

Committee on Global Opportunities and the Creative/Innovative Economy
February 19, 2020

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES
AND THE CREATIVE/INNOVATIVE ECONOMY

Room 400, City Hall
1400 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107
Wednesday, February 19, 2020
10:10 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN DAVID OH, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN

RESOLUTION: 200136

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2 COUNCILMAN OH: We'll get
3 started in a couple of minutes. I'm
4 giving a heads-up to my colleagues who
5 are in their offices watching on
6 television or whatever they're doing
7 to come on down. We're going to get
8 ready to start. I appreciate everyone
9 being here. And I will in opening
10 statements kind of go through the
11 process of what we're doing, and of
12 course congratulations on another
13 successful Philadelphia Fashion Week.
14 Thank you very much.

15 (Brief recess.)

16 We're going to start the
17 hearing on the resolution regarding the
18 fashion and garment industry. This is
19 a public hearing on City Council
20 Committee on Global Opportunities in
21 the Creative/Innovative Economy. The
22 purpose of this public hearing is to
23 obtain testimony on Resolution 200136.
24 At this time, I'll ask the Clerk to
25 read the title of the resolution.

1 THE CLERK: Resolution
2 200136, authorizing Council's Committee
3 on Global Opportunities and the
4 Creative/Innovative Economy to hold
5 public hearings on the state of
6 Philadelphia's fashion and design
7 industry.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
9 Thank you very much. I'm going to
10 provide an opening statement and then
11 as my colleagues come in, I'll
12 recognize them and if they want to make
13 a statement, we'll have that as well.
14 Let me just state that everything is
15 being recorded by a stenographer.
16 There are four cameras. The testimony
17 is being televised live on our
18 Government channel. It is recorded and
19 videotaped, and we do use the
20 videotapes to further the goals of
21 which I think we're all here for, that
22 is, to support and enhance
23 Philadelphia's fashion and garment
24 industry.

25 The Committee on Global

1 Opportunities in the
2 Creative/Innovative Economy was created
3 in 2011, the very end of 2011. And the
4 purpose of it was to give the
5 legislature, City Council, a committee
6 that specifically dealt with the topic
7 of jobs and economic engines in
8 Philadelphia regarding the creative
9 innovative economy.

10 We started with PHL LIVE
11 Center Stage which is now going into
12 its seventh year, which is a free music
13 platform for anyone to submit music and
14 their submissions that are judged by
15 Grammy-award winners, Grammy-nominated
16 and other music industry leaders.
17 Thanks to the generous donations of
18 many of our private businesses we've
19 been able to give \$66,000 out to the
20 various winners along with thousands of
21 dollars worth of free student recording
22 time and other things, but most
23 importantly an opportunity here in
24 Philadelphia. And that's really what
25 we're talking about.

1 There are many talented
2 people. There are many people who will
3 never realize the talent they have for
4 the lack of opportunity right here in
5 our city. And so, I really appreciate
6 all of you and everyone who is involved
7 in the creative arts economy coming to
8 City Hall to lend your expertise in how
9 we can make this city a place where
10 people can thrive.

11 The next thing that happened
12 is from PHL LIVE Center Stage, Music
13 Industry Task Force was created. And
14 that task force has completed its
15 report and I'm happy to say there will
16 be a public hearing on Thursday, March
17 12th at 1:00 p.m. for them to testify
18 about their recommendations and what we
19 can do to make our city a more vibrant
20 music city.

21 One of their recommendations
22 of course is to create a permanent
23 office for the music industry. Another
24 committee that was created was the Film
25 and Television Task Force. They are

1 completing their report. They will
2 then testify about their
3 recommendations. And along with that,
4 there other initiatives that the City
5 is involved with.

6 This hearing really came
7 about through a conversation with Kevin
8 Parker and Kerry Scott of the
9 Philadelphia Fashion Week. They have
10 been very good about coming to speak
11 with me about what they do and how we
12 can be helpful. One of the things that
13 I have tried to say is I don't want to
14 see that the experts in the field are
15 not driving the car. People are
16 concerned, of course, that government
17 is as I said the unwanted dinner guests
18 that get invited and never leaves.

19 It's important for me that
20 the industry governs itself, that you
21 advise us, you instruct us and that we
22 merely support your ideas. And so,
23 what I've asked is that you create,
24 establish your own task force. And on
25 Thursday of this week, I will introduce

1 a resolution to make that task force a
2 task force passed by resolution in City
3 Council to be an initial task force of
4 the City of Philadelphia to give us
5 guidance, structure and other things.

6 One of the things that will
7 happen is that task force will have a
8 set period of time, usually it's a
9 year, could be longer, to come up with
10 recommendations. And with that,
11 there's of course at the end of that
12 always the issue of how to fund it and
13 to give it the resources it needs.

14 Like everything else, that depends on
15 how good your ideas are, how strong you
16 are in advocating for what you believe
17 in and how many people in this city we
18 can convince that this is a priority of
19 importance. And so, your testimony is
20 very important today.

21 I'm going to ask the Clerk to
22 call the first panel of witnesses.

23 THE CLERK: Michelle Shannon,
24 Farah Farag and Sara Frank.

25 (Panel approached

1 Witness Table.)

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Please step
3 right up to the microphones, have a
4 seat and because you're being recorded,
5 start by stating your name and who you
6 are and then provide us your testimony.
7 And we have received written testimony
8 from people, that is in the record. So
9 I'll ask you to try to give your
10 comments, the main things you want to
11 say in about five minutes. Thank you.
12 Why don't you start.

13 MS. FARAG: My name is Farah
14 Farag from Fashion District. I am the
15 Marketing Coordinator.

16 MS. FRANK: And I am Sara
17 Frank. I am the Marketing Director at
18 Fashion District Philadelphia.

19 MS. FARAG: So this task
20 force is something that is very
21 important to Fashion District, being
22 that fashion is not only in our name
23 but also part of our four pillars of
24 food, film, fashion, fun. We want
25 Fashion District to be part of this

1 historic moment and potentially help
2 grow the fashion industry within the
3 City of Philadelphia.

4 I personally come from a
5 creative and fashion background and
6 have experienced firsthand how hard it
7 is for a student or young professional
8 to get their feet in the door or simply
9 have mentorship. This is why it's
10 extremely personal for me and also
11 imperative that we help our city's
12 industry.

13 MS. FRANK: Philadelphia has
14 so much wonderful talent and we are yet
15 to be seen as a large fashion hub
16 compared to other cities. If the City
17 can support not only us but the future
18 generations in the market, they will
19 see how far we can grow and how we can
20 pivot the City of Philadelphia to see a
21 fashion hub.

22 We've seen what a few amazing
23 shops have done for our city in the
24 food industry and now it's our turn to
25 step up and be part of history. Thank

1 you for having us and thank you for
2 your time.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
4 very much. I'm going to ask you to
5 stay for questions because I do have a
6 couple for the panel. But please
7 identify yourself and give us your
8 testimony.

9 MS. SHANNON: Sure. My name
10 is Michelle Shannon and I'm Vice-
11 president of Marketing for Center City
12 District. Philadelphia has a long and
13 storied history with the industry of
14 fashion and retail. From early fashion
15 magazine, Godey's Ladies book, retail
16 giant John Wanamaker department store,
17 fashionable Stetsons hats to present
18 day powerhouse Urban Outfitters and
19 successful fashion designers like Tory
20 Burch and Ralph Rucci. Philadelphia
21 has fashion and retail in its blood.

22 We have three of the
23 country's best fashion design schools
24 in our city and Wharton's best-kept
25 secret, the Jay H. Baker School of

1 Retail, a center for retail, research,
2 education and practice. Fashion and
3 retail are glitzy and sexy and for that
4 reason, they don't always get taken
5 seriously as an industry. But it is an
6 important economic driver.

7 Retail is an important driver
8 for tourism. Shopping is one of the
9 top two things that people do when they
10 travel and it generates millions of
11 dollars for our local economy every
12 year. Fashion and retail are an
13 important source of entry-level jobs
14 that with hard work can be a career
15 path in management or even opening of
16 business of their own.

17 Over 70 percent of Center
18 City retailers are independent, not
19 chains. And it's this local flavor
20 that gives Center City and their other
21 neighborhoods the unique shopping
22 experience we love. Local fashion is
23 hot right now. Today's consumers want
24 to have a connection with the apparel
25 they buy. They want to know how it was

1 made, where it was made and who's
2 selling it. They want to be able to
3 customize things to their taste and
4 they want a high level of customer
5 service.

6 Local retailers and designers
7 are more able to source and design
8 better for their clientele because they
9 know them so well, and I'm not talking
10 about basic demographics. I mean, they
11 know their customers and they talk with
12 them regularly. They buy for them and
13 they design for them.

