

Committee On The Enviroment
September 21, 2016

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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, September 21, 2016
1:15 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

Resolution 160387 - Resolution authorizing the
Committee on the Environment to hold public
hearings on Urban Agriculture in Philadelphia.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
3 afternoon, everyone. Hello. So good
4 afternoon to my colleagues, to guests,
5 and enthusiasts around this important
6 issue we'll be discussing and examining
7 this afternoon known as urban
8 agriculture.

9 To the members of City
10 Council's Committee on the Environment,
11 we want to say thank you for stepping
12 away from your busy lives and joining us
13 this afternoon as we take a close
14 look-see at this issue.

15 I also want to personally
16 salute and say thank you and congratulate
17 my colleague Councilman Taubenberger,
18 co-member of the Penn State caucus, for
19 introducing this resolution on urban
20 agriculture. This is truly an exciting
21 topic for us to explore. I might think
22 that it might be a first that we are
23 examining this as closely as we are.

24 Joining us on this Committee is
25 also Councilwoman Cherelle Parker,

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2 representing the 9th Councilmanic
3 District.

4 The potential is to grow -- the
5 potential and purpose for this afternoon
6 is to closely examine to see how we can
7 grow urban agriculture in Philadelphia.
8 So I'm looking forward to learning a lot
9 and hearing from the advocates and
10 professionals this afternoon.

11 I will now ask the sponsor of
12 this resolution, Councilman Taubenberger,
13 to provide opening remarks.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Madam
15 Chair Lady, thank you very much and thank
16 you for calling this hearing to order. I
17 think this is a great opportunity for
18 those that are enthusiastic about
19 producing food in the City of
20 Philadelphia or gardening or using the
21 land in such a way that plants are
22 propagated in the proper usage.

23 I think this is a great
24 opportunity for the City as a whole, for
25 individuals, particularly young folks. I

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2 see some Future Farmers of America here.

3 Just so you know my background,
4 I graduated from Penn State University,
5 which makes me part of the Penn State
6 caucus here with Madam Chair Lady as
7 well. She's also the Chair Lady of that,
8 as I am the freshman here. Graduated in
9 1975 with a degree of agronomy. For
10 those that are not familiar with
11 agronomy, it's soil, science, and field
12 crop management. And with that, it was
13 specialized in turf grass, which is
14 important in today's agricultural
15 landscaping in sports and also for job
16 opportunities.

17 So young folks out there,
18 there's a lot of room in agriculture. In
19 fact, I spoke to the dean, not of the
20 College of Agriculture but of the
21 department head of the turf grass. For
22 every two graduates, every two graduates,
23 there are five jobs waiting them. So
24 think about it. I never thought of the
25 possibilities until later in my life. I

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2 changed my major when I went to Penn
3 State. I wanted to be a history teacher
4 and I wound up being an agronomist, which
5 has served my life well. And I'm so glad
6 to be part of these hearings and I'm so
7 glad to see you all here, taking the time
8 out of your busy day.

9 So, Madam Chair, whenever
10 you're set, we are ready to call our
11 witnesses.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please
13 allow me now to ask the Clerk to please
14 read the title of the resolution and to
15 call up the first witness panel.

16 THE CLERK: Resolution 160387,
17 authorizing the Committee on the
18 Environment to hold public hearings on
19 Urban Agriculture in Philadelphia.

20 Can the first panel please come
21 up, which is Kathryn Ott Lovell,
22 Commissioner of Parks and Recreation;
23 Christine Knapp, Director of Office of
24 Sustainability; and Scott Sheely,
25 Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

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2 (Witnesses approached witness
3 table.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
5 afternoon, everyone.

6 So that's an opportunity to say
7 if you have any type of electronic
8 device, if you would be so kind to take
9 15 seconds and turn it off so that we can
10 get through this without deliciously
11 wonderful background music, which I love.

12 And let me state the rules of
13 engagement, which are important for those
14 of you who may be -- where this may be a
15 first. Let me first commend Al
16 Taubenberger, Councilman Taubenberger,
17 for such a diverse audience on an issue
18 that one might not ordinarily think would
19 bring a very rich demographic. So I
20 salute you for that.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
22 you very much.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We have a
24 gazillion witnesses and many more
25 enthusiasts who want to have a say, but

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2 there's a decorum that we have to honor
3 and a clock that we have to honor, or
4 else we could be here easily until
5 tomorrow morning. So I'm asking you to
6 please limit your remarks to two minutes.
7 I know that sometimes that means more
8 like three. And we will allow each panel
9 to present and then we will ask questions
10 and move to the next panel. Understood?
11 Hello?

