmond did the original work on
24 eviction, he actually characterized
25 mass evictions probably five years ago

1 now, mass eviction is the Black female
2 correlate to mass incarceration for
3 Black men. So we know that African-
4 American women are disproportionately
5 impacted by eviction.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes.

7 Thank you. I know that you had
8 mentioned earlier with Councilmember
9 Bass that there might be a reduction in
10 the number of available family beds, is
11 that right, because of the potential
12 closure or the repurposing of those two
13 shelters?

14 MS. HERSH: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Is that
16 based on the fact that there's
17 availability despite the fact that
18 we've got a moratorium in place which
19 may be impacting numbers, right? What
20 I wanted to understand was whether that
21 was a long-term movement towards that.
22 Obviously, we feel like this stage with
23 the eviction moratorium is very fragile
24 and should the courts begin -- we
25 estimate that there are about 2,000

1 immediate lockouts that could be in the
2 hands of a landlord tenant officer in a
3 matter of days effectively. And then
4 we've got more that are being scheduled
5 and 1,000-plus that have already been
6 filed since September when people
7 started filing.

8 Is there some thinking about
9 what our capacity might look like given
10 the fragile state of the situation
11 rather than assuming that family beds
12 may not be as-needed?

13 MS. HERSH: Yes. That's one
14 reason why we're not moving
15 precipitously. That's why we are
16 really trying to manage this balancing
17 act. We don't want to have an
18 oversupply of beds because that money
19 can be repurposed in theory, and at the
20 same time because we don't know what's
21 going to happen with the eviction
22 moratorium, the employment rate with
23 the pandemic. We really feel that we
24 have to keep all of our options open.

25 Some of this also for us

1 relates to what you can use which
2 product money for unfortunately, it
3 goes to Councilmember Brooks' question.
4 And the ESG money that we have, that's
5 the biggest source of money that we
6 have right now, cannot be used for
7 eviction prevention or eviction
8 defense. So we're in a little bit of a
9 tricky balancing place with that.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay.
11 Could you talk a little bit about what
12 kinds of services do you have available
13 for people with disabilities?

14 MS. HERSH: As I mentioned,
15 we're an equal access system. We do
16 have a substantial number of people in
17 our system who have -- are you talking
18 about physical disabilities or
19 behavioral health disabilities?

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I think
21 you could help me by explaining what
22 you have on physical disabilities and
23 those with behavioral health.

24 MS. HERSH: Well, we do get a
25 fair number of people who have either

1 physical disabilities who are in
2 wheelchairs or who have significant
3 mobility issues that make it very hard
4 for them to function daily in a
5 shelter. And so, I think last year we
6 served between 500 and 600 people who
7 had either mobility issues or were in
8 wheelchairs.

9 There is a program called --
10 it's a catchy name, the Section 811
11 program. It's a federal program that
12 does provide accessible units for
13 people. So we actively, you know, we
14 do everything we can to get people into
15 those units. Most of those referrals
16 come from Liberty Resources. And then
17 we also try to get people into
18 affordable units that are accessible,
19 and there are PHA units that are
20 accessible that we are able to access.

21 But the fact of the matter is
22 that we do have people in our shelters
23 who have physical disabilities and it's
24 a crime and a sin. I don't think
25 anybody who's elderly -- I don't think

1 anybody should be homeless. But for
2 people who are physically disabled or
3 elderly or mobility-impaired to be in
4 shelter is just really unacceptable.
5 We do allow people to come in if they
6 have a full-time aide and the aide is
7 accommodated, so we do have folks in
8 those situations as well.

9 On the behavioral health
10 side, a lot of folks have behavioral
11 health challenges or as we like to say
12 being homeless is crazy-making. Sorry.
13 Forgive me for being politically
14 correct. The higher incidence of
15 behavioral health, specifically serious
16 mental health, is more on the single
17 side and more on people who are
18 unsheltered. And just like we've seen
19 half the people in the COVID prevention
20 space come from the street, very often
21 people who have a serious mental
22 illness really can't live in a
23 congregate site for a variety of
24 reasons. And so, being able to help
25 them get into a space where they have a

1 little privacy and can get the care
2 they need is very effective. I hope
3 that answers your question.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I think
5 it's an ongoing issue.

6 MS. HERSH: It is.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: One of the
8 things that we've been trying to do,
9 especially on the DHS side, is leverage
10 the power of our dollars to require
11 providers, especially those who receive
12 public subsidies -- just out of
13 curiosity, and I'm sorry because I'm
14 relatively new to the world of
15 affordable housing and not as quite
16 familiar with physical availability and
17 what qualifies and doesn't qualify, but
18 in general if you have Section 8
19 housing or PHA contracts with
20 particular providers, are they required
21 to have all their units be accessible
22 units rather than as a set-aside,
23 specifically that would be limited to
24 people with particular disabilities,
25 whereas it just seems that we would try

1 to be expanding the pool of available
2 housing that is accessible to everybody
3 regardless of ability so that anybody
4 could move in and we're not just kind
5 of being hyper limited or having it be
6 an issue of scarcity?

7 MS. HERSH: Right. No, I
8 agree with --

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I'm
10 sorry if I'm asking something that's
11 pretty basic.

12 MS. HERSH: No, I actually
13 don't know what the rules are at this
14 point in time for the housing choice
15 vouchers or tax credit funding. I know
16 they are required to have a set-aside
17 of, I think, 20 percent of their units
18 for "special needs." But above and
19 beyond that, I actually don't know what
20 the answer to that question is.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: As I said,
22 I think it's important for us as a
23 city, particularly because we have an
24 anti-discrimination law because we've
25 got so many people who are in need to

1 try and do as much as we can to both
2 send a message that providers that have
3 fully equipped residences that could be
4 available for people regardless of
5 ability needs to be a strong message
6 that we can send if we're ever going to
7 have a shot at housing truly vulnerable
8 communities and families, multiple
9 people, whether they're seniors or
10 veterans or young people or across the
11 spectrum, that we really need to do
12 that. And then I think those are most
13 of my questions.

14 MS. HERSH: I agree.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
16 so much, Madam Chair.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
18 you so much, Councilmember.

19 Are there any additional
20 questions or comments from members of
21 the Committee?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
24 Great. There being none, will you
25 please call the next panel or witness

1 to testify.

2 THE CLERK: Modesto, could
3 you call in the folks who signed up for
4 public testimony?

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
6 Modesto?

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Hello?

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hi.

9 COUNCIL SUPPORT: We should
10 have Marta Guttenberg online.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
12 Can you please state your name for the
13 record and proceed with your testimony.

14 MS. GUTTENBERG: Thank you
15 very much. My first name is Marta,
16 M-a-r-t-a. My last name is Guttenberg,
17 G-u-t-t-e-n-b-e-r-g. I believe I'm the
18 only person not already a member of
19 service organization or Council who
20 signed up to testify today. I was
21 surprised to learn that. As I waited
22 on hold, I remembered the phrase
23 nothing about us without us. And I'm
24 aware that as near as I can tell, I
25 have listened from the beginning, there

1 has been no direct testimony from
2 actual homeless people. It's been
3 about homeless people.

4 I understand that this is the
5 first hearing. I know that the
6 homeless encampment brunch invitation
7 out to the Mayor, and I'm sure that if
8 people from Council wanted to have
9 brunch at the Parkway site, they would
10 be accommodated also and it might be an
11 important way for the people actually
12 affected to be able to more directly
13 inform the Council.

14 I'm going to say some harsh
15 things. I'm going to try to say them
16 in a nice way and I understand that
17 everybody is well-meaning and wants
18 things to be better. The visual I had
19 of this conference was of people making
20 bandages for a war and discussing how
21 little gauze they had and how they
22 could stretch insufficient gauze to
23 cover gaping bleeding wounds.

24 I would also like to say that
25 the overall method that the City has

1 for thinking about housing is exactly
2 anti-Robin Hood. It steals from the
3 poor to incentivize the rich to
4 gentrify and maximize. I believe that
5 there are ways that the City Council
6 can really work to prevent the strong
7 anti-Robin Hood system.

8 For instance, if City Council
9 would simply hold people who have taken
10 city, state and federal money to build
11 affordable housing and then don't do it
12 to account. If the City Council would
13 abandon the tax exempt status or the
14 tax abatement permitted to people who
15 are actually very rich and don't need
16 it. I think I'll stop with that. I
17 don't want to hurt anybody's feelings,
18 and I hope that you will accept these
19 words as not personal criticism, but
20 systemic criticism and an effort to
21 point City Council to where it can do
22 its job. I'll take questions if people
23 want to ask me any.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
25 you so much for your testimony and your

1 critiques. They're important. I've
2 been to the encampment several times as
3 has Councilmember Brooks, but I take
4 your point that we have to be
5 highlighting the real-lived experiences
6 and stories of people, so I'll do a
7 better job next time of making sure
8 that we include that and give it space.

9 Are there any questions or
10 comments from members of the Committee
11 for this witness?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: There
14 being done, Mr. Weiss, will you please
15 call the next panel or witness to
16 testify.

17 THE CLERK: Yes. Modesto,
18 I'm not sure who you can bring on next
19 but Scalp Gibson, David Fair, Sterling
20 Johnson and Jennifer Bennetch.