14 Philadelphia is brimming with
15 local designers and retailers and we
16 are increasingly taking a national
17 stage because of it. We've had
18 multiple local retailers featured on
19 and winning Project Runway. We've had
20 retailers such as Boyds and Joan Shep
21 featured in the pages of Women's Wear
22 Daily which is the Wall Street Journal
23 of fashion. We've been held as the
24 second best shopping city in the world
25 by Conde Nast Traveler Magazine.

1 As a founding Board member of
2 the Philadelphia Fashion Incubator,
3 I've seen the talent designers this
4 city has to offer. I've seen them
5 evolve as they expand their knowledge
6 of the industry and business during the
7 one-year residency that the Incubator
8 provides.

9 Most of all I've seen the
10 value of the community helping each
11 other. Retailers like Joan Shepp
12 hosting our designers for a critique or
13 trunk show, designers mentoring each
14 other and of course, the camaraderie
15 and celebration when everyone comes
16 together for Philadelphia Fashion Week.

17 This is Philadelphia's time
18 to take the success that we have shown
19 already in this industry and amplify it
20 with resources, community and
21 visibility through the creation of the
22 Philadelphia Fashion and Garment
23 Industry Task Force. Thank you. I
24 hope I didn't run over my time.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: No. Thank

1 you very much. I'd like to just state
2 for the record that we are joined by
3 Councilman Isaiah Thomas to my left,
4 and I'll ask the Councilman, would you
5 like to make any opening statements?

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: No.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. Let me
8 ask you as a panel, I will always start
9 with this, there's a lot of great
10 things about Philadelphia and there's a
11 lot of things that we really need to
12 work on. I think that's evident to a
13 lot of folks, but what do you find most
14 frustrating about fashion in
15 Philadelphia? What needs to be done,
16 because as you said I think in the
17 minds of many, particularly here in our
18 own city, fashion is not taken
19 seriously for the economic engine and
20 change agent that it is.

21 What would you like to see
22 done to make this city more responsive
23 and being able to really do the things
24 that you believe we can do?

25 MS. FRANK: So --

1 COUNCILMAN OH: Please just
2 state your name for the record.

3 MS. FRANK: Yeah, sure. Sara
4 Frank from Fashion District. So we're
5 actually lucky enough to be the host of
6 Philly Fashion Week for this whole
7 week. And honestly, just even last
8 night seeing the amazing designers that
9 come in and display what they have to
10 offer and all their creativity, it's so
11 great to see and we look forward to the
12 next few days as well as with our
13 runway shows, but just a lot of
14 different new opportunities like that
15 where really designers have that
16 opportunity to showcase not only during
17 the Philly Fashion Week that we host
18 twice a year with Philly Fashion Week
19 but different opportunities to showcase
20 throughout the City.

21 MS. FARAG: To touch on that,
22 Farag also with Fashion District, I
23 just feel that there isn't a platform
24 like that, like Philly Fashion Week.
25 Other than them, there are few small

1 ones but you don't see it a lot in the
2 media. If you do, it's a smaller
3 segment. It's just not focused on it.
4 And I touched a little about it
5 previously, but we've seen what a few
6 amazing chefs can do in the food
7 industry. And now it's all over in
8 national magazines that Philadelphia is
9 the place to be if you're a foodie.
10 And I would love to see that with
11 fashion because I think we have that
12 same drive, if not more, in that
13 regards.

14 MS. SHANNON: Thank you. I
15 think there are a number of things.
16 I'm sorry. Michell Shan --

17 COUNCILMAN OH: Just identify
18 yourself for the record. Thank you
19 very much.

20 MS. SHANNON: I'm sorry?

21 COUNCILMAN OH: No, you just
22 did it. You identified yourself for
23 the record. Thank you.

24 MS. SHANNON: I think there's
25 a lot of things. As I said in my

1 statement, I was one of the founding
2 members of the Philadelphia Fashion
3 Incubator and learned a lot about the
4 industry. In fact, it's amazing to me
5 that any fashion company survives
6 because it's a very tough business.

7 But I think that the way
8 consumers are buying now, their habits
9 and their preferences, I think that
10 there's an opportunity for niche
11 manufacturing here in Philadelphia. I
12 think that -- when I say niche
13 manufacturing, back in the '80s,
14 Philadelphia was the second largest
15 apparel manufacturer in the country.

16 I don't see that level of
17 industry coming back, but people want
18 locally-made, locally-sourced items.
19 And I believe that with some
20 guidance -- I think there are people
21 out there doing it already in this
22 city. And I think if we could pull our
23 resources together, I think there's an
24 opportunity for more of that happening
25 here.

1 I also think that a lot of
2 the people that worked in the industry
3 have gone away. They've either gone to
4 New York or they're dead, you know.
5 And so, I think we need to start
6 feeding the industry, teaching. And I
7 know that St. Hubert's has a program
8 for seamstresses and sewing and design.
9 We need to be able to guide some of our
10 young people into that area and let
11 them explore it. Not every child needs
12 to go to college. There are great
13 trades out there, and that's one of the
14 skills that by and large has been lost,
15 so I think in our education system we
16 also need to funnel the future talent
17 through our schools.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: I've heard
19 and I don't personally know, I did a
20 little reading that seems to support
21 the idea that there is movement in New
22 York's fashion industry, their garment
23 industry and possibly a search for
24 another location, another city.

25 Can any of you comment on

1 that? If not, we'll go to another
2 panel that can do that. But I just
3 really bring it up because that's one
4 of the issues that arise, what can the
5 City do to invite or attract those
6 existing manufacturers and other
7 companies to locate here in our city,
8 how could we perhaps do some incentives
9 or outreach, because we have a lot of
10 space that seems to be well-suited for
11 this, that we really are having a
12 little bit of trouble kind of getting
13 them to be places of employment and
14 production.

15 MR. SHANNON: Well, New York
16 had a whole program of not only
17 incentives but education for their
18 designers and it's something I have in
19 my files, I could get it to you, in
20 terms of incentives and the government,
21 the city being able to attract new
22 businesses. I think we can put a road
23 show together and go to other cities,
24 see who's there in New York, who might
25 be there in other cities that would be

1 interested in relocating here. And,
2 yes, financial incentives will probably
3 be a big deal.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm
5 sorry. I apologize for the tardiness.
6 But do you have any examples of
7 municipalities that have provided any
8 level of financial incentives to be
9 able to attract folks to the industry
10 to their particular city?

11 The reason that I think my
12 colleague is probing into this issue is
13 because you're presenting some good
14 information and some phenomenal facts.
15 But from our seat on municipality
16 government, there's not much we can do
17 from the seat that we hold right now.

18 But if we can brainstorm ways
19 which I'm assuming is part of the
20 reason why we're having the hearing
21 today, if we can brainstorm ways that
22 we can work as a collective, right now
23 we have a huge unemployment issue in
24 the City of Philadelphia and just
25 listening to the level of your

1 testimony, you talked about a number of
2 different opportunities that can
3 present themselves to young people in
4 the City.

5 But if we don't have
6 opportunities for employers to employ
7 them, a lot of it will require
8 entrepreneurship. While that is a
9 phenomenal model, everybody is not
10 built to be an entrepreneur. And if
11 you don't know, it's not a big deal at
12 all.

13 But from the perspective that
14 I think we sit in, we just want to be
15 able to figure out how can we support
16 the industry and what are maybe some
17 tangible examples out there of why
18 would somebody want to go to New York
19 besides the fact that it's
20 well-populated and have a reputation,
21 what are they doing, how are they
22 incentivizing people to essentially
23 bring their industry there?

24 I did hear you talk about
25 manufacturing. I'm very passionate

1 about bringing manufacturing back to
2 the City of Philadelphia, but what does
3 that look like for the fashion
4 industry?

5 MS. SHANNON: I can't answer
6 your first question necessarily without
7 a little more research, but I can tell
8 you what bringing manufacturing back
9 looks like to me, like I said, are
10 these niche manufacturing where we're
11 not talking somebody the size of a
12 Macy's would be buying from, but it's
13 small batch production and it has a
14 couple of advantages.

15 One, it's less waste. That's
16 a big thing right now, sustainability
17 in the fashion industry. So when
18 you're doing something small batch
19 production, many times you're only
20 manufacturing for who you know is going
21 to be buying it. It's again local and
22 it's a very curated process, so that's
23 how I would see it.

24 And the other thing is I
25 believe that -- I know being involved

1 with the Fashion Incubator, we feel
2 like there are funding sources that we
3 are not able to identify. Elissa Bloom
4 will talk more about the Incubator. I
5 think the government, the City will be
6 able to help us identify sources out
7 there for grants or other programs that
8 we don't know about it on a local level
9 but might exist on a state and federal
10 level.