12 (Yes.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.
14 My principal hat couldn't let me get by
15 that.

16 So with that, we open it up to
17 our first panel. State your full name,
18 the position you hold, and proceed with
19 your testimony.

20 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Sure.
21 Good afternoon, Chairwoman Reynolds Brown
22 and Committee members. My name is
23 Kathryn Ott Lovell. I'm the Commissioner
24 for the Philadelphia Department of Parks
25 and Recreation. I appear before you

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2 today on behalf of the Department of
3 Parks and Recreation concerning
4 Resolution No. 160387 introduced by
5 Councilman Taubenberger, Council's
6 agronomist-in-residence, authorizing the
7 Committee on the Environment hearing on
8 urban agriculture in Philadelphia.

9 Historically, Philadelphia City
10 Council has demonstrated tremendous
11 leadership and support by passing
12 legislation to make it easier to create
13 and maintain spaces for urban
14 agriculture. The Department of Parks and
15 Recreation have greatly benefited from
16 your support, and in 2012, we developed
17 FarmPhilly. FarmPhilly enhances garden
18 programming on parks and recreation land
19 and throughout the City. The program
20 supports food production on parkland as
21 well as urban agriculture projects across
22 the City through education, resources,
23 and in some cases preservation. By
24 recognizing the importance of these
25 gardens and impact they have had on their

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2 communities, I am here today to express
3 my support of legal land access and, when
4 appropriate, tenure for these treasured
5 spaces.

6 Gardening is a recognized
7 recreational activity, and community
8 gardens intrinsically align with Parks
9 and Recreation's mission to work with
10 community stewards to provide clean green
11 recreation spaces and positive
12 programming for Philadelphia's residents.
13 We currently host 18 community gardens on
14 parkland that are currently supported
15 through our Community Gardens Network.

16 With the creation of
17 FarmPhilly, an interagency collaboration,
18 we work with neighborhood residents to
19 build urban gardens, reclaiming
20 underutilized land in their neighborhoods
21 and actively cultivating healthy
22 communities. Our FarmPhilly program
23 increases healthy food access and
24 physical activity, improves the natural
25 environment and air quality, increases

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2 beautification, mitigates heat island
3 effect, and empowers communities to be
4 the change they want to see in the world.
5 By connecting with leaders in each
6 community we serve and through non-profit
7 support and youth education programs,
8 Philadelphia's urban agriculture is now a
9 national model.

10 As Mayor Kenney seeks to build
11 equity and investment across
12 neighborhoods, urban agriculture requires
13 minimal public investment with high
14 yields in community impact and benefits.
15 We have the opportunity to create
16 innovative urban agriculture projects
17 that can feed communities, create jobs,
18 empower our citizens, and educate our
19 young people to improve our urban
20 ecosystem.

21 Thank you, and I'd be glad to
22 answer any questions you have.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
24 very much.

25 Proceed.

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2 MS. KNAPP: Good afternoon,
3 Chairwoman Reynolds Brown, Councilman
4 Taubenberger. I'm Christine Knapp. I'm
5 the Director of the Office of
6 Sustainability. Thank you to the members
7 of the Environment Committee. As well
8 I'm pleased to be here to testify on
9 Resolution No. 160387 and to discuss the
10 City of Philadelphia's efforts to promote
11 urban agriculture and expand access to
12 healthy and local food. I'd particularly
13 like to thank Councilwoman Reynolds Brown
14 for your continued leadership and
15 partnership and to Councilman
16 Taubenberger for putting a spotlight on
17 this important issue.

18 In the past five years, the
19 City has made significant progress in
20 supporting growers by making it easier to
21 create and maintain spaces for urban
22 agriculture. In 2012, City Council
23 revised the Zoning Code to allow
24 community gardens, markets, and other
25 agricultural uses on most land in the

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2 City. The Parks and Recreation
3 Department also established the
4 FarmPhilly program to support new and
5 existing urban agriculture projects on
6 parkland. And in 2013, City Council
7 passed legislation to create the
8 Philadelphia Land Bank, which recognizes
9 urban agriculture as a beneficial use of
10 City-owned property and is a critical
11 tool to facilitate the preservation of
12 existing gardens and farm spaces.

13 These legislative and
14 administrative changes have improved
15 access to resources, tools, and knowledge
16 for growers throughout the City who are
17 participating in urban agriculture.

18 The Office of Sustainability is
19 responsible for the implementation of
20 Greenworks, the City's comprehensive
21 sustainability plan. The original
22 implementation timeline for Greenworks
23 ended in 2015, so we are in the process
24 of updating that plan, which will be
25 released this fall. We look forward to

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2 sharing that report with you and working
3 with Council, our partner agencies, and
4 community members to continue moving us
5 towards our ultimate goal of making
6 Philadelphia a more sustainable city for
7 all.