21 COUNCIL SUPPORT: Okay. We
22 have Mr. Sterling P. Johnson online.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 Good afternoon. Can you please state
25 your name for the record and proceed

1 with your testimony.

2 MR. JOHNSON: All right. My
3 name is Sterling Johnson. I'm with the
4 Black and Brown Workers Cooperative.
5 I'm a lawyer who has 10 years of
6 experience with people with
7 disabilities, HIV, mental disorders as
8 well as just people that are low
9 income. Personally, I identify with
10 persons that uses drugs. I've been in
11 mental health recovery for a time.

12 I work specifically with the
13 Philadelphia system for the last seven
14 years. And I have been -- I worked at
15 the social service agencies, also the
16 legal service agencies around housing
17 and I see a lot of the different issues
18 and how they affect each other.
19 Currently, with the encampment that is
20 at the Ben Franklin Parkway, I'm
21 currently negotiating with them, with
22 the City since June 10th.

23 The people there have been
24 organizing in their own right, so I
25 don't want to say that I represent

1 every single issue but I've been a
2 lawyer that's supporting basically the
3 people there, communicating exactly
4 what they want. So a few things is
5 that just to start off with
6 (inaudible), especially the major ones
7 that must be focused on permanent
8 housing solutions.

9 The Community Land Trust was
10 the demand that we had, the first
11 political demand that we had at the
12 encampment. These important
13 discrimination laws, especially with
14 source of income, racial discrimination
15 as well as evictions and criminal
16 record discrimination that occurs,
17 those are just proxies for racial
18 discrimination in our City. Most
19 hospitals and prisons that have
20 actually certain policies that are not
21 the shelter and not for the street,
22 they need to be held accountable for
23 all the harm that they do.

24 We also must use the money
25 that's currently used for homelessness

1 and other -- including the police
2 interaction with (inaudible). We must
3 use all of that money to actually
4 support the people that are on the
5 street and that means make a safe
6 sanction space, whether it's actually
7 sanctioned and managed by a service
8 provider or just a safer entity that
9 allows for people to be so they are not
10 being pushed and moved around all year.

11 In general, those are the
12 points that I want to hit. I have
13 extra testimony in here. I feel like
14 some -- that we actually need more
15 hotels. This is something that I said
16 before, we need to hold people
17 accountable with the 40 percent vacancy
18 rate in hotels, they are spaces for
19 people to be, private developers in
20 general, particularly properties
21 available in our neighborhoods as well
22 as the PHA.

23 Even our nonprofit housing
24 developers, they evict people
25 constantly from their spaces as well

1 and that's how people end up at our
2 encampment. They are evicted from the
3 spaces, whether officially or
4 unofficially. (Inaudible) they should
5 be where they're at. Even when we
6 attempt to put people into the homeless
7 service provider network, those spaces
8 evict people.

9 I personally help people. I
10 work with Liz and David as well to get
11 people back into a shelter, get people
12 back into a safe haven. That is the
13 work that really is unnecessary. There
14 really does not need to be a summary
15 discharge policy that happens from
16 every service provider that then allows
17 them to be back on the street.

18 The amount of people that
19 have been entered into services from
20 our encampment is not 150. Maybe they
21 entered that many people. They may be
22 double, triple or quadruple counting
23 people because they've exited and then
24 they have to be placed back in or
25 they're still at the encampment. So

1 when we're talking about what other
2 issues that need to be done, I will
3 stop right here and say there are
4 significant barriers to people staying
5 in these spaces.

6 Whether it's just the
7 carceral nature of them, it reminds
8 people of being in jail. We cannot
9 have tiny jails in our systems.

10 (Inaudible) they can't have carceral
11 systems. They make people take
12 constant drug tests, that basically
13 surveil people that question whether
14 they have guests. There are no good
15 guest policies. There are curfews on
16 different spaces.

17 To treat people, grown
18 adults, 30-year-old people, 40-year-old
19 people with curfews is offensive. We
20 have to understand that we cannot treat
21 basically a small prison and expect
22 anybody to stay in it, and then we
23 count those as permanent housing
24 solutions. That is wrong. That is
25 wrong. There has to be a network where

1 you are actually talking to people that
2 are unhoused.

3 I'm not talking about the
4 unsheltered housing group that has a
5 bunch of business people on it. That
6 needs to be abolished. They need to be
7 listening to people that aren't housed.
8 That is the only solution. There are
9 other solutions (inaudible) actually
10 supporting people that aren't housed
11 and actually do it. And just lastly,
12 there are 60,000 households that earn
13 less than \$10,000 a year. We need to
14 actually understand that need and meet
15 that need and stop exclusionary zoning
16 policies.

17 Exclusionary zoning policies
18 are things that white supremacists do.
19 That is not what we should be doing.
20 Any exclusionary housing policy needs
21 to be stopped right now. Councilmanic
22 prerogative clearly has to be
23 questioned and abolished. That is what
24 causes our current situation. And
25 please understand that it is not an

1 accident. It really seems intentional
2 if you do not actually stop -- it's
3 actually required of you under the AFH.
4 We have another administration --

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Can I
6 ask you to wrap up? I'm sorry.

7 MR. JOHNSON: I will be. I
8 have wrapped up, but the Assessment of
9 Fair Housing, again go back to it and
10 it says you have to intentionally stop
11 housing discrimination. That is not
12 what is happening now. Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you so much for your testimony and for
15 your advocacy around these issues.

16 Are there any questions or
17 comments from members of this Committee
18 for this witness?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: There
21 being none, Mr. Weiss, will you please
22 call the next panel or witness to
23 testify.

24 THE CLERK: So we've got
25 David Fair and Jennifer Bennetch.

1 MR. FAIR: Hello?

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 Hello. Hi. Can you please state your
4 name for the record and proceed with
5 your testimony.

6 MR. FAIR: My name is David,
7 Fair, F-a-i-r, is my last name. Good
8 morning. I thank you for the
9 opportunity to provide testimony this
10 morning on behalf of the Philly Homes
11 for Youth Coalition. I am deputy Chief
12 Executive Officer of Turning Points For
13 Children and a Co-founder and former
14 Co-chair of the Coalition. I have
15 submitted more extensive testimony that
16 I ask you to review.

17 A recent survey by the Field
18 Center at Penn reported that among
19 youth and foster care, 43 percent
20 reported COVID-19 having a negative
21 impact on their living situation. Over
22 7 percent were living on the street at
23 the time they were surveyed. In August
24 of 2016, the Youth Point-In-Time
25 counted 569 homeless youth between the

1 ages of 13 and 25 in Philadelphia, and
2 the survey conducted by the
3 Philadelphia School District of high
4 school students found that over 700
5 older students reported being homeless
6 for at least one night in the previous
7 year.

8 We surely don't need to tell
9 you that youth homelessness is a crisis
10 for the Philadelphia community and it's
11 one that has only worsened during the
12 pandemic. And at a time of increased
13 understanding and recognition of the
14 special challenges facing
15 disenfranchised community, it is also
16 important to recognize that most
17 homeless youth in Philadelphia are
18 Black and Latinx and a large percentage
19 of these young people are former foster
20 youth and LGBTQ youth.

21 Since 2016, the 33
22 organizational members of the Philly
23 Homes For Youth Coalition and/or youth
24 members with lived experience of
25 homelessness have played a leading and

1 essential role in developing and
2 implementing the City's efforts to
3 reduce homelessness among youth and
4 young adults. The role of the
5 Coalition in this area recodified in
6 2018 in the Office of Homeless Services
7 Roadmap to Homes Strategic Plan.

8 Until the end of Fiscal Year
9 2019, this effort was co-facilitated by
10 an OHS youth homelessness coordinator
11 along with Co-chairs from the Young
12 Adult Leadership Committee and the
13 provider agency. When the OHS position
14 was suddenly eliminated last year in
15 recognizing the ongoing role of the
16 Coalition in developing OHS's Youth
17 Homelessness prevention strategy, OHS
18 agreed to provide one year of funding
19 to support a part-time coordinator to
20 provide administrative support to the
21 Coalition.

22 It was expected that during
23 Fiscal 2020 the Coalition would seek
24 additional funding sources to support
25 its activities going forward.

1 Unfortunately, the sudden loss of the
2 support of the OHS youth homeless
3 coordinator interrupted the processes
4 of the Coalition early in the fiscal
5 year, leading to several months of
6 reorganization efforts. And the
7 efforts to raise funds to support the
8 Coalition activities were unsuccessful,
9 largely because of the priority of
10 supporting COVID-19.

11 Attached to my submitted
12 testimony is an extensive list of the
13 goals and accomplishments of the
14 Coalition in its short history. Today
15 the Coalition asks City Council to
16 re-affirm the earlier recognition of
17 the Coalition as a formal partner to
18 OHS in the City of Philadelphia with
19 the role of facilitating collaboration
20 among agencies and integration of
21 efforts to end youth homelessness in
22 the City government as contemplated by
23 the Roadmap to Homeless Strategic Plan.