11 This industry hits so many of
12 the key things that people are excited
13 about, growing jobs, entrepreneurship
14 and there has to be more money out
15 there than what we know exists in terms
16 of helping to fund all of these things.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
18 you.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank
20 you very much. I will just say that
21 one of the things that we will look to
22 do is to establish this task force of
23 experts to put your heads together with
24 our assistance to support. We know
25 you're busy, to give you some level of

1 support as you do the research as we
2 look at best practices, as we look
3 overseas to see what type of
4 collaborations and of course, I will
5 say the big thing at the end of the day
6 is this, everyone fights for dollars.

7 Dollars go to where the
8 majority of people who advocate for
9 those dollars come into this building.
10 It's not a perfect system, but it's a
11 very democratic system. And that means
12 sometimes, at least to me, the dollars
13 are not always spent in the best
14 possible manner, but often loudest gets
15 the more money.

16 And a lot of times people who
17 are very, very confident in the good
18 that they do, their industry and their
19 work, are very modest about advocating
20 for their fair share of the dollars.
21 And one of the things I would love to
22 see is that these industries that are
23 so important get a little more
24 aggressive with their government to
25 fund the things that really make a

1 difference. We have some other panels
2 that are going to address some more
3 issues, so thank you very much.

4 MS. FRANK: Thank you.

5 MS. FARAG: Thank you.

6 MS. SHANNON: Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Clerk, would
8 you call the next panel?

9 THE CLERK: Rachel Ford,
10 Michelle Ortiz and Elissa Bloom.

11 (Panel approached
12 Witness Table.)

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning.
14 Just like with the prior panel, your
15 testimony is being recorded by a
16 stenographer as well as video, but
17 please state your name so the
18 stenographer will know who is speaking.
19 And we can begin kind of like let's say
20 from your left to your right.

21 MS. FORD: Thank you. My
22 name is Rachel Ford. I'm the founder
23 of Made Institute, Philadelphia's
24 premier independent fashion design and
25 sewing school since 2012. I'm also the

1 Regional Director of Fashion
2 International for Philadelphia and I'm
3 on the Advisory Board for the
4 Philadelphia Fashion Incubator.

5 Before starting my school, I
6 taught at Moore College of Arts, was a
7 head cutter draper for the Opera
8 Company of Philadelphia's Costume
9 Department. I was a designer at Urban
10 Outfitters and I attended Drexel
11 University for fashion design.

12 I mention all of this to say
13 I'm very versed in the dynamic value
14 that fashion and sewing bring to this
15 city and the specific needs of young
16 designers to build a lasting fashion
17 career in Philadelphia instead of going
18 to a city like New York.

19 Currently, Philadelphia lacks
20 certain resources that are integral to
21 both fashion business startups and the
22 manufacturing and production industry.
23 Resources like the Council of Fashion
24 Designers of America, CFDA, in New York
25 City bring startup capital,

1 manufacturing subsidies and education
2 grants and mentorship that are
3 sponsored at the state and the city
4 levels.

5 The grants part of the public
6 and private fashion manufacturing
7 initiative go to small businesses and
8 manufacturers that make and design
9 clothes in the city. Funds are used
10 for infrastructure upgrades, worker
11 training, business training and state-
12 of-the-art equipment.

13 Cities like New York
14 understand that fashion is a large part
15 of the local economy creating 180,000
16 jobs with \$11 billion in annual wages
17 and manufacturing jobs averaging
18 \$41,000 annually. Philadelphia already
19 has a rich history of garment
20 production and with such close
21 proximity to New York and New Jersey
22 can again be a large contributor to the
23 growing need for manufacturing
24 resources.

25 As an educator, I'm

1 particularly interested in the
2 workforce development and small
3 business training programs that could
4 revamp both ends of the ecosystem.
5 Through education, we can invest into
6 small businesses and workforce
7 training, thus quickly activating new
8 jobs in the local economy.

9 The proposed Philadelphia
10 Fashion and Garment Industry Task Force
11 will organize Philadelphia's fashion
12 leaders in education, styling, design,
13 manufacturing, marketing, retail, event
14 production and finance towards a
15 singular goal of pulling our resources
16 and creating accessibility to our
17 designers and makers.

18 With the help of our local
19 government, I believe that Philadelphia
20 can again be a leader in the fashion
21 and garment production industries.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.
24 Would you please take the microphone
25 and identify yourself before you give

1 your testimony.

2 MS. BLOOM: Good morning. My
3 name is Elissa Bloom. I am the
4 Executive Director of the Philadelphia
5 Fashion Incubator. I'm here this
6 morning to express the Incubator's
7 support of the Philadelphia Fashion and
8 Garment Industry Task Force. The
9 Incubator's mission is to nurture
10 emerging fashion entrepreneurs from
11 Philadelphia design schools and the
12 local fashion community.

13 By teaching them the business
14 of fashion in a dynamic 12-month
15 residency, the Incubator connects
16 designers to the global fashion network
17 and encourages them to expand and
18 retain their businesses in the region.

19 Since our launch in 2012, the
20 Incubator has graduated over 40
21 designers and there are 28 that are
22 still actively in business. Our
23 initiative has positively impacted
24 Philadelphia's apparel manufacturing
25 and retail economy.

1 More than 90 percent of our
2 designers are manufacturing locally.
3 Each designer generates work for over
4 15 people in the community. From
5 manufacturers and technical designers
6 to photographers, videographers and
7 graphic designers to printers, PR
8 specialists and accountants, the
9 Incubator has had a direct impact on
10 the creative economy and the region's
11 economic development.

12 Our designers have been in
13 the national spotlight, including
14 Project Runway and Style To Rock to the
15 Today's Show and Good Morning America
16 to national press in Forbes, Rolling
17 Stone, O Magazine, WWD Entrepreneur
18 magazine just to name a few.

19 Alumni Amy Voloshin and her
20 husband who is an Incubator Board
21 member launched Jasper Studios where
22 some of our alumni now has offices.
23 Alumni Milano di Rouge launched a
24 hugely successful retail store on
25 Spring Garden and sold her streetwear

1 brand to a national company.

2 Alumni Cherelle Mosley will
3 be on air next month on QVC selling her
4 MinkeeBlue bags during International
5 Women's Day. These are just a few
6 success stories and there are many to
7 come. The Incubator is bringing
8 barriers with Nancy Connor's Smart
9 Adaptive clothing brand for people with
10 disabilities, to designers Shelby
11 Donnelly's upcycled and sustainable art
12 to wear brand Wear to Wall, to Ali
13 Pearce and her gender neutral brand
14 Pearce.

15 Over the past eight years, we
16 have seen the need of additional
17 manufacturing resources for our
18 designers along with marketing and
19 sales opportunities nationally and
20 globally.

21 With the growing fashion
22 talent in our city, it's time for
23 Philadelphia to showcase our incredible
24 fashion brands to the world. Kevin
25 Parker and Kerry Scott have served on

1 the PFI Advisory Committee since its
2 inception and we have partnered with
3 them with our designers showcasing
4 their collections on the Philly Fashion
5 Week runway.

6 I am proud to be serving on
7 the Task Force and think this is an
8 exciting time for the Incubator and the
9 many fashion organizations supporting
10 designers in the City to come together
11 as a collective in the Task Force to
12 further our goals in putting the City
13 of Philadelphia back on the fashion
14 map. Thank you to the City for
15 supporting our effort and moving the
16 fashion sector of Philadelphia forward
17 towards a potential of growth and
18 sustainability. Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
20 very much. Please state your name and
21 give your testimony.

22 MS. ORTIZ GONZALEZ: My name
23 is Nasheli Juliana Ortiz Gonzalez. I'm
24 the Chair and Associate Professor of
25 Moore College of Art and Design. My

1 body of work is centered in research of
2 political, social and religious issues
3 from an apparel point of view. I had
4 fortunately to present some of the
5 designer platforms in the world and
6 that could never have happened without
7 first being seamstress for many years.

8 Fashion has a strong social,
9 cultural impact and has played an
10 important role in empowering
11 marginalized communities. I think it's
12 important to educate ourselves as
13 consumers and educate new designers to
14 attack the problems of the industry by
15 making informed decisions to create
16 fertile and sustainable alternative
17 spaces.

18 The City of Philadelphia can
19 help us achieve history by using the
20 responsibility with us assuming this
21 responsibility with us of creating a
22 platform where immigrants, girls and
23 women find a safe place to empower
24 themselves through design. I have
25 found the City of Philadelphia must

1 support more fashion as a culture
2 asset. Fashion creates value. It
3 improves not only the creative
4 landscape but it also benefits the
5 economy.

6 We see students in our
7 college graduate and leave Philadelphia
8 and we need them here. And that is
9 where the City of Philadelphia must
10 take action. Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
12 Thank you very much. Ms. Ford, can I
13 ask you, you are an educator but an
14 entrepreneur?

15 MS. FORD: Yes.

16 COUNCILMAN OH: Since 2012,
17 could you kind of let us know what has
18 been markedly good in your experience
19 about being in Philadelphia and what
20 has been markedly bad about being here
21 in Philadelphia comparatively
22 relatively when you look at other
23 locations?