8 As part of Greenworks, the City
9 set a goal of ensuring that all
10 Philadelphia residents have access to
11 fresh, affordable, and healthy food.
12 Urban agriculture is an important tool to
13 achieve this goal. It decreases the
14 transportation and environmental costs of
15 food, provides economic development
16 opportunities, and reduces disparities in
17 healthy food access that contribute to
18 illnesses like obesity and diabetes. And
19 while significant work remains, between
20 2008 and 2015, the number of markets,
21 gardens, and farms in the City increased
22 from 230 to 347, far exceeding the goal
23 of 316 set in Greenworks. We're
24 committed to continuing our support of
25 urban agriculture and food access in the

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2 new Greenworks plan when it comes out
3 this fall.

4 Many agencies influence urban
5 agriculture, and we're proud of the
6 resulting interdepartmental collaboration
7 with Public Property, Law,
8 Sustainability, Office of Planning and
9 Development, Parks and Recreation, Public
10 Health, the Land Bank, Redevelopment
11 Authority, Philadelphia Water, many
12 partners, and that collaboration has
13 helped enhance the community benefits of
14 green stormwater infrastructure by
15 coupling green stormwater infrastructure
16 projects with existing urban agriculture
17 sites through the Green City, Clean
18 Waters program; conducting environmental
19 site assessments on parcels that are
20 suitable for urban agriculture or green
21 stormwater infrastructure with a \$200,000
22 grant from the U.S. EPA; building
23 municipal and community capacity to
24 create and expand safe gardening and
25 green stormwater projects on vacant

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2 parcels citywide with a \$150,000 grant
3 from the Agency for Toxic Substances and
4 Disease Registry, which is a branch of
5 the Centers for Disease Control and
6 Prevention.

7 Much of this progress has been
8 in partnership with the Philadelphia Food
9 Policy Advisory Council, known as FPAC,
10 which the Office of Sustainability staffs
11 and administratively supports. FPAC
12 members are volunteers appointed by the
13 Mayor to provide expert advice to the
14 City on how to be a productive part of
15 the regional food system. The City
16 benefits enormously from FPAC, and our
17 office is committed to continuing to
18 coordinate their work.

19 While these efforts represent
20 important progress, we acknowledge the
21 need for a more comprehensive urban
22 agriculture strategy within the City. To
23 this end, our office is committed to
24 working with the Office of Planning and
25 Development, Philadelphia Parks and

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2 Recreation, City Council, and other
3 partner agencies to coordinate urban
4 agriculture support and processes across
5 City government. Specifically, our
6 office will continue to support FPAC and
7 their members to advise the City on urban
8 agriculture; collaborate with agencies
9 participating in the Brownfields
10 Assessment Grant for urban agriculture
11 and green stormwater infrastructure; and
12 facilitate coordination with City
13 agencies to explore new policies and
14 practices that support urban agriculture.

15 Thank you for the opportunity
16 to testify, and I'd be happy to answer
17 your questions.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
19 then.

20 Good afternoon.

21 MR. SHEELY: Good afternoon,
22 Chairwoman Reynolds Brown and honorable
23 members of the Philadelphia City Council.
24 Thank you for the opportunity to address
25 you today on the topic of urban

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2 agriculture on behalf of Pennsylvania's
3 Secretary of Agriculture, Russell
4 Redding. I'm Scott Sheely, Special
5 Assistant for Workforce Development at
6 the Department of Agriculture.

7 Over the last year, the
8 Department has engaged more than 50
9 organizations in Philadelphia and the
10 surrounding area that are involved in
11 expanding agriculture production in the
12 City for a variety of reasons.
13 Eliminating food insecurity, developing
14 healthier and safer communities,
15 providing a context for skill training,
16 finding opportunities for transitional
17 jobs for people undergoing
18 rehabilitation, and encouraging
19 entrepreneurship seem to be the leading
20 drivers of this activity.

21 We have had the great
22 opportunity to visit sites at historic
23 homesteads, in some of the great parks of
24 the City, in the middle of City blocks
25 surrounded by row houses, next to all

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2 manner of buildings in Center City, in
3 schools, at community centers, under the
4 flight path of the airport, and next to
5 rivers and streams. The gardens and
6 farms are big and small. They grow
7 dozens of different crops and vegetables
8 and have many different distribution
9 networks, some charitable, some
10 for-profit. The gardener and farmers
11 themselves represent a wide range of age
12 groups, but are predominantly young
13 people with the passion for reinventing
14 the food system and making it more
15 responsive to the needs of people in
16 parts of the City where fresh food is
17 hard to find at a reasonable price.