24 Further, the Coalition
25 requests that the Council recommend to

1 OHS to provide annual funding to
2 support the Coalition's work each
3 fiscal year. These funds are needed to
4 support a full-time coordinator,
5 provide financial support for young
6 people with lived experience to
7 continue to exert leadership in the
8 Coalition's work and advanced efforts
9 to raise funds from other sources to
10 support the Coalition's work in the
11 future. Thank you for your kind
12 attention and consideration.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you so much for your testimony.

15 Are there any questions or
16 comments from members of the Committee?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: There
19 being none, Mr. Weiss, will you please
20 call the next panel or witness to
21 testify.

22 THE CLERK: Jennifer
23 Bennetch.

24 MS. BENNETCH: Hello?

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Could

1 you please --

2 MS. BENNETCH: Hello?

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
4 afternoon, Jennifer. Could you please
5 state your name for the record and
6 proceed.

7 MS. BENNETCH: Jennifer
8 Bennetch.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
10 Please proceed.

11 MS. BENNETCH: Yes. So I
12 guess I want to start by saying that I
13 was homeless between 2003 and 2008 and
14 I only just recently, it was in the
15 past two years to even learn that there
16 is an Office of Homeless Services, so I
17 think that that is an issue and even
18 now people that are experiencing
19 homelessness, they know about outreach
20 but a lot of people do not know that
21 there is an Office of Homeless Services
22 in Philadelphia or how to access that
23 office. So I think that that is an
24 issue.

25 I also feel like a lot of the

1 services provided by that office are
2 very insufficient and very inaccessible
3 to most people. I feel like this
4 hearing itself is even very
5 inaccessible to most people that are
6 affected by this issue. Like people
7 that are living outdoors even if they
8 have devices, their battery power may
9 not be charged, they are unable to
10 testify at this hearing regarding their
11 experiences with that office. But from
12 personal experiences and things that I
13 witnessed, a lot of things need to
14 change.

15 There needs to be more
16 representation from people that are
17 homeless or have experienced
18 homelessness in the Office of Homeless
19 Services. I think right now they have
20 one staff member who was formerly
21 homeless but not even chronically
22 homeless, like the population that they
23 actually serve. I feel they're not
24 open to criticism or ideas from other
25 people and I understand that people put

1 time in to come up with these services,
2 but you have to be open to hear from
3 the people who are being affected.

4 And it seems like the Office
5 of Homeless Services focuses more on
6 services that are like things that
7 people could receive through their
8 insurance and through other programs
9 rather than by actual housing and the
10 actual process of getting people off
11 the streets and keeping people in their
12 homes. It's just like all of these
13 other services and they're not
14 sufficient.

15 Homeless Outreach -- like
16 there's so much money going into all of
17 these things that aren't an actual
18 solution to the issue and I think that
19 the Office of Homeless Services should
20 be speaking out about the fact that the
21 Philadelphia Housing Authority stopped
22 expediting housing to people that are
23 in the shelter system, but has
24 officially created a crisis where
25 people are trapped in the shelters.

1 And as they start working, they are
2 being given a really short deadline on
3 getting out of the shelter, but they're
4 not able to save up money to get out of
5 their shelter.

6 I'm watching people -- a
7 personal friend of mine that has been
8 in the shelter for almost three years
9 going through this process of having a
10 job, she got a job and she thought that
11 she could stay in the shelter for a
12 while and save up and she was given a
13 deadline which wasn't enough time for
14 her to save up money, so she quit the
15 job and now she's just still sitting in
16 the shelter, so there's these cycles
17 that's happening.

18 And it seems like the upper
19 level staff of Homeless Services isn't
20 really open to the criticism. They
21 just say they don't believe these
22 things when they're coming from the
23 people who's living there. There needs
24 to be a clear oversight process and
25 complaint process for people who are

1 experiencing issues in the shelter. It
2 shouldn't just be because a shelter
3 staff said that a thing happened and
4 it's just true. There should be a
5 process for filing a complaint. There
6 should be a grievance process before a
7 individual is kicked out.

8 People are kicked out on
9 moments of notice from the shelter, in
10 a storm, in any kind of weather, and
11 there needs to be a grievance process.
12 If you're renting an apartment, even if
13 it's subsidized by the government, you
14 get a process before you're removed.
15 So why is it okay to just tell a mother
16 and her children or a single person
17 that because this issue happened, there
18 could just be a personality clash
19 between the staff and the person that
20 lives there, why is it okay to just
21 send people onto the street with zero
22 notice.

23 And then there's another
24 issue in the shelter where the
25 Department of Human Services Child

1 Welfare system is kind of held over a
2 parent's head to keep them, so to say,
3 in check. And there's a lot of crazy
4 policies, like you can't allow another
5 resident of the shelter to watch your
6 child while you go look for a job or go
7 to work, and I think that's
8 inappropriate.

9 The shelter is a community at
10 the end of the day once everybody lives
11 in there. And if people want to assist
12 each other in that way by saying, okay,
13 well, you just got a job or while
14 you're going to an interview, I want to
15 watch your child, why would the shelter
16 sit there and call the Department of
17 Human Services on people.

18 So I think that -- I'm not
19 really sure of all the services
20 provided by this office. But the issue
21 that I see is that there's a lack of
22 transparency and there's a lack of
23 accountability and there needs to be a
24 really clear-cut process with each
25 program that this office oversees, for

1 a point person for people to contact if
2 they're having an issue with that
3 department or if they need something
4 from that department and the process
5 before kicking people out of the
6 shelter. That's really important to
7 me.

8 There has to be a process and
9 there has to be a process before
10 barring people. The shelter system is
11 able to just bar people for 30, 60, 90
12 days without any kind of process. So I
13 think those are the things that are
14 most important to me and to really see
15 where the office has a pretty large
16 budget, where is that money going and
17 could it be utilized in a different way
18 to solve the problem. And I guess
19 that's all I have.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you so much, Jennifer, for your
22 testimony.

23 Are there any questions or
24 comments from members of the Committee?

25 (No response.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
2 wanted to say Jennifer and Sterling
3 brought up a lot of important points
4 that I will be following up on after
5 this hearing, so thank you so much for
6 the testimony.

7 Mr. Weiss, will you please
8 call the next panel or witness to
9 testify.

10 THE CLERK: That was the last
11 witness, Councilmember.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
13 There being be no further questions
14 from the members of the Committee and
15 no other witnesses to testify, I will
16 ask if there is anyone else present in
17 this hearing whose name we have failed
18 to call and that wishes to offer
19 testimony on the resolution being
20 considered today?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: This
23 concludes the business before the
24 Committee on Housing, Neighborhood
25 Development and the Homeless today.

1 Thank you all very much for your
2 attendance and for participating. Have
3 a good day everybody.

4 MS. HERSH: Thank you for the
5 opportunity.

6 MR. HOLLoman: The same.
7 Have a great day.

8 (Committee on Housing,
9 Neighborhood Development and the
10 Homeless concluded at 12:15 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 noted are contained
fully and accurately in the stenographic
notes taken by me in the foregoing matter,
and this is a correct transcript of the
same.

TANEHA C. CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

(The foregoing certification of
this transcript does not apply to any
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supervision of the certifying reporter.)