24 MS. FORD: Sure. Well, I've
25 only ever been here in this city as far

1 as building something from the ground
2 up, but Philadelphia has been a
3 wonderful city to incubate a new idea.
4 There's lots of room for growth. Rents
5 are somewhat affordable and there's a
6 lot of people that are looking for
7 synergy to work with their own creative
8 endeavors. So I love and continue to
9 love building my business here in
10 Philadelphia.

11 With that said, I think that
12 because there is so much room to grow,
13 sometimes we lack certain resources
14 that can help further small businesses,
15 and that's not just to say we just need
16 money and funding. I think it's a lot
17 more about mentorship, accessibility
18 and knowing that like today we have a
19 voice towards change in the future.

20 So I think my biggest
21 take-aways -- and also, let me say my
22 school we create entrepreneurs as well.
23 So not only am I an entrepreneur, I'm
24 surrounded by wonderful entrepreneurs.
25 And I think that watching them go

1 forward, a big fear for them is how
2 they're going to make their mark in a
3 city like Philadelphia be seen, and
4 then of course turn it into a viable
5 business with actual business
6 opportunities.

7 It's one thing to launch a
8 collection and have all the eyes on it
9 at a fashion show, but how does that
10 translate into dollars and cents. And
11 I think that a lot of that transition
12 is taught through education, mentorship
13 and some of these students don't have
14 access to the finances that they need
15 even just for start up or even just to
16 pay for their own education to learn
17 these skills themselves.

18 So for them, I think that
19 they might say they lack some of the
20 knowledge of the resources that are out
21 there. And so, maybe bringing that to
22 light through something like the Task
23 Force where they know that there's a
24 central agency that they can talk to
25 and go through to find the answers they

1 need and to find the people that they
2 need to connect with.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Is there an
4 issue surrounding, for example,
5 possibly the lack of paid internships
6 and opportunities in Philadelphia?

7 MS. FORD: So that's a great
8 question. Paid internships are hard
9 because a lot of the people, the small
10 businesses that need the help are also
11 in financial strain themselves and they
12 of course understand that they have to
13 compensate people that are no longer in
14 school. And so, that can be difficult
15 and a lot of times those opportunities
16 are found in places very close by like
17 New York.

18 So I think that helping small
19 business owners to create those kinds
20 of opportunities, because the need is
21 there for sure and the opportunities
22 are there to work with start-up
23 designers. It's the best education you
24 could ever have. But I think that for
25 the business owners it's hard to afford

1 to be able to pay interns the way that
2 they would. Otherwise, they might just
3 hire somebody with experience. So
4 that's that sort of in-between niche
5 that an intern can bring. But again,
6 it comes with a dollar sign sometimes
7 designers can't afford it.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: So one of the
9 questions we will ask the Task Force is
10 to kind of prioritize incentives. For
11 example, New York City has its own
12 separate from the state film tax
13 incentive. We're looking at a
14 Philadelphia film incentive. But the
15 issue that arises, for example, with
16 PHL LIVE was is it the money or is it
17 the free student recording time, like
18 which one is better. We kind of ended
19 up splitting the difference as best as
20 we could.

21 So incentive-wise, is it for
22 the business, the small business, as
23 you talked about grants, how important
24 is the incentivizing paid internships
25 in a city like ours with so many young

1 people graduating and being attracted
2 here? It's not a question I'm going to
3 ask you now, but just to say, yes,
4 that's one of the things we'll ask the
5 Task Force to consider.

6 And then for the Incubator, I
7 know the wonderful things that you do.
8 My question is has the City itself in
9 any way been supportive or not? You
10 find the City missing or helpful?
11 What's your experience with the City
12 and from what you may know when you
13 compare it to, for example, New York,
14 how are we doing as a City government?

15 MS. BLOOM: So the City is
16 one of our founding sponsors of the
17 Incubator with Center City District and
18 Macy's, so we're very appreciative of
19 the support over the years. I think
20 that we, as Michelle had stated, we are
21 still in need of -- we are always
22 looking for additional funding and
23 sponsorships and grants and just to be
24 able to be a little bit more informed
25 about some of those opportunities that

1 are out there, but we have actually a
2 business boot camp.

3 We're launching our ninth
4 residency in March and we're going to
5 be meeting -- every year we have a
6 business boot camp, we're meeting with
7 the Commerce Department for the
8 designers to find out about the various
9 resources that they can tap into for
10 their individual businesses.

11 So we're very appreciative of
12 the support of the City. I think again
13 just finding out more about those
14 opportunities that we can tap into as
15 an organization that is helping women
16 and minorities and entrepreneurs here
17 in the City build businesses is just
18 key for us to continue moving on with
19 our vision and to able to continue to
20 keep our designers in business.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
22 Thank you. Before I continue with my
23 last question, let me just recognize
24 for the record that we are joined by
25 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore

1 Richardson. Thank you.

2 From the perspective of one
3 of the things that you raised about the
4 social impact, the social cultural
5 significance, how does that play into
6 the things that you are doing in terms
7 of fashion affecting the community or
8 the people here in our city?

9 MS. ORTIZ GONZALEZ: I'm from
10 Puerto Rico. That is the first thing
11 that I want to say, so I have -- I've
12 worked in many places and I have never
13 found so immediately welcome and
14 support in my work, in my own work and
15 in my students. And I only have three
16 years here.

17 So talking about the
18 marginalized communities, I think we
19 can -- through education we can educate
20 and empower this community if we give
21 them a job. If we give them the
22 skills, they can have jobs and they can
23 go out of the circles of poverty. I
24 think that is very important.

25 For example, in New York now

1 in the early 2,000s, they lost their
2 incentive for the garment district to
3 have. They had an incentive that the
4 landlords needed to have at least 60
5 percent of their space occupied by the
6 fashion industry-related, and they lost
7 that. And in 2015, they started doing
8 small fellowships for designers that to
9 only add in their brand made in New
10 York City, and they give \$15 million to
11 that incentive.

12 So if we create manufacturing
13 here, that we can train the
14 communities, we can help them. Money
15 is power. So I think we can create
16 that through education.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
18 Thank you very much. I'm going to
19 recognize that we're joined by
20 Councilmember Derek Green and ask the
21 members if they have any comments or
22 questions. Councilmember Isaiah
23 Thomas?

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: This
25 question is for Ms. Rachel Ford. So in

1 the midst of your testimony, one of the
2 things that really caught my attention
3 was this Council of Fashion Design,
4 Designs of America, the CFDA program up
5 in New York, I'm not familiar with it,
6 but I did a quick little Google search
7 on my phone and got some support from a
8 staff member. So my basic
9 understanding is that this is a
10 combination of mostly philanthropy
11 dollars as well as government dollars.

12 From your expert opinion, how
13 do you suggest that we replicate a
14 model like that here in the City of
15 Philadelphia to essentially help
16 startups, because again a large
17 percentage from the money from my
18 understanding comes from the industry
19 while government does provide some
20 level of funding?

21 MS. FORD: That's a great
22 question and I've thought about that
23 myself often. I think that from the
24 scale that we have to start at having
25 government funding of any sort would be

1 a fantastic start with then private
2 inventors wanting to be a part of that
3 once we've tested the model.

4 So we've worked with the
5 Department of Commerce and the Director
6 of Manufacturing to talk about building
7 up small batch manufacturing in
8 Philadelphia. And dollars put into
9 something like that would then
10 eventually turn into dollars put into
11 designers pockets because they can
12 afford to manufacture locally here and
13 then jumpstarting the economy.

14 I think small-focused amounts
15 that we start with can then turn into
16 something that grows mass over time. I
17 don't think that we can be the CFDA
18 right away, because like you said the
19 funding is coming from the industry
20 itself. The biggest players sometimes
21 in the world are -- or the biggest
22 companies I should say in the world are
23 putting money back into that.

24 And I think that being in
25 such close proximity to New York, we

1 don't want to try to do what New York's
2 doing. We need to be Philadelphia, and
3 I think that the heart of that will
4 possibly land in our manufacturing
5 efforts, our sustainability efforts
6 that can really put us on a platform to
7 be recognized, and I think that small
8 dollars can make very large change in
9 those particular ways. And then the
10 money will start to come once people
11 see that the theory's been proven.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: Any other
15 questions or comments? Councilmember
16 Derek Green?

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
18 Chairman Oh. Just a quick question, as
19 you were talking it made me think of
20 Philadelphia has had a long history in
21 manufacturing, especially from the
22 garment perspective. When I was a
23 small business lender for Meridian
24 Bank, I used to work in a part of North
25 Philadelphia that was called Garment

1 Square because of Bonded 500 and other
2 large manufacturers that were in
3 Philadelphia, especially World War 2,
4 Philadelphia was known as the workplace
5 for the world because of all of the
6 manufacturing that occurred in
7 Philadelphia.