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 1

A	154:1	30:16 34:9	7:14 37:1	agree 55:12	151:18	appreciative	113:13
a.m 1:7	accommod...	additional	37:12,19,24	80:1 88:22	analysis	124:11	158:11
abandon	140:7	6:4 53:18	38:23 39:19	88:22 96:15	64:13	approach	attempt
146:13	145:10	93:6 96:20	39:20,23	128:3 142:8	100:19	51:13 86:18	19:10,16
abatement	accomplish...	131:15	40:12 41:5	143:14	and/or	appropriate	21:24 151:6
146:14	158:13	143:19	44:17 56:16	agreed	156:23	49:16 90:18	attendance
ability 37:20	account 87:6	157:24	56:20 57:10	157:18	169:23	area 17:11	2:22,24
55:2 76:4	89:2,2	Additionally	57:20 66:23	agreement	announcem...	36:23 50:17	28:18 168:2
142:3 143:5	146:12	9:6	67:16 79:20	89:8 109:14	2:5	86:11 93:19	attention
able 14:19	accountabil...	address 41:4	79:22 99:1	129:2,5,9	annual 159:1	157:5	45:19 53:24
16:15 24:5	165:23	80:9 95:1	104:4	ahead 94:4	annually	areas 51:12	57:18
28:13 29:7	accountable	99:3	113:14	133:23	117:12	57:17 65:17	132:12
37:21,25	110:2 121:1	adequate	121:23	aide 140:6,6	answer 10:5	art 47:22	159:12
65:14 67:22	149:22	37:14 47:14	122:1,10	aiming 95:9	51:19	61:21	August
69:20 74:11	150:17	adjacent	123:2	aligned 100:7	100:18	articulate	155:23
99:21	accounts	98:19	139:18	ALLAN 1:14	116:13	46:6 122:15	Authority
100:24	81:11 83:15	adjust 94:17	141:15	allow 9:12	128:25	artificial	24:24 130:8
104:6	85:4	adjusted	146:11	122:10	133:25	132:4	162:21
108:19	accurate 44:6	93:23	AFH 154:3	140:5 165:4	142:20	as-needed	authorized
109:12	accurately	adjustment	African-	allowed 14:2	answers	137:12	134:4
119:15	169:4	118:6	136:3	50:25 81:24	141:3	aside 38:25	authorizing
122:15	achieve 64:17	administra...	African-A...	allowing 53:9	anti-discr...	95:17	8:11
139:20	65:18	39:10 53:13	10:19	124:8	142:24	asked 41:17	availability
140:24	act 6:9 9:14	154:4	100:23	allows 19:9	anti-Robin	43:6 128:12	18:11 122:8
145:12	128:15,21	administra...	afternoon	150:9	146:2,7	asking 25:20	135:3
163:4	129:19	157:20	147:24	151:16	anticipate	41:19 81:6	136:17
166:11	130:21,22	adopted	160:4	alternative	120:4	103:24	141:16
abolished	134:2,5	79:10	age 14:8 23:5	19:17	anybody 19:5	104:2	available
153:6,23	137:17	Adult 157:12	73:21	amazed	60:22	142:10	9:11 10:5
absent 55:1	action 36:18	adults 19:8,9	125:23	70:15	127:12	asks 158:15	18:22 21:5
absolutely	116:8	72:6 101:5	agencies 31:8	amazes 30:11	139:25	aspects 21:19	24:6 33:20
41:16 52:3	activated	101:8	51:23,24	amending	140:1 142:3	assessment	36:20 37:23
102:18	13:4	152:18	63:17 75:23	132:7	152:22	12:20 22:21	39:9,23
111:14	active 131:21	157:4	76:2 102:12	amendment	anybody's	39:6 154:8	97:4 101:22
absorbing	actively	advance 69:8	148:15,16	129:7	146:17	assist 165:11	108:24
40:24	139:13	advanced	158:20	amendments	anymore	assistance	132:21
accept 146:18	activities	159:8	agency 83:6	132:8	83:14	6:7 16:18	133:2 134:9
access 22:1	157:25	advantage	84:13 85:18	American	anyway	19:19 25:24	134:10,12
23:1 36:14	158:8	22:11 68:9	118:9	136:4	32:10	27:20 28:11	134:19,22
56:22 75:5	actual 22:1	advocacy	157:13	Americans	apartment	29:6,9,21	136:10
100:22	27:9 30:18	124:5	ages 156:1	11:4	164:12	30:19,20	138:12
102:6 122:8	79:9 145:2	154:15	aggregate	AMI 52:20	apartments	31:5,15	142:1 143:4
138:15	162:9,10,17	advocate	128:23	93:19 94:16	71:24	66:7 86:12	150:21
139:20	add 42:22	23:1 46:5	aggressive	94:22 95:4	apologize	115:1,10	Avenue 97:21
160:22	50:12 56:1	54:2 110:18	22:25	95:10,12	70:8	117:9	105:16,18
accessible	57:24 74:5	affect 148:18	aging 74:8	121:25	appeal	118:19	average
23:24 57:21	85:11 100:4	affirm 107:24	76:10 99:25	amount	107:11	119:11	27:21 34:10
139:12,18	104:7	afford 28:7	100:1	20:12 30:7	applicants	121:10,12	34:12 48:21
139:20	119:15	37:14 56:19	ago 20:1	46:13 50:22	118:21	125:1 127:5	66:11
141:21	added 12:9	affordability	66:10 75:21	105:13	applies 23:10	127:6 132:1	avoid 30:9
142:2	adding 78:20	94:1 96:16	76:2 111:22	116:15	apply 169:21	132:16	131:17
accessing	92:13	affordable	114:12,18	117:11	appreciate	assuming	await 13:15
25:15	addition 13:9	4:19 5:13	125:6	131:13	43:5 53:9	137:11	awaiting
accident	16:7,23	5:16,18	135:25	134:14	59:12 69:23	attached 19:2	78:22

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 2

aware 8:24 72:3 144:24	117:23 118:2 136:16	beef 84:24 beginning 2:5 98:22 144:25	40:16,20,22 62:4 66:18 79:1 87:21 121:4	bring 33:23 64:21 99:15 147:18	153:5 167:23 businesses 69:15	10:25 11:17 11:19 42:12 42:14 44:8	127:9 cell 92:23 center 8:2 13:3 15:10
B	basic 11:5 142:11	behalf 155:10 behavioral 43:10 105:4 138:19,23 140:9,10,15	biggest 26:19 138:5 billing 129:12 bills 8:9 bit 8:7 29:4 47:12 48:23 49:13 81:5 83:24 108:21 131:23 134:8 135:15 138:8,11	bringing 42:9 42:14 55:3 Brith 91:20 Broad 15:15 Brooks 1:13 3:6,7 99:11 99:12 102:1 106:10 108:20 110:20 113:18 114:24 117:15 118:16 121:18 128:11 147:3	buy 53:1 buyer 69:1 buying 69:7 86:20	46:11 67:10 73:21 74:8 76:11 84:7 99:25 100:2 141:1 155:19	15:24 48:10 48:11 85:25 98:19 155:18
back 47:12 51:1,5 56:2 56:23 71:9 76:1,16 88:13 100:3 103:10 106:7,15,17 107:15 108:7 109:21 119:19 151:11,12 151:17,24 154:9	basically 12:10 18:19 32:11 69:14 84:14 118:2 118:4,14 149:2 152:12,21 basis 97:4 134:20 Bass 1:13 3:10,11 70:3,4,6,19 72:7,18 73:4,12,15 76:12,18,22 78:5 80:1,6 82:11 87:15 88:1 89:10 136:9	believe 26:25 28:10 31:6 46:3 48:11 62:4 79:3 98:6 111:17 118:11 124:12,22 144:17 146:4 163:21 Ben 148:20 benefit 50:8 Bennetch 147:20 154:25 159:23,24 160:2,7,8 160:11 best 32:13 49:2 115:21 betcha 26:17 Beth 9:25 50:12 100:17 better 19:13 31:16 33:9 33:10,10 41:10 44:22 52:7 64:4 64:11,14 65:20 69:19 73:13 85:19 85:21 86:25 97:15 122:25 123:10 145:18 147:7	black 99:19 100:5,13 101:18 102:14 104:21 108:11,12 120:23 136:1,3 148:4 156:18 blackouts 92:17 Blanche 104:10 105:2 bleeding 145:23 block 91:21 97:19 blocks 97:20 97:21 blow 58:5,7 bogart 90:7 boiler 112:18 books 106:16 born 105:22 bottom 69:14 bounds 103:25 brand 21:10 breaking 73:7 brief 3:1 29:10 32:25 briefly 10:5 11:9	Brooks' 138:3 Brotherly 123:18 brought 54:16 62:20 99:23 167:3 Brown 148:4 brunch 145:6 145:9 budget 62:5 99:2 131:4 166:16 budgeting 81:12 budgets 63:22,24 buffer 58:11 build 85:7 146:10 building 91:20 93:3 buildings 22:5,11 48:8 74:13 94:5,6 95:25 96:10 built 91:22 bunch 54:12 153:5 burden 5:10 burning 107:4 business	call 2:21 9:17 18:17 91:6 93:18 95:24 115:17 116:1 143:25 144:3 147:15 154:22 159:20 165:16 167:8,18 called 3:1 4:7 15:17 16:17 84:12 98:14 103:1 114:16,21 139:9 calling 25:23 calls 15:9 41:21 camp 95:22 camps 56:18 candidates 73:23 capacity 137:9 capital 107:4 112:17 113:11 carceral 108:9 152:7 152:10 card 117:1 care 7:24	careful 133:6 caregivers 135:12 cares 14:11 16:16,24 18:4 123:17 128:15,21 129:1,19,24 130:9,15,21 130:22 131:14 134:2,5 CARROLL 169:12 case 20:25 21:2 34:4,5 34:8 39:4 85:25 cases 11:24 12:1 73:22 75:20 92:11 92:25 96:17 101:22 109:24 cash 40:8 catastrophe 92:25 catchy 139:10 categories 129:13 category 32:24 caterers 15:22 caught 45:18 92:14 cause 98:17 causes 153:24 causing 69:17 CCP 76:8,11 CDBG 96:20 130:9 CDC 14:7	49:16 52:19 114:7 120:23 125:22 149:20 certainly 37:16 82:10 101:2 102:23 certification 169:20 certify 169:2 certifying 169:24 cetera 22:6 chain 108:13 Chair 1:12 3:13,21 45:8 58:23 59:13,18 60:16 69:24 89:18 90:1 99:8,13 118:17 124:7 143:16 Chairwoman 53:9 91:6 93:17 challenge 6:16 50:23 challenges 7:20 43:10 53:11 84:22 105:5 140:11 156:14 challenging 21:21 change 18:10 52:19 161:14 changed 51:25 changing

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 3

117:19	15:24 17:9	clash 164:18	159:2,8,10	124:2	company	confidential	continuum
118:11	17:18 18:22	clear 10:24	colder 133:12	143:20	93:8	72:20,23	46:11
characterize	19:8 22:5	55:18 64:25	collaboration	147:10	compared	conflict 30:17	contracts
125:13	23:20 24:25	68:7 80:20	158:19	154:17	44:18	congregate	94:7 116:4
130:25	25:2 27:20	80:22	collaborative	159:16	competition	33:14 47:7	141:19
characteriz...	28:11 30:13	111:23	75:23 102:2	166:24	46:20	140:23	contrary 12:3
135:24	30:24 33:15	163:24	102:10	Commissio...	competitive	consenting	control 14:21
charged	37:22 39:12	clear-cut	103:20	104:10	46:19	9:5	37:18
87:18,19	56:20 57:4	165:24	colleagues	105:2	complaint	consider	115:18
161:9	59:7 62:12	clearly 5:11	3:22 24:15	commitment	163:25	44:17 68:8	169:23
chat 9:10,14	64:5,10	7:23 128:22	59:8,19	23:20	164:5	79:2,18	convene
cheaper 91:9	67:2 70:25	153:22	97:13	Committee	complaints	considerati...	64:22
check 165:3	73:23 77:2	CLERK 3:5	college 74:10	1:2 4:6,9,13	109:15	78:20	convening
checked	81:1 91:2	3:9,14,18	74:23	6:11 7:12	completed	159:12	64:20
85:2	91:13 94:8	3:23 4:2	color 10:17	8:12 10:9	100:19	considered	convents 22:5
checking	94:10,24	8:10 9:19	combat 8:17	24:18 41:8	completely	45:21 77:1	conversation
89:1	95:13,15	144:2	come 2:21	64:23 69:8	78:24	77:19 79:15	4:17 58:25
cherry-pick	96:25 97:3	147:17	11:16 14:14	124:8,10	completeness	117:23	102:11
117:9	97:6,21	154:24	14:18,23	143:21	38:5,9	134:1	106:3,9
Chief 9:24	98:19	159:22	27:9 40:19	147:10	complexity	167:20	conversatio...
155:11	102:11	167:10	43:14 45:12	154:17	43:9	consistency	102:2
child 84:7	109:9,14,17	client 48:22	53:10,13	157:12	complicated	119:8,10	104:10
102:21	110:24	clientele	56:12 59:1	159:16	47:18	consolidated	105:1
125:21,22	111:5,14	98:16	61:6 74:21	166:24	101:11	129:8	131:21
164:25	113:3 114:9	cliff 17:24	82:19 89:4	167:14,24	comply 9:13	constant	convert 36:3
165:6,15	114:20	close 12:24	105:3,13	168:8	comprehen...	57:19	converting
children 47:5	115:2,13,18	15:12 35:11	106:17	Committee's	100:18	152:12	71:18
72:5 125:15	117:17	71:12 93:13	125:3,12	committees	comprise	constantly	convicted
126:23	119:3,8	102:23	129:1	2:8,14	10:19,21	50:16 87:2	107:4
135:2	122:20	closed 105:19	132:24	124:13	computer	150:25	Cooperation
155:13	123:3,16,17	closely 16:10	139:16	common 56:4	38:14	consultant	24:20,24
164:16	132:10	74:25 75:9	140:5,20	56:17	concern 91:5	62:21	Cooperative
choice 117:20	142:23	closer 29:19	162:1	communal	99:22	consumers	148:4
142:14	145:25	63:14	comes 16:22	18:21	119:17	36:24 37:7	coordinating
choices 121:3	146:5,8,10	closing 93:12	43:16 46:12	communicate	concerns	38:21,24	75:7
choose 117:8	146:12,21	closure	47:23 80:23	86:25	21:6 73:19	39:2	coordinator
chronic 23:6	148:22	136:12	94:12	communica...	99:14	contact 166:1	157:10,19
62:24	149:18	Co-chair	coming 7:14	85:20 149:3	conclude	contained	158:3 159:4
chronically	158:15,18	155:14	34:2 40:5	communica...	24:7	169:3	Coronavirus
161:21	158:22	Co-chairs	41:14 44:25	44:20	concluded	contemplat...	130:18
churn 68:17	City's 7:2	157:11	57:14 68:18	104:18	168:10	158:22	correct 104:9
churning	8:17 9:22	co-facilitated	70:9 96:3	communities	concludes	context 37:2	126:7,8
108:8	10:20 16:20	157:9	97:16 98:23	143:8	167:23	37:9 38:18	130:7,23
CINDY 1:13	39:11 82:13	Co-founder	100:8	community	concrete 85:9	continue	140:14
cities 69:13	157:2	155:13	103:16	21:3,7	condition	13:20	169:6
citizens 42:7	City-funded	Coalition	106:21	41:12 74:10	94:14,18	113:13	correctional
123:1,14	106:20	155:11,14	123:3	87:14 89:6	conditions	115:7 123:9	102:20,25
city 1:1 2:8	clarifies	156:23	126:24	122:11	14:10 23:6	159:7	103:5,10,17
4:21 5:5,11	128:6	157:5,16,21	163:22	149:9	conducted	continues	103:23
5:14 6:18	clarify	157:23	comment	156:10,15	156:2	100:4	corrections
6:19 7:17	127:25	158:4,8,14	107:19	165:9	conference	continuing	67:11
8:2,12 11:6	clarifying	158:15,17	121:19	companies	confident	9:4 23:20	correlate
11:15 13:9	133:25	158:24	comments	42:10	130:13	57:14 58:24	136:2
14:12 15:10	clarity 134:8	Coalition's				121:9,11	cost 5:2,9,10

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 4

45:25 48:20	42:20 45:3	90:11 99:9	45:19 71:6	40:9 95:8	149:25	deadline 55:8	denominator
51:10 52:6	46:12 55:12	99:12 102:1	84:10	120:7	CURTIS	132:5,9	56:17
62:14 65:6	59:15,16,21	106:10	111:22	142:15	1:12	163:2,13	denominat...
65:9 92:12	61:5 66:2	108:20	132:19	credits 96:25	curve 94:5	deal 43:7,8	56:5
93:7 112:8	68:13 70:2	110:20	course 33:4	97:7	cut 17:17	53:14 55:17	department
117:22	70:3,4	113:18	44:11 65:23	crew 71:5	28:5	69:17 94:18	13:1 60:8
cost-burde...	73:10 76:17	114:24	77:22 89:24	CRF 130:17	cycle 72:4	dealing 43:14	70:22
4:25	83:21 89:20	117:15	courses 81:19	crime 139:24	cycles 163:16	44:2,23	164:25
cost-burdens	90:7,13,15	118:16	court 93:11	criminal 40:3	cycling 34:18	54:4 91:7	165:16
91:13	99:10,11,23	121:18	169:13	40:15,18	78:1	93:18	166:3,4
costly 19:17	101:2	123:22,25	courts 55:18	42:3 100:1		deals 91:24	departments
20:2 47:1	107:24	125:11	93:12	102:5	D	debate 79:1	7:17 24:25
52:14	117:5,25	126:3,10	131:11	106:25	D 1:15	80:3,4	64:16
costs 63:10	123:21,23	127:8,15	136:24	149:15	D.C 44:19	debating	Depaul 74:18
112:2,13,16	123:24	128:4,10,19	cover 112:12	crisis 4:22	daily 2:16	127:22	depending
115:22	125:18	129:18	145:23	8:3 10:11	15:23 75:18	December	63:9
131:7	128:11	130:20	covered 43:4	11:8 18:2	134:20	128:7	deputy 10:1
couch 6:13	131:1	131:2,8	75:17	30:22 36:19	139:4	decency 49:7	90:9 155:11
79:13	135:22	132:17	covering	43:8 57:6	Dane 98:14	decent 40:2	described
Council 1:1	136:8 138:3	133:18,22	44:10	66:10 67:8	danger 60:23	46:24 47:10	79:12
2:8,14 6:9	143:18	134:6,24	COVID 7:7	85:24 156:9	darn 34:2	decide 56:9	description
6:19 8:12	147:3	135:9,14	10:12,13	162:24	data 32:5,13	decline 126:5	29:11 32:25
10:4 64:22	167:11	136:6,15	11:24 12:16	criteria 14:7	37:3 38:5,9	declined 60:1	deserve
94:25	Councilper...	138:10,20	12:24 14:3	critical 8:1	125:17	dedicate 44:7	70:22
109:25	99:6	141:4,7	15:1 16:11	criticism	135:17	dedication	deserves
120:6 129:6	Councilwo...	142:9,21	23:7 25:21	146:19,20	data-infor...	11:12	70:22 120:6
144:9,19	1:12,13,13	143:15,17	36:17 45:13	161:24	35:2	deeply 38:19	123:4
145:8,13	1:14,15,15	143:23	50:25 61:8	163:20	date 12:3	124:10	designation
146:5,8,12	2:2 3:7,11	144:5,8,11	93:12 94:13	critiques	14:12	defense 138:8	96:18
146:21	3:16,20 4:5	146:24	118:20	147:1	Dave 42:20	defer 74:4	designed 20:2
147:21	8:20 24:9	147:13,23	119:8,16	cultivated	43:1 50:12	75:12	61:1
158:15,25	25:10 26:1	154:5,13,20	133:8	84:10	104:7	100:17	desire 132:15
Councilfolks'	26:11 28:15	155:2	140:19	culture 85:12	David 9:23	120:15	Desmond
85:15	28:24 29:3	159:13,18	COVID-19	86:14	147:19	deferred	135:23
Councilman	31:19,24	159:25	4:23 7:4,23	cures 18:6	151:10	92:13 93:9	despite
1:12,14,16	32:19 35:9	160:3,9	8:15 155:20	curfews	154:25	96:14	136:17
3:25 28:22	35:20 36:21	166:20	158:10	33:24	155:6	defines	deteriorating
29:2 59:17	38:17 41:6	167:1,12,22	COVID-pr...	152:15,19	day 11:16,16	135:13	94:14
60:15 62:3	42:25 43:6	counseling	13:25	curiosity	54:10,11	definitely	determine
62:8,17	45:1,5	31:8	cramped	141:13	91:16	67:21	50:22
63:3,15,23	47:24 48:5	count 33:17	78:13	curious	109:20	definition	determined
64:2 68:1	48:18 51:20	77:6,8 79:3	crazy 165:3	126:11	165:10	17:13 79:11	49:14
68:23 89:25	52:4 56:2	152:23	crazy-maki...	current 7:21	168:3,7	definitional	devastating
90:4,16	58:22 59:14	counted 77:8	140:12	63:1,4	day-to-day	79:18	58:5,6
91:4 97:12	60:12 70:1	155:25	create 52:12	112:15	5:7 112:14	defunded	developed
122:18	70:6,19	counterparts	72:15 86:3	125:4	days 13:19	46:21	95:14,16,25
Councilma...	72:7,18	104:14	109:5	126:17,19	34:11 106:1	degree 69:16	96:23 98:17
153:21	73:4,9,12	counting 78:6	created 67:5	130:14	137:3	demand 5:18	developers
Councilme...	73:14,15	151:22	162:24	153:24	166:12	26:5 29:8	150:19,24
3:5,9,14,18	76:12,18,22	country	creating 18:8	currently 2:3	daytime	149:10,11	developing
3:23 4:2,4	78:5 80:1,6	69:13	52:13	2:9 71:16	15:13	demands	157:1,16
10:8 24:8	82:11 87:15	county	creation	126:6 127:9	de 117:13	33:21	development
28:18,19,23	88:1 89:10	104:11,25	69:14	134:9	de-densified	demonstrat...	1:2 8:13
28:25 37:11	89:19 90:2	couple 41:19	credit 40:1,2	148:19,21	12:4	7:23	19:24 27:19