8 Has it been any initiative to
9 try to capture that type of historical
10 perspective and then connect that with
11 some of the people who are doing
12 design, who are in the creative space
13 now and make that linkage? There's
14 been similar efforts on the music side
15 where we tried to make the connections
16 between the history we've had in the
17 City of Philadelphia from American
18 Bandstand to Mayor Anderson and John
19 Coltrane. But has there been a similar
20 type of connection about the history,
21 because I don't think a lot of people
22 really are cognizant of the strong
23 manufacturing history that we have here
24 in the City of Philadelphia. Even if
25 you look in parts of South Street and

1 Queens Village where we had a number of
2 boutiques, tailors that were a large
3 part of that small business community
4 which is now really starting to shrink
5 because of the changes in the industry
6 and also changes in this industry as a
7 whole. So has there been any type of
8 connection or history?

9 I know we do have -- I
10 believe right by the AIA there's a
11 fashion museum or boutique right off
12 Arch Street by the Community Center,
13 but I was curious if there's been any
14 type of real linkage in that way?

15 MS. FORD: I'm assuming this
16 is for me?

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yes, or
18 anyone on the panel.

19 MS. FORD: Rachel Ford.
20 That's a fantastic question as well. I
21 think a lot of designers are aware of
22 the history of Philadelphia being a
23 former manufacturing hub and there is a
24 renaissance happening about bringing
25 small batch back, bringing some

1 manufacturing back.

2 Mostly, that happens through
3 necessity. Small designers can't
4 afford the minimums to produce overseas
5 so the beauty of small businesses, it's
6 sustainable and local by nature. So
7 with all of that said, the customer now
8 is becoming privy to -- similar to the
9 slow food movement, the slow fashion
10 movement and wanting to buy locally,
11 wanting to support sustainable
12 companies and loving to buy into the
13 story that goes along with those
14 companies.

15 So as far as the viability of
16 that, it does boil down again I believe
17 into education. We can talk forever
18 about opening factories and bringing
19 that energy back to a city like
20 Philadelphia, but at the end of the day
21 the trained hands aren't there in a way
22 that they need to be. And if they are,
23 they need to be paid a wage that is
24 livable. And that is contradictory to
25 the model that fashion has lived up to

1 thus far. So it's a bigger battle that
2 I'm fascinated with.

3 And I think that there's
4 again small wins that start with small
5 battles, and that being in my opinion
6 education, setting up training programs
7 that get people into entry-level jobs
8 that can pay their rent. And once
9 we've accomplished that which seems
10 like a really basic request but that's
11 actually the tough part, if we can get
12 that going and I think with the City's
13 help, we can really focus those dollars
14 in an effective way that will have
15 results quickly, then we can start
16 talking about matching that beautiful
17 history and seeing that, no, it won't
18 come back the same way like Elissa
19 stated, but I do think that it will
20 come back in Philadelphia's current way
21 in a way that really people need and
22 not just Philly needs, but New York
23 needs that as well.

24 I think that this is a model
25 that can be replicated in many cities

1 and I would love for Philadelphia to be
2 at the beginning of that story.

3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Just one
4 more follow-up question. In the IT
5 infrastructure, there has been a number
6 of -- in the shared economy there's
7 been a number of co-working spaces. So
8 if you're familiar with WeWork and
9 Benjamin's Desk and others and now it's
10 moved into the entertainment space
11 where like REC Philly, David Silver,
12 David Thomas who started around Temple
13 University and now they're at Fashion
14 District.

15 Is there a similar type of
16 model in the fashion industry where you
17 have a co-working space where people
18 from the different type of designers
19 can do similar to what Evan Malone has
20 done with NextFab off Washington
21 Avenue? Is there a similar type of
22 location in the City of Philadelphia or
23 is there a model in other cities that
24 we can try to replicate?

25 MS. FORD: Well, not to toot

1 my own horn, but Made Institute is a
2 place like that. So we're not only
3 education, but we are a community. So
4 we open up our classrooms to just
5 people that want to take one-off
6 courses to just learn how to sew for
7 their own obvious reasons, but we also
8 open our space that's full of
9 industrial equipment and professional
10 know-how to designers who want to start
11 but can't afford rent and need access
12 to professional equipment, so that's
13 happening.

14 We're a small business and
15 we're looking to expand actually
16 currently to build that feature out
17 more. But I do believe closing that
18 ecosystem with not only educating
19 people but then giving them a place to
20 land is really important.

21 And the final piece I believe
22 is then what are the manufacturing
23 resources that can keep them here in
24 Philadelphia and sustaining.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,

1 Mr. Chair.

2 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

3 I'd like to recognize Councilmember
4 Gilmore Richardson.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you,
7 Mr. Chair. First, thank you for
8 introducing this resolution and for
9 having the hearing. I'm really
10 encouraged by the diversity of the
11 audience and the amount of industries
12 represented here.

13 And I just wanted to take a
14 point of personal privilege to
15 acknowledge the presence of one of my
16 high school classmates who started a
17 business here in Philadelphia, DaVinci
18 Skin Care which is downtown. It was a
19 pleasure to be at your grand opening.
20 Also, today I'm wearing a scarf from
21 SPERGO from Trey Brown. He's the CEO
22 of SPERGO, a new fashion line by a
23 young teenager here in Philadelphia.

24 But I wanted to quickly ask
25 you a question relative to workforce

1 development in the fashion industry and
2 figuring out how we can work with the
3 School District around curriculum
4 realignment to ensure that we are
5 pairing some of our career and
6 technical programs in the District with
7 the opportunities that are available.

8 So could you quickly talk
9 about some of the partnerships with the
10 District or if you have any at all?

11 MS. FORD: I'm assuming this
12 is to me. Rachel Ford. So there are
13 trade schools in Philadelphia at the
14 grade school level that are diving into
15 sewing specifically. I'm forgetting
16 the name of it right now, but I've
17 toured there to talk about their
18 curriculum and to see the level of
19 skill and bringing that information to
20 designers in Philadelphia that are
21 looking for talented hands. So it's
22 only been one visit with one school,
23 but it was very encouraging to see that
24 that is a model that exists and it's
25 alive and well.

1 I spoke with -- and again,
2 I'll get back to you about who these
3 people were. I need to remember their
4 names. But the people in charge that
5 were writing the curriculums, very
6 passionate people that are really
7 taking care of these kids and trying to
8 land them in positions that are more
9 based on trade, based on their interest
10 in that skill and not necessarily
11 placing them in colleges but into the
12 trade. So I think that that kind of
13 curriculum could be again duplicated
14 and built out, and it's part of their
15 school's curriculum to place their
16 students in internships, unpaid by
17 nature because they're in high school.

18 There's a lot of red tape of
19 course with protecting the students and
20 making sure they're placed in proper
21 situations and not every designer -- if
22 they are working out of their home,
23 that's not necessarily a proper
24 situation. So again, the idea of
25 co-working, a place that's professional

1 and can meet the standards to that kind
2 of connection is something that they
3 were very interested in as well. So,
4 yes, that does exist and I think it's
5 fantastic.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

9 Thank you very much. I'll ask the
10 Clerk to call up the next panel.

11 THE CLERK: Joanne Litz and
12 Erika Erb.

13 (Panel approached
14 Witness Table.)

15 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
16 Please identify yourself and give your
17 testimony. Thank you.

18 MS. ERB: Good morning. My
19 name is Erika Joy Erb and I am a
20 marketing brand consultant. Thank you
21 all so much for having us here today.
22 As a lifelong Philadelphian and former
23 head of marketing for Sugarhouse Casino
24 and Fashion District Philadelphia, I've
25 had the pleasure of working alongside

1 Kevin Parker and Kerry Scott for many
2 years now as well as gaining firsthand
3 insight into the fashion industry in
4 Philadelphia.

5 Philadelphia is special.
6 It's a city deeply-rooted in pride,
7 authenticity and uniqueness. Instead
8 of following trends, Philadelphians
9 make their own. We are a city that
10 celebrates and encourages individuality
11 and as such, our personal style and
12 fashion reflects just that.

13 Every day amazing individuals
14 are doing amazing things to elevate the
15 fashion industry in Philadelphia.
16 Everyone behind me is one of those
17 amazing people. From talented local
18 designers and entrepreneurs to multiple
19 renowned higher education programs to
20 over 300 Center City retailers focused
21 on apparel and jewelry, Philadelphia is
22 ripe with opportunity.

23 We even have our very own
24 Fashion Week that is held twice a year,
25 in fact being held right now. So why

1 isn't Philadelphia known for fashion
2 just like we're known for our food
3 scene or our mural arts community?
4 Much of this is due to lack of
5 awareness and the lack of ability to
6 combine resources. The Philadelphia
7 Fashion and Garment Industry Task Force
8 will create an essentialized hub to
9 encourage collaboration and new
10 opportunities, all while promoting
11 Philly's fashion story in a cohesive
12 and unified way.