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 5

31:2 40:1	9:21 10:1	44:10	141:10	66:5 71:8	131:16	54:23 57:12	especially
66:25 96:7	24:22 90:9	disproporti...	Domb 1:14	136:8	138:25	59:6	10:16
102:7 114:2	disabilities	10:17	3:24,25	158:16	139:7	encounter	101:18
167:25	20:3 23:9	108:11	59:16,17	early 21:18	elaborate	38:25	104:20
168:9	92:10	136:4	60:15 62:3	108:10	29:12	encourage	108:12
developme...	138:13,18	distance	62:8,17	158:4	elaborated	24:2 66:20	113:1
40:9 95:7	138:19,22	91:21	63:3,15,23	earn 102:8	42:24	83:9 96:19	127:11
devices 161:8	139:1,23	distancing	64:2 68:1	153:12	elderly 92:7	encouraged	141:9,11
DHCD 129:4	141:24	12:6 15:15	68:23	earns 127:12	139:25	12:9	149:6,13
DHS 73:25	148:7	133:10	122:18	easier 21:25	140:3	encouraging	essential
75:1,6,14	disability	distinguishi...	Domb's	57:21	elected	21:18 23:16	13:22 18:2
75:18 141:9	disabled	47:11	83:21	easily 80:4	121:22	ends 6:2 27:4	157:1
dialogue	20:9 28:1	distribute	domestic	easy 55:5	electricity	41:23 65:22	essentially
102:23	14:16 20:14	15:23	49:18	echo 124:1	18:20 92:19	95:4	116:18,20
dictate 43:21	34:20 47:17	distributed	door 6:13	economic	eligibility 6:6	energetic	established
83:10	140:2	128:22	27:9 43:14	16:10 25:21	14:6	101:6	13:10,24
difference	disagree	District 5:4	43:16 44:25	36:17 57:9	eliminate	engaged	54:9
26:19 93:24	89:15	5:15 15:10	doors 21:22	58:9	5:10	106:6	estimate
111:20	disappointed	70:14 73:3	61:7	economically	eliminated	Engine 67:3	29:15 32:16
113:17	81:21	81:8 91:19	double 20:11	69:10	157:14	enrolled	62:13,21
different	disasters	98:9,10,10	98:15	economy	email 133:25	21:14	63:1,4,10
19:23 21:8	43:12	99:5 156:3	151:22	5:20 41:24	embedded	ensure	63:12
21:22 51:11	discharge	Districts	downtown	69:16	51:22	109:12	136:25
54:7,14	104:17	98:21	13:12,25	101:21	emergency	ensuring	estimates
76:4 85:14	105:6	diverse 29:17	dozens 15:8	education	2:8 6:8	22:23	18:9
86:7 91:8	151:15	diversion	dramatic	74:24	13:3 16:25	enter 12:19	estimation
97:8 98:4	discharged	29:6,11,14	15:6 36:18	101:12	17:2 32:21	32:8	26:19 31:25
98:16	104:16,19	32:3 120:9	draw 129:14	effect 15:4	33:1,5	entered 26:25	et 22:6
107:20	105:9,23	131:17	131:5	71:10,13	35:12,14	30:5 32:10	Eva 50:11
134:2,3	discontinued	diversity	drink 88:6	126:16	36:25 37:5	66:7 124:21	71:5 74:4
148:17	82:16	23:21	drivers 41:2	effective	41:14 48:10	151:19,21	75:12 89:21
152:16	discriminat...	divesting	dropped	141:2	77:15	entering	90:8,18
166:17	108:17	122:23	35:25 66:3	effectively	employment	104:22	113:18
differently	111:3,13	division 31:1	Drueiding	137:3	34:16 66:25	entice 55:3	116:7
26:16	122:14	doing 12:11	48:10 50:4	effectiveness	67:5 84:25	entire 45:7	120:16
difficult	149:13,14	31:2 46:17	drug 33:22	11:11 29:13	101:12	64:5	124:3
14:23	149:16,18	54:5 67:24	54:15 55:4	efficiency	108:16	entity 78:8	128:20
104:12,24	154:11	76:9 81:10	61:10 84:15	71:23	137:22	150:8	130:23
difficulties	discuss 35:13	89:16 97:10	152:12	effort 8:17	empowered	entreprene...	evaluating
37:4	35:21	105:8	drugs 148:10	59:12 76:1	110:17	69:15	36:5
difficulty	131:14	113:23	dry 93:5	79:23 82:17	empty 50:4	entry 33:22	everybody
70:9	discussing	115:15	due 2:7 17:17	146:20	enable 114:4	82:19	22:9,21,23
dig 38:19	72:25 127:9	153:19	29:9 120:4	157:9	enables 20:17	environment	37:12 38:3
dignity 83:5	145:20	dollar 25:19	duration	efforts	enacted 6:9	38:2	39:5,7
diligently	disenfranc...	29:16 32:1	117:11	103:20	encampment	equal 36:13	66:20 72:2
6:19	156:15	32:17 51:18	119:18	157:2 158:6	21:12 53:14	80:5 138:15	142:2
dire 18:1	disorders	109:19	dwindled	158:7,21	54:8,21	equipped	145:17
direct 42:17	148:7	dollars 14:11	39:22	159:8	55:13 56:3	143:3	165:10
57:1 145:1	disparities	23:23 26:16		either 27:10	56:4,13	equity 23:22	168:3
169:23	45:15	44:13 68:21	E	28:6 37:21	145:6 147:2	100:12,19	everybody's
directly	disparity	129:19	E 169:1	41:12 78:9	148:19	era 91:23	25:20
17:16	100:24	130:15,17	earlier 6:25	79:20 102:8	149:12	ESG 16:25	everyone's
145:12	displayed 3:3	130:18	39:6 43:18	106:4 107:2	151:2,20,25	17:2 23:13	59:12
Director 7:1	displaying	132:13	45:18 51:4	127:5	encampme...	129:3 138:4	evict 150:24

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 6

151:8 evicted 121:14 124:23 125:6 151:2 eviction 30:22,25 31:3,4 110:12 111:21 120:8,9 124:25 126:15 127:6,11,24 128:5 131:18 135:17,24 136:1,5,23 137:21 138:7,7 evictions 8:16 8:18 27:7 121:11 124:16 127:18 135:25 149:15 evidence 169:3 evidence-b... 35:1 45:22 46:4 103:7 evidence-p... 56:6 evils 101:17 exacerbated 10:12 15:2 exact 51:19 exactly 37:9 48:8 130:7 146:1 149:3 example 5:16 48:9 65:4 65:16 103:22 123:16 exceptions 34:13 excited 74:14 108:23 122:16 exclusionary 153:15,17 153:20	excuse 70:23 71:2 Executive 24:22 155:12 exempt 146:13 exert 159:7 exist 82:8 existed 45:16 existing 18:7 22:11 91:10 exists 32:13 111:3,11,14 exit 37:20 40:18 42:4 42:4 67:15 104:6 exited 37:1 151:23 exits 37:5 expand 16:15 46:14 expanding 19:21 142:1 expect 74:5 74:10 152:21 expectation 9:3 expected 157:22 expediting 162:22 expenditures 32:23 expensive 62:1 experience 10:22 20:13 148:6 156:24 159:6 experienced 10:15 77:24 161:17 experiences 147:5 161:11,12 experiencing 6:23 160:18 164:1 explain 38:20 60:7,16	explaining 59:10 138:21 expressing 76:3 124:2 expressway 97:22 extend 43:23 96:15 132:9 extending 6:5 6:7 extension 127:23 extensive 155:15 158:12 extent 37:25 extra 150:13 extraordin... 103:9 extreme 10:14 11:12 12:13 43:15 extremely 16:11,13 20:5 42:16 79:16 104:12,24 F F 169:1 F-a-i-r 155:7 facilitating 158:19 facilities 77:18 92:15 93:16 94:19 97:19 facing 4:20 4:21 5:6 17:23 156:14 fact 11:3 20:14 49:7 69:12 108:9 131:10 136:16,17 139:21 162:20 facto 117:13 factor 48:21 factors 51:2 fail 65:25 failed 167:17	failing 92:16 fair 58:16 63:6 117:24 138:25 147:19 154:9,25 155:1,6,7 fairer 23:3 Fairmount 97:19 fairness 22:23 faith 40:6 115:14 fall 32:23 falling 79:8 100:14 familiar 141:16 families 19:7 23:11 26:5 26:7 36:7 36:10 48:22 71:19 72:1 73:18 78:17 106:13,15 106:22 125:19 126:5,23 135:8 143:8 family 6:12 26:3 33:12 35:24 36:8 36:15 46:1 47:19 49:1 52:25 66:2 71:15 125:8 125:14 133:2,16 134:11,15 134:16,22 135:6,13,13 136:10 137:11 far 21:13 25:13 54:21 father 36:12 fathers 135:11 feature 9:11 9:14 federal 7:7 14:10 16:22 26:14 64:10	94:23 95:2 96:24 111:17 117:19 118:11 119:15 139:11 146:10 federally 107:3 feedback 86:24 feeder 40:14 40:16 feeders 40:22 feeds 91:8 feel 101:14 101:19 110:17 136:22 137:23 150:13 160:25 161:3,23 feelings 146:17 fees 82:8,12 82:14,21 86:15 87:17 87:18 feet 80:24 88:13 FEMA 14:11 female 135:18 136:1 fewer 33:19 Field 155:17 fight 110:15 121:13 figure 16:4 29:25 50:1 51:15 55:22 65:20 filed 137:6 filing 137:7 164:5 filled 133:10 final 25:2 financed 65:9 finances 5:6 financial 29:21 159:5 financing	95:8,8,15 97:6 find 7:21 21:20,25 50:17 64:3 100:24 111:2,4 122:25 123:5,9,13 finding 34:16 42:5 fine 32:12 fire 43:11 first 7:11 9:17 10:6 12:14 19:11 20:8 37:2 37:13 39:11 61:3 67:13 68:25 69:3 70:10 75:22 82:18,24 84:11 90:21 100:15 130:9,12 144:15 145:5 149:10 first-time 69:1 fiscal 24:18 77:25 157:8 157:23 158:4 159:3 fit 104:4 five 76:2 103:2 135:25 fix 112:11 fixed 20:4 34:20 47:18 92:5 flexibility 50:11 118:10 flexible 44:13 floor 24:8 90:15 flow 40:8 fly 120:18 flying 79:5 focus 65:12 focused 30:19 45:14	113:23 149:7 focuses 162:5 focusing 6:15 folks 59:3 73:18 77:1 77:21 79:12 81:10 89:4 99:24 104:15 105:3,7,21 108:24 110:25 111:2,4 113:8 122:1 122:3 123:17 132:10 140:7,10 144:3 follow 59:21 73:1 followed 23:8 following 2:4 167:4 follows 2:7 food 15:22 force 55:2 111:22 foreclosures 8:16,19 foregoing 169:5,20 Forgive 140:13 form 28:8 47:22 formal 158:17 former 88:17 155:13 156:19 formerly 161:20 forth 100:3 forward 3:12 7:3 54:4 58:24 76:6 108:14 119:13 157:25 foster 73:21 74:8,21 76:11 99:25	100:2 102:5 155:19 156:19 found 2:18 81:22 83:25 86:16 93:2 108:25 156:4 foundation 7:25 four 21:14,16 34:12 54:23 68:14 113:4 114:11 four-year 66:9 fragile 61:15 136:23 137:10 Franklin 148:20 frankly 40:13 50:14 65:25 95:21 130:12 free 68:7 74:9 89:1 friend 6:12 163:7 fringes 99:6 front 6:13 8:2 21:22 43:14 43:16 44:25 61:7 125:17 full-fledged 27:20 full-time 140:6 159:4 fully 143:3 169:4 function 69:12 116:19 139:4 functions 128:24 fund 16:21 46:2 62:9 112:25 114:1 130:18,22 fundable 17:8 funded 14:10
--	--	---	--	---	--	--	--

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 7

48:17 74:17	26:11 28:15	163:3	154:9 165:6	43:1,2 44:9	153:4	17:14 35:7	108:2
75:22	28:24 29:3	Gibson	165:6	46:8 47:3	grow 101:7	46:10 53:25	127:19
103:14	31:19,24	147:19	goal 61:4	51:24 59:19	growing	68:5 91:21	138:19,23
funding	32:19 35:9	gifts 14:22	71:16	70:6,7,7	72:12 98:18	140:19	140:9,11,15
16:16 17:3	35:20 36:21	Gilmore 1:14	goals 25:1,5	76:13 84:2	99:4	hand-in-ha...	140:16
17:14,23	38:17 41:6	3:19,20	64:12,17,25	84:23 88:10	grown 152:17	13:5	148:11
18:3 29:10	42:25 45:1	give 5:7	65:18	89:11,21	growth 72:15	hands 137:2	health- 48:16
43:19,23	59:14 60:12	29:10 32:25	158:13	90:8 98:17	guaranteed	handwashing	healthcare
44:7 46:11	70:1 73:9	37:2 49:6	God 78:23	109:25	115:12	12:8	40:21
50:6 71:18	73:14 89:19	65:4 76:19	goes 46:22	115:14	guardians	HAP 16:17	healthy 108:4
96:13 109:9	90:2,11	80:20	51:3 56:17	116:25	135:12	happen 98:11	hear 8:21
115:19	99:9 123:22	110:24	79:1 87:11	122:19	guards 15:9	106:4	87:16
134:2	143:17,23	147:8	92:19 100:3	133:19	guess 64:2	109:24	128:12
142:15	144:5,8,11	given 81:17	107:21	147:24	66:19 75:20	119:18	162:2
157:18,24	146:24	132:3 137:9	138:3	152:14	87:19	127:4,7	heard 107:19
159:1	147:13,23	163:2,12	going 13:20	155:7 160:3	107:13	137:21	126:13
funds 7:7	154:5,13,20	gives 22:12	17:16 18:11	168:3	160:12	happened	hearing 2:6
16:20 17:9	155:2	30:5 93:16	24:13 28:2	gotten 16:19	166:18	15:1 92:10	2:15 3:13
17:18 18:4	159:13,18	giving 52:7	29:23 42:20	23:17 38:10	guessing	164:3,17	4:7,8 7:11
24:5 26:14	159:25	120:1	49:8 52:20	53:23 57:18	125:18	happening	7:16 8:5,25
39:12 96:24	160:3,9	glad 7:10	54:3 56:2	66:6	guest 152:15	74:1 102:3	9:1 10:9
97:4 119:15	166:20	41:17 91:1	56:23 59:6	government	guests 152:14	132:12	24:17,21
131:15	167:1,12,22	gladly 110:23	60:3 64:6,6	6:18 64:20	guidance	154:12	25:7 73:11
132:1,11	gauze 145:21	122:10	69:6 76:11	158:22	13:7	163:17	145:5 161:4
158:7 159:3	145:22	Gladstein	82:20 84:1	164:13	Guttenberg	happens 98:8	161:10
159:9	gears 108:21	75:16 89:24	84:6 87:2	grab-and-go	144:10,14	151:15	167:5,17
fungible	gender 36:11	90:6,8	88:12 92:22	12:5 15:24	144:16	happy 50:10	hearings 2:11
68:21	general 11:1	94:20	94:11 96:19	grace 78:22	guys 57:13	133:13	2:13,18
further	17:9,18	113:20	97:7 99:2	grant 16:25	87:16 116:2	hard 38:13	8:14
158:24	39:1,12	114:20	99:15,16	17:2 113:1	123:19	40:10 70:11	heartbreak...
167:13	110:2	124:4 130:1	103:10	113:24	Gym 1:15	73:10 99:20	58:19 60:2
future 57:23	131:18	130:5,24	104:7	129:2,5,9	28:19	111:4 119:4	heat 18:20
101:14,15	141:18	131:20	108:21	grantee 129:4	123:24,25	121:7 139:3	92:18
159:11	150:11,20	133:20,24	119:18	grants 113:10	125:11	harder 46:2	heater 112:18
FY19 124:22	generally	GLEC 48:14	120:22	grass 90:23	126:3,10	hardest 5:24	held 68:20
FY20 25:1	17:9,12	50:4	127:3,7	gratitude	127:8,15	34:16	121:1
29:5,9	33:21 63:7	glossed 42:23	130:7 131:7	124:3	128:4,10,19	harm 149:23	149:22
35:10 36:25	79:2 125:19	go 11:18	131:21	gravitate	129:18	harsh 145:14	165:1
FY2020 25:5	generators	35:25 38:13	137:21	117:4	130:20	Harvey 24:21	HELEN 1:15
FY22 17:24	92:20,21	47:12 53:10	143:6	great 28:16	131:2,8	hate 111:24	hell 90:23
	gentrificati...	56:9 57:12	145:14,15	38:18 63:25	132:17	haven 61:9	Hello 60:13
G	97:14 98:11	60:14 62:1	157:25	65:21 73:19	133:18,22	151:12	60:13 144:7
G-u-t-t-e-n...	99:7	67:3 71:9	162:16	74:3 76:23	134:6,24	havens 77:17	155:1,3
144:17	gentrify	75:11 76:20	163:9	80:25 84:5	135:9,14	head 165:2	159:24
gain 66:15	146:4	86:10 87:9	165:14	88:19,20	136:6,15	heads 135:2	160:2
game 131:24	geography	96:13 98:1	166:16	89:13,17	138:10,20	135:19	help 6:11
games 46:16	117:24	101:3	Gonzalez	143:24	141:4,7	health 2:7	29:25 37:20
gaping	Germantown	103:18	9:25	168:7	142:9,21	7:24 10:24	38:15 41:20
145:23	15:25 48:15	107:15	good 3:7,11	greater 57:22	143:15	13:1 14:9	42:2,5
Gauthier	getting 60:21	110:11,14	3:17,17,21	green 90:22		23:6 42:10	44:19,21
1:12 2:2	74:9 84:7	112:19	3:22,25	grievance	H	42:13 43:10	47:12 64:22
4:5 8:20	89:3 97:7	127:21	4:11 9:20	164:6,11	habitation	61:15 67:10	65:18 72:5
10:8 24:9	103:8 129:9	131:15	28:19,25	group 22:6	77:14	77:18 90:9	74:16 75:2
25:10 26:1	162:10	133:12,22	38:10 40:6	54:9 116:9	half 14:13	103:3 105:5	80:24 81:1