13 As individuals, we can only
14 do so much. But as a collective, the
15 Task Force will redesign what fashion
16 means in Philadelphia. It's time we
17 put Philly on the map for fashion and
18 do it in a way that creates jobs,
19 creates opportunities, provide
20 resources and also gives our 42 million
21 tourists another reason to visit our
22 great city. Working together, the Task
23 Force can accomplish just that. Thank
24 you.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you.

1 Please identify yourself and provide us
2 with your testimony.

3 MS. LITZ: Hi. My name is
4 Joanne Litz and I am a sustainable
5 fashion designer and I am a partner in
6 the Brand Steel Pony. We've been in
7 business for Philadelphia for 28 years.
8 Five years ago we opened up our first
9 brick and mortar on 4th Street. And I
10 was born in Philadelphia and received
11 my Bachelor's of Science at Philly
12 Textile Design, which is now Jefferson
13 University.

14 Prior to opening Steel Pony,
15 I worked just outside the City as a
16 design director for an import company.
17 I am passionate about what I do and I
18 work hard to make this successful.
19 First, I wanted to say thank you for
20 giving this Task Force the opportunity
21 to get support from the City. I am
22 very excited to be part of what I think
23 will be an exciting chapter to an
24 industry that has so much history in
25 this city.

1 I have been part of this
2 industry for 40 years and this is the
3 first time I've seen some real progress
4 and hope. We have four or five
5 colleges, universities and tech schools
6 that educate young people to become
7 fashion designers, production managers
8 and other aspects of the industry.
9 Unfortunately, in order to get jobs,
10 they have to leave the City.

11 So for those of us who have
12 chosen to stay, we have become
13 entrepreneurs struggling to find
14 community sourcing and exposure.
15 Although we have had different groups
16 such as Philadelphia Fashion Group and
17 others, it seems that no one can get
18 everyone in one room to collaborate and
19 get things done until Kevin and Kerry
20 came along, and I'm really excited to
21 see that they've taken the lead on
22 this.

23 I believe that this Task
24 Force will do a lot to help the City of
25 Philadelphia. The City is at the

1 forefront of promoting arts. Fashion
2 should be part of that. Help us become
3 the Paris of the East. Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
5 Thank you both very much. Let me just
6 kind of throw this out because a lot of
7 this does have to do with awareness,
8 and you're kind of pointing out how
9 great the fashion industry is and the
10 garment industry and its great history.
11 And yet, if you talk to the average
12 person on the street, if you talk about
13 Philly fashion, they might not have an
14 answer for you. So to get the media,
15 to get the awareness going and of
16 course we always think about Comcast
17 right down the street, could you put
18 everybody on television, what do you
19 think about the ways that the Task
20 Force could approach addressing that
21 awareness issue?

22 MS. ERB: My name is Erika.
23 From a marketing perspective, I think
24 there's tremendous opportunity for us
25 to really take all of these amazing

1 things and these amazing programs that
2 are already going on and putting some
3 real public relations behind it, some
4 real video assets and a collective
5 website for people to learn about all
6 of these amazing opportunities in a
7 centralized way.

8 We have sponsorships and
9 events and advertising campaigns that
10 we can do to really tie it all
11 together. So that when you think of
12 Philly, you do think of fashion. And
13 right now there's a bit of a
14 misconception that we're not really
15 known for fashion. We don't really
16 have all of the big designer retailers
17 opening up on Walnut and Chestnut
18 Streets. We all kind of know the story
19 of brick and mortar and some of that
20 storyline and how that's trending out,
21 and I think what we can do with this
22 Task Force is really put Philly on the
23 map for what fashion means going
24 forward, looking at sustainability,
25 looking at the niche manufacturing and

1 really doing it in a way where we're
2 telling our story.

3 We're not New York. We're
4 not trying to be New York. We're
5 better, and I hope that's on the record
6 of saying that. But there's a lot that
7 we can do from a marketing perspective
8 to really build that out.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: And could you
10 tell us about your struggles and
11 successes at Steel Pony?

12 MS. LITZ: Well, that can be
13 a long conversation. But I do not
14 manufacturer in Philadelphia, so that's
15 one of the things that -- I'm a
16 sustainable designer so I use 99
17 percent of all of my fabrics and
18 everything. I take all of my outcuts,
19 I do a whole other upcycle line. And I
20 find it very hard to work at the
21 factories in Philadelphia.

22 They wanted bigger
23 quantities. They were only interested
24 in Urban Outfitters manufacturing and
25 it was very frustrating. I currently

1 sew in Allentown, Pennsylvania so it's
2 still in the state. I would love to
3 see a situation here like what I have
4 in Allentown. It's a really
5 interesting operation where it's a
6 husband and wife and she does
7 powermaking, she manages the sewers so
8 it's almost like having a production
9 manager that's not in your space, so
10 it's not added cost, and her husband
11 does all the cutting. It keeps it all
12 under one roof. They're small and they
13 go out and they work with small sewers.
14 That would be the perfect type of
15 business for Philadelphia to have as
16 their small batch manufacturing which
17 is what this company does. I'd love to
18 see more of that or any of it.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: Well, thank
20 you and you shall have your say. Are
21 there any other questions or comments?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILMAN OH: Being none,
24 thank you very much. I'll ask the
25 Clerk to call up the next panel.

1 MS. ERB: Thank you.

2 MS. LITZ: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: I think we
4 have just one more panel after that.

5 THE CLERK: Sarah Zeller
6 Annello and Dawn Summerville.

7 (Panel approached
8 Witness Table.)

9 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
10 very much. Please state your name
11 before you provide us your testimony.

12 MS. SUMMERVILLE: Absolutely.
13 Good after -- good morning. Dawn
14 Summerville, Department of Commerce.
15 Good morning, Chairperson Oh and
16 members of the Committee.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: You can
18 adjust the mic.

19 MS. SUMMERVILLE: Thank you.
20 Good morning, Chairperson Oh and
21 members of the Committee on Global
22 Opportunities and the Creative Economy.
23 My name is Dawn Summerville and I am
24 the Senior Director of Business
25 Development for the Department of

1 Commerce.

2 I'm happy to be here today to
3 provide testimony on Resolution 200136,
4 which authorizes a public hearing to
5 explore the state of Philadelphia's
6 fashion and design industry. I'd like
7 to start by thanking this Committee for
8 highlighting the tremendous opportunity
9 that Philadelphia holds for the
10 business and the creative economy.

11 Philadelphia is a place where
12 small businesses in this industry can
13 thrive. We are a diverse and vibrant
14 city with a strong consumer base. Our
15 low cost of living relative to the
16 other major cities attract young talent
17 and entrepreneurs. The City exempts
18 small businesses with less than
19 \$100,000 from gross receipts from being
20 the business income receipts tax. And
21 as of this year, the City will no
22 longer require that they file a return.

23 At the Commerce Department,
24 the Office of Business Development has
25 just assigned a business development

1 manager to lead the creative economy.
2 We know this is an industry that is
3 growing here in Philadelphia. Fashion
4 and design professionals are a
5 significant segment of this economy.

6 According to the Bureau of
7 Labor Statistics, there are over 6,000
8 people working in textile manufacturing
9 and apparel manufacturing in
10 Philadelphia. Philadelphia offers
11 premier schools of design such as Moore
12 College of Art and Design, Thomas
13 Jefferson University formerly
14 Philadelphia University and Drexel
15 University whose undergraduate program
16 in fashion design was recently ranked
17 No. 6 in the world by CEO World
18 Magazine.

19 Alongside these stellar
20 institutions, Philadelphia is home to
21 one of the oldest manufacturers in the
22 United States, American Hats, LLC
23 formerly trading as S&S Hats which
24 dates back to 1923. Organizations such
25 as Made Institute teaching couture

1 sewing classes under the guidance of
2 Rachel Ford and Elissa Bloom, Executive
3 Director for the Philadelphia's Fashion
4 Incubator lead aspiring and seasoned
5 designers from concept to creation.

6 Philadelphia continues to see
7 the emergence of local designers such
8 as Dom Streeter, Christine Phillips and
9 Milano de Rouge just to name a few. I
10 would be remiss if I didn't mention our
11 local schools. Dobbins Technical
12 School fashion design course takes
13 their students from garment
14 construction to apparel merchandising.

15 Commerce remains dedicated to
16 supporting all businesses throughout
17 the City and in all sectors, and we
18 especially look forward to continuing
19 to work alongside the fashion industry
20 to support its continued growth. Thank
21 you for the opportunity to testify
22 before you today. I'm happy to answer
23 any questions that you may have at this
24 time.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you

1 very much. Would you please identify
2 yourself and provide us with your
3 testimony.