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless
September 29, 2020

Page 8

83:13 85:7	120:5	110:1 114:7	156:5,17	horrible 60:4	34:7,8,17	123:13	ideas 161:24
88:12	123:20	144:22	157:6 158:2	hospitality	34:22,25	126:1	identify
107:11	124:3,19	146:9	158:23	5:24	35:4,12	141:15,19	148:9
108:19	125:16	150:16	160:13,16	hospitalizat...	36:25 37:1	142:2,14	identifying
110:14,17	126:8 127:1	holding 26:8	160:21	13:17	37:5,12,19	143:7 146:1	105:3
112:9,10	127:14	holds 108:7	161:17,18	hospitals	37:24 38:22	146:11	ignoring
113:10	128:3,8,18	Holloman	161:21,22	40:21	38:24 39:4	148:16	90:12
115:3 119:4	128:25	9:24 42:21	162:5,15,19	149:19	39:5,9,13	149:8	ill 61:14
127:24	129:24	43:2 50:15	163:19	host 7:12	39:19,21,25	150:23	illegal 126:18
128:12	130:3 131:3	52:3 55:25	167:25	hot 14:20	40:12 41:5	152:23	illness 140:22
138:21	132:23	85:10 87:24	168:10	hotel 13:12	41:15 42:8	153:4,20	image 3:3
140:24	134:14	88:21 104:8	homelessness	hotels 14:1	44:18 45:21	154:9,11	imagination
151:9	135:5,10,21	107:13	4:18 6:15	61:9 150:15	46:9,23	162:9,21,22	132:2
helpful 41:25	136:14	134:21	6:21,23 7:5	150:18	47:21 48:12	167:24	imagine 60:4
42:16,18	137:13	135:7 168:6	7:13 8:15	hour 2:20	48:13 49:11	168:8	immediate
84:17	138:14,24	home 4:15	8:18 10:10	hours 34:3	49:15,22	Housing's	15:5 137:1
108:18	141:6 142:7	7:24 11:4	10:22 11:6	house 16:9	51:3,6,8	62:5	immediately
112:5	142:12	15:19 16:22	17:4 18:6	18:12,14	56:7,16,20	hosings	73:22
132:18	143:14	69:1 106:17	20:7,14	19:7 20:2	56:25 57:11	45:23	imminently
helping 38:21	168:4	Home4Good	23:10 26:4	24:6 36:10	57:16,20	HUD 20:23	79:17
66:15 81:10	Hi 43:2 144:8	16:21	26:21 29:15	36:13 53:2	61:3,13,20	22:22 34:24	impact 5:19
84:5	155:3	homeless 1:3	31:9 35:6	74:18 78:15	62:9,23	37:22 46:11	7:4 8:15
helps 30:8	high 52:6	4:10,14	35:25 40:24	78:17	65:5 66:14	49:14,25	16:10 25:21
Hersh 4:13	103:1	6:21 7:2	41:3 53:15	122:17	66:23 67:19	51:4 77:7	36:17 54:3
7:1 9:19,20	127:16	8:14 9:22	62:24 66:3	125:8	68:11,24	79:10,15	57:23 114:3
9:21 25:9	156:3	9:25 11:14	66:6 72:5	housed 36:9	72:10 73:17	91:24 94:7	135:18
25:18 26:3	high- 113:5	13:2,8 15:3	73:23 77:24	42:12	74:11,13,19	96:1 107:1	155:21
26:17 29:18	higher 39:24	16:13,17	79:9 94:12	115:23	75:2 76:7	114:17	impacted
31:21 32:4	95:5 111:16	17:14 21:5	94:17 108:1	153:7,10	76:10 77:16	129:13	58:12 136:5
33:4 35:16	117:4,7	22:19 25:3	111:1 120:3	household	78:7,13,22	huge 59:2	impacting
35:22 37:8	140:14	27:11 30:10	124:17	93:22	79:16,20,23	85:7	136:19
39:3 41:16	highest 97:2	30:13 32:16	149:25	127:13	82:18,23	human 11:5	impacts 15:6
46:7 48:2,7	112:2	37:16 54:13	156:9,25	135:2,19	84:4 85:25	77:13 90:10	17:22 18:1
49:12 54:6	highlight	54:17,18	157:3,10,17	households	91:11 94:3	164:25	93:14,20
57:24 60:20	74:4	58:4 60:9	158:21	29:5 153:12	95:22 96:23	165:17	implement
62:7,16,19	highlighting	60:17 61:16	160:19	houseless	96:24,25	hundreds	87:13
63:6,20,25	147:5	63:19 64:7	161:18	70:25	99:1,17,21	11:13	implemented
65:19 68:12	highly 58:12	65:22 66:21	homes 5:22	houses 67:24	100:22	hung 91:1	46:18
70:18 71:14	72:11	67:6,13	6:4 12:12	77:19 120:2	104:4	hunger 15:2	implementi...
72:8,22	hired 15:21	70:25 74:20	18:15 22:6	housing 1:2	105:10,14	46:16	18:5 157:2
73:7 74:2	Hispanic	75:4 77:2	155:10	4:9,18,19	106:14,18	hungry 15:7	important
76:16,21	21:3	77:10,20	156:23	4:22 5:2,13	106:19,20	15:11 16:3	4:16 38:7
77:5 78:25	historical	78:18 79:6	157:7	5:17,18 6:8	107:12,17	hurt 10:18	45:9 53:17
80:2 82:6	45:15	79:11,17,24	162:12	6:24 7:14	108:16	146:17	55:24 60:25
82:13 87:25	historically	83:5 93:13	honest	7:18,24 8:1	110:22	hustle 6:2	99:5 115:13
91:3 100:16	123:8	103:3 105:4	125:17	8:13 10:24	111:2,3,9	hyper 142:5	124:13
102:18	history 39:11	108:3	Hood 146:2,7	16:14,21	111:13		142:22
106:23	40:2 49:19	116:14	hope 55:15	18:5,6,8,25	113:25	I	145:11
107:23	158:14	125:3 130:2	61:25	19:3,6,18	115:8,22	ID 84:15	147:1
109:23	hit 5:24 58:13	130:3 140:1	101:20	20:24 21:2	117:20,22	idea 63:24	149:12
111:12	58:18 102:9	140:12	102:19	22:18 23:1	121:23	65:22 76:13	156:16
114:15	150:12	145:2,3,6	141:2	30:1 31:8	122:2,8,10	82:25 87:17	166:6,14
116:6	HIV 148:7	151:6	146:18	31:17 32:21	122:13,22	88:8 114:19	167:3
117:18	hold 8:14	155:25	hopeful 72:13	33:1,16	123:2,4,12	119:21,22	impressed