4 MS. ZELLER ANNELLO: Yes. My
5 name is Sarah Zeller Annello and thank
6 you very much for having me. I'm going
7 to talk about another industry that's
8 been enhanced by this Task Force. And
9 that will also -- the Task Force will
10 enhance the local infrastructure. The
11 Task Force's mission to reinforce the
12 presence of fashion in Philadelphia in
13 order to improve our local economy,
14 create employment, provide educational
15 opportunity and become a leader in
16 sustainability will help support and
17 have a positive economic impact on the
18 special events and hospitality
19 industry.

20 The majority of special
21 events industry is made up of small
22 local businesses, from tenting to
23 floral, to audio, visual, to music,
24 sound, catering. Most of these
25 businesses are considered small and are

1 locally-owned.

2 I would know this because I
3 am the president of the International
4 Live Events Association of Greater
5 Philadelphia and I have been in the
6 events industry for over 25 years. The
7 fashion industry is known for their
8 highly sophisticated special events,
9 runway shows, product launches, trade
10 shows and week-long fashion events.

11 The fashion industry has a
12 positive impact as the special events
13 industry as a whole by supporting these
14 local businesses and creating jobs for
15 event professionals. Special events,
16 if well-organized, can assist the City
17 as a tourism destination to improve its
18 image and to attract new visitors.

19 There is a direct correlation
20 between tourism destinations and
21 fashion events which has a positive
22 economic impact on the hospitality
23 industry and the special events
24 industry. Per the Joint Economic
25 Committee of the United States Congress

1 the largest fashion event in the United
2 States, New York's Fashion Week
3 generates close to 900,000 in total
4 economic impact each year, including an
5 estimated \$532 million in direct
6 visitor spending.

7 So on the behalf of the
8 special events and hospitality
9 industry, we believe that this Task
10 Force will only benefit the City and
11 our industries. Thank you so much for
12 letting me speak.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
14 very much. Let me ask my colleagues
15 does anyone have any questions or
16 comments?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
19 The only question I'll ask you both is
20 how would you see your role on the
21 Fashion Industry Task Force and what
22 would you hope it to achieve with the
23 support of the City and the state?

24 MS. ZELLER ANNELLO: My role
25 again being different from many of the

1 other people who have testified, but I
2 was working with Kevin and Kerry on
3 some of their most recent Fashion Week
4 events. Sorry, Sarah. And we hired
5 all local businesses, tenting, AV,
6 staging, lighting, music. Everyone was
7 a locally-owned small business and
8 everyone benefited from having Fashion
9 Week here.

10 I think that for the City
11 that as this Task Force comes about and
12 as it grows, that it'll again benefit
13 our tourism, bring people into the City
14 to see Philly Fashion Week, go to
15 pop-ups to a product launch, any of
16 those things, and the reputation of
17 their special events will only benefit
18 the City. So my role is to see that
19 our special events industry also
20 supports the Task Force as well.

21 MS. SUMMERVILLE: Thank you.
22 I think from the standpoint of the
23 Commerce Department, we're here to
24 support the Task Force and I would ask
25 that the Task Force be thoughtful and

1 intentional in their work. I'm saying
2 that from the standpoint of I heard a
3 couple of folks and I was so happy to
4 hear someone on the other panel say, we
5 don't have to be New York, we're
6 better, we're Philadelphia.

7 And I think we really need to
8 take a look at possibly doing an impact
9 study to find out what is missing, what
10 is Philadelphia doing well in this
11 arena and what's missing. There were
12 discussions around small batch
13 manufacturing. That will continue to
14 come up and having individual
15 designers, independent designers being
16 able to build scale. It's costly to be
17 a designer. It hasn't changed.

18 I've had history in working
19 in the industry from the stylist, the
20 make-up artists, to a show buyer for
21 Nordstrom. So this industry is a tough
22 industry. However, you can be
23 successful here. And I believe that
24 with the support of the City in moving
25 forward we're happy to assist where we

1 can, but I would definitely encourage
2 them to think about an impact study of
3 what does Philadelphia have, what do
4 you do well, what are you missing,
5 right, and what is happening on trends
6 and moving forward.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you
8 very much. Chair recognizes
9 Councilmember Derek Green.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair. I just have two quick
12 questions. What are the types of
13 requests that the Commerce Department
14 receives from various small business
15 owners in the fashion industry from
16 your recollection?

17 MS. SUMMERVILLE: It has to
18 do with capital, right. Sometimes
19 there's money needed for the runs that
20 they have to do or if they have an
21 order, that individual might not be
22 paying upfront, so they need money to
23 continue on with the next project. So
24 I think a lot of that is capital.

25 And in speaking with some of

1 these designers because they are
2 individual small businesses, having
3 more capacity or business knowledge on
4 the business side of the fashion
5 industry and not just knowing how to
6 create pattern or how to create design,
7 but keeping the books moving forward,
8 understanding that you might not be
9 paid in 90 days or if your merchandise
10 doesn't come back or come in. So I
11 think from that standpoint it's about
12 business technical assistance as well
13 as capital.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: On the
15 technical assistance and capital needs
16 for some of the businesses that you've
17 encountered in the fashion design
18 industry, are they somewhat unique or
19 are they similar to the challenges that
20 many other small businesses in
21 reference to technical assistance, cash
22 flow, or are there specific products
23 that need to be tailored to this
24 industry?

25 MS. SUMMERVILLE: I would say

1 very specific to a small business or
2 any other business, period, not just a
3 small business but any other businesses
4 looking for support around capital or
5 funding a gap.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right. So
7 as a former small business owner, in
8 fact, I'm interested in having this
9 conversation regarding fashion. When I
10 actually had some hair, my wife and I
11 had a ladies shoe store so that was a
12 very interesting dynamic in
13 understanding retail and understanding
14 shoe packs and buyers and wholesale and
15 manufacturing and going back and forth
16 between Philadelphia and New York and
17 learning about selling different major
18 shoe shows lines, FFANY and the ones in
19 LA and Atlanta. It was a very
20 interesting industry. But it also
21 reminded me of the challenges of small
22 businesses.

23 And a lot of the challenges
24 that many small businesses have, being
25 a former banker and an attorney, I was

1 attuned to some of those challenges,
2 but the cash flow dynamic is very
3 important in reference to payment and
4 how you manage your affairs.

5 And my assumption was it was
6 very similar to any small business, the
7 same issues that a small business would
8 have in the fashion and design
9 industry, so thank you.

10 MS. SUMMERVILLE: Absolutely.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chair.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
14 Well, with that I'll ask the Clerk to
15 call up our final panel. Thank you
16 everybody for your patience.

17 MS. SUMMERVILLE: Thank you.

18 THE CLERK: Kevin Parker,
19 Kerry Scott and Angela Edmunds.

20 (Panel approached
21 Witness Table.)

22 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
23 Please state your name for the record
24 and provide us with your testimony.
25 Thank you.

1 MR. PARKER: Hello. My name
2 is Kevin Parker. Cofounder, producer
3 of Philadelphia Fashion Week and I also
4 serve on the Advisory Board for the
5 Philadelphia Fashion Incubator, and I
6 want to say thank you guys for having
7 us today, of course.

8 Philly Fashion Week reaches
9 over 5,000 people annually through
10 fashion events, fashion mixers and
11 seminars. The mission of Philadelphia
12 Fashion Week is to strengthen and
13 influence to the success of designers
14 in Philadelphia and surrounding areas.

15 Our goal is to impact the
16 global economy and build sustainable
17 businesses by featuring and supporting
18 local, national and international
19 brands. Building Philadelphia Fashion
20 Week's community by supporting
21 retailers and independent fashion
22 designers is our goal.

23 We are elated to provide such
24 a platform for our amazing eclectic and
25 diverse talent in and out of

1 Philadelphia. Philadelphia Fashion
2 Week brings the world of fashion to the
3 City of Philadelphia. Our efforts was
4 also honored by City Council in 2015
5 and enlisted top 25 fashion icons in
6 the City of Philadelphia by the
7 Philadelphia Inquirer in 2012. Through
8 our initiative, Philly Fashion Week has
9 been able to attract the attention of
10 the creator of New York Fashion Week
11 Fern Mallis who serves as our mentor
12 and heads our business of fashion
13 workshops with our designers each
14 session and critiques collections,
15 alongside Mickey Boardman, the
16 Editorial Director of Paper Magazine,
17 to educate the designers about the
18 business and the state of fashion
19 today.

20 Through our years as
21 producers, we have attracted over 75
22 international brands and featured over
23 1,000 local and surrounding area of
24 designers to gain exposure and showcase
25 in front of buyers, stylists, press,

1 industry leaders and clients to further
2 expand their businesses and their
3 wallets, Philadelphia's rich and
4 profound talent and the world has taken
5 notice.

6 PFW has attracted major press
7 outlets such as O Magazine, Harper's
8 Bazaar, WWD, Lucky Magazine, the New
9 Yorker and locally Fox 29, NBC 10, PHL
10 17, 6 ABC, Metro News, Philadelphia
11 Inquirer, Philly Mag and many more.
12 Philly Fashion Week has featured
13 designers from all over the world such
14 as Paris, London, Africa, India,
15 Brazil, Ukraine, Haiti, Bolivia,
16 Vietnam, Shanghai, Lebanon and many
17 more and nationally and locally, LA,
18 New York, New Jersey, Atlanta,
19 Baltimore and of course Philadelphia.

20 While the future is still in
21 the making, we continue to expand by
22 also being stylists for publications
23 such as Harper's Bazaar, L Magazine,
24 FASHIZBLACK, Jess Magazine and other
25 projects such as Vietnam's Next Top

1 Model and styling for New York Couture
2 Fashion Week and Celebrity Apprentice
3 and many more, while utilizing the
4 designers that we serve in the
5 community that we've utilized over the
6 years, as we currently style for
7 magazines and also do fashion segments
8 with Fox 29 and PHL 17 and many more
9 for award seasons, like the MET Gala,
10 Oscars, Grammy's, Emmy's and more.

11 We believe the creation of
12 the Philadelphia Fashion and Garment
13 Industry Task Force's success will be
14 guaranteed by unity by joining forces
15 with the influential individuals who we
16 are honored to be here with today whom
17 all have a passion for the growth and
18 success of the Philadelphia fashion
19 community as it relates to the
20 community overall. The Philadelphia
21 fashion community is thriving, but
22 there's only but so far we can go
23 without the support of City government.

24 We believe Philadelphia can
25 compete on the national fashion stage

1 and have a piece of the multi-billion
2 dollar fashion industry. We have
3 already established relationships by
4 producing fashion shows and shopping
5 events, pop-up shows and trunk shows
6 with companies such as Macy's, Century
7 21, Banana Republic, Fashion District
8 Philadelphia and most currently, Lord &
9 Taylor.

10 Our goal is to provide access
11 to resources and help our designers
12 grow and open brick and mortars and
13 attract the struggling garment district
14 in New York City and attract the
15 manufacturing companies to operate and
16 reside in Philadelphia.

17 Companies who are already
18 doing so consist of American Hats who
19 relocated to Philadelphia from the New
20 York garment district and Thread Ted
21 Boston, a manufacturing company opening
22 this spring in North Philadelphia.

23 Our goal is to enrich the
24 fashion community and further develop
25 the reputation of the fashion industry

1 in Philadelphia and become a leading
2 force for other states to model after.
3 Each of the Task Force members here
4 have made strides in Philadelphia
5 individually, but collectively our
6 potential is immeasurable.

7 Again, our mission is to
8 reinforce the presence of fashion in
9 Philadelphia in order to improve our
10 local economy, create employment,
11 provide educational opportunities and
12 become a leader in fashion and
13 sustainability. Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
15 Thank you very much. Would you please
16 identify yourself for the record?

17 MS. EDMUNDS: Yes. Hello. I
18 am Angela Edmunds, owner of Showroom 77
19 and Designer Chair for Philadelphia
20 Fashion Week. I am a proud
21 Philadelphia native, graduate of Temple
22 University and small business owner and
23 authority in the business of fashion in
24 the Philadelphia fashion industry for
25 the past 21 years.

1 In addition, I come from a
2 family of leaders in the Philadelphia
3 arts community. I am the Design
4 Committee Chair for Philadelphia
5 Fashion Week, Advisory Board member to
6 the Fashion Incubator at Macy's,
7 Adjunct Professor and Advisory Board
8 member of Harcum College of fashion
9 design and merchandising.

10 I'm most noted for creating
11 Philadelphia firsts, such as
12 Showroom77, which launched in 2006 as
13 Philadelphia's first wholesale retail
14 multi-clothing and accessory labeled
15 showroom, which was sought nationally
16 and internationally. Along with
17 Boutique77, in 2010 the first pop-up
18 boutique of its sort on the Avenue of
19 the Arts featuring 22 independent
20 designer collections, which ran a
21 successful three-month pop-up holiday
22 season at the Dranoff Property at 777
23 South Broad.

24 Often times I've been asked
25 why didn't I move to New York for

1 fashion. My answer has always been
2 because there is so much talent here in
3 Philadelphia. As a consultant
4 strategic brand advisor and professor
5 providing direction and education and
6 collection launching, branding and
7 expansion to retail markets and career
8 development, I have found what many of
9 our small businesses and students in
10 the fashion industry need here are more
11 resources locally.

12 There are many students who
13 struggle to afford fabric and supplies
14 needed for school projects. Just as
15 there are many business owners that can
16 see greater growth with more localized
17 resources and manufacturing and fabric
18 sourcing, along with more extensive
19 educational programs available in the
20 business of fashion.

21 The City of Philadelphia has
22 a groundbreaking opportunity with the
23 development of the Philadelphia Fashion
24 and Garment Industry Task Force to
25 collectively strengthen and grow

1 Philadelphia's fashion and garment
2 industry as a major resource to sustain
3 existing businesses, aid in developing
4 new businesses and career
5 opportunities, expand educational
6 support and grow its retail community.
7 The love of Philadelphia is sewn into
8 the fabric of its communities, and what
9 is possible when we can all work
10 together. Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.
12 Thank you very much. And finally,
13 would you identify yourself for the
14 record and provide us with your
15 testimony.

16 MR. SCOTT: My name is Kerry
17 Scott and I am the cofounder of
18 Philadelphia Fashion Week and me and
19 Mr. Kevin Parker have a joint
20 testimony.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay.
22 Fantastic. Well, listen, before I open
23 up for questions, I would just like to
24 recognize Julian Domanico who is
25 Vice-chair of the Philadelphia

1 Millennial Advisory Committee sitting
2 back there who's quite the interest in
3 fashion. If you just stand up for a
4 second, I don't mean to embarrass you.
5 But listen, there's people in City
6 government that are quite interested in
7 fashion and they are here.

8 Let me ask if there's any
9 questions? Okay. Chair recognizes
10 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
13 First, thank you for creating Philly
14 Fashion Week and thank you for
15 expanding to include the Lov'n My
16 Curves fashion show, which I attended
17 here in City Hall's courtyard a few
18 years ago and then again at the new
19 Fashion District, so thank you for
20 doing that.

21 I wanted to quickly ask you a
22 question relative to the Fashion Week
23 specifically. How can we support you
24 and help you expand that effort
25 throughout the City of Philadelphia?

1 And you've already been doing it, but
2 what more can we do from a City
3 perspective to support your efforts?

4 MR. PARKER: I feel from a
5 retail aspect there are tons of
6 boutiques in the City of Philadelphia
7 and most of them carry only
8 international brands, and I feel like
9 that's the disconnect. I feel like we
10 need to carry more of our local-based
11 designers.

12 The crazy part is New York
13 has actually taken full advantage of
14 the talent we have here in
15 Philadelphia. Bergdorf Goodman in
16 particular has purchased and sold and
17 also gave a window display to a local
18 designer named Iris Bonner of These
19 Pink Lips, which is a very successful
20 designer who has dressed many
21 celebrities from Cardi B to Billy
22 Porter to Mary J. Blige and has been
23 featured in L and Vogue and a number of
24 international publications.

25 And I feel like the retail in

1 the City of Philadelphia is missing
2 that connection, and I feel like we
3 should take full advantage to providing
4 the opportunities to our local
5 designers by making that connection as
6 it relates to pop-up shops and trunk
7 shows.

8 And we've also recently
9 partnered with Lord & Taylor where
10 we're going to do a yearlong
11 partnership where we're going to do
12 trunk shows and instore fashion shows
13 to highlight and sell the designers
14 wear as well. And not only that, but
15 we're also partnering with Fashion
16 District Philadelphia to do -- every
17 other month we're going to do pop-up
18 shops and trunk shows to highlight and
19 feature our independent designers
20 outside of the retail they already have
21 in store.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

25 Any other questions or comments?

1 (No response.)

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. With
3 that, let me just close by saying I
4 appreciate everyone coming here, and of
5 course this is Philly Fashion Week, the
6 labor of these two gentlemen here and
7 all involved with them.

8 I've really been struck just
9 by your humility, your perseverance,
10 was not an easy road to travel, and we
11 have come to a point thanks to all of
12 you that we can create by resolution a
13 formal recognition of your Task Force
14 to work with our City government, our
15 state government and others so that you
16 can provide to us your expertise in how
17 to grow and enhance our city and the
18 opportunities in our city for everyone.
19 So thank you very much and thank you
20 for coming to City Hall.

21 MR. PARKER: Thank you for
22 having us.

23 COUNCILMAN OH: With this,
24 I'm going to recess the hearing to the
25 call of the Chair. Thank you.

(Committee on Global
Opportunities and the
Creative/Innovative Economy concluded
at 11:40 a.m.)

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.

Court Reporter - Notary Public

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