18 As we have come to understand
19 it, this is not simply a bunch of people
20 trying to do good things, but it is a
21 coordinated movement with an emerging
22 vision and a plan. It has a significant
23 set of stakeholders, including the City
24 of Philadelphia.

25 Today, the Department is here

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2 to support the folks who are sharing the
3 vision and implementing the plan.
4 Secretary Redding also wants the
5 Department to be seen and to be a
6 significant stakeholder in your local
7 collaboration.

8 In the interest of time, I'm
9 not going to go through a lot of the
10 written testimony. You folks have that,
11 but really in summary, I think these are
12 the things that the Department would like
13 to bring to the table as you begin to
14 think about this initiative going
15 forward.

16 First of all, the Department
17 does support the efforts that are
18 underway in urban agriculture in
19 Philadelphia and truly congratulates the
20 City and its stakeholders on the progress
21 that has been made. This is a national
22 model that needs to be shared, and we
23 would like to help get that information
24 out to more people.

25 We hope to become a stakeholder

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2 in the local collaborative effort and to
3 be a contributor to the initiative.
4 We'll have to figure out how we can do
5 that, but I think we're here and we're
6 ready and we're eager to make that
7 happen.

8 We do plan to use our
9 experience in Philadelphia to reach out
10 to other urban agriculture projects
11 around the Commonwealth and become an
12 intermediary for information sharing. We
13 already have contacts in Pittsburgh and
14 Erie and Scranton, and we plan to
15 continue that, and I think having the
16 experience of your folks here in
17 Philadelphia is fantastic.

18 We would like to use our
19 influence to bridge the gap as
20 opportunities arise between the new
21 actors with an urban orientation and the
22 traditional players with a more rural
23 point of view in the agriculture and food
24 system that is emerging. We can
25 certainly learn from one another. And to

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2 make that kind of learning happen, the
3 Department is very much an advocate of.

4 We support existing efforts and
5 expansion of possibilities to increase
6 agriculture content in traditional
7 education and agriculture possibilities
8 in the Philadelphia school system. I see
9 my friends back here from Saul High
10 School. They are a key part of that and,
11 again, another model that we can look to
12 in the Philadelphia experience. And then
13 also to keep the dialogue open with
14 workforce, veteran, drug and alcohol
15 offender, and disability services to find
16 ways to use agriculture as a context for
17 rehabilitation. It certainly has
18 applicability there, and we have had
19 those contacts and conversations with
20 many groups and we think that there's
21 more to be said and done.

22 So I want to thank you for the
23 opportunity to testify, again, on behalf
24 of the Pennsylvania Department of
25 Agriculture and Secretary of Agriculture

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2 Russell Redding about the interest of the
3 Department and the urban agriculture
4 activities that are happening in
5 Philadelphia and about the interest of
6 City Council in supporting them.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, you
9 are welcome. We thank you for your
10 testimony and for making the trip and for
11 acknowledging that once again
12 Philadelphia is a first when it comes to
13 models.

14 I want to welcome Councilman
15 Green, Derek Green, to this Committee,
16 and we want to ask Councilwoman Cherelle
17 Parker to offer her remarks.

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
19 you, Madam Chair, for your leeway.

20 I just wanted to state for the
21 record a special thanks to you,
22 Councilman Taubenberger, for your
23 leadership on this issue.

24 I am so happy, Dr. Sheely, to
25 see you here, having spent my most recent

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2 last ten years in Harrisburg. The fact
3 that you are here along with Ms. Knapp
4 and Commissioner Kathryn Ott shows and
5 demonstrates for us the intergovernmental
6 cooperation and planning that's required
7 in order to make whatever activity
8 Philadelphia attempts to lead in a
9 regional approach, and it's extremely
10 important.

11 And, Councilman Taubenberger, I
12 wanted to say -- and I'm happy Saul is
13 here -- economic impact, economic impact.
14 We've been, during our budget process,
15 hearing folks talk about the need to grow
16 the pie. You, through your introduction
17 of this resolution, have just tapped on
18 an industry that people never considered
19 to be urban, only rural, and your
20 leadership will help us think about this
21 from a STEM perspective and job creation.

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
23 you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So thank
25 you so very much.

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

3 You're welcome.

4 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: And
5 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, although I
6 have to go to a prior meeting that was
7 scheduled, I want to thank you for the
8 leeway and the opportunity to make some
9 brief comment.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Of course.

11 I wanted to underscore your
12 innovativeness in bringing this to this
13 body.

14 We live in a world where
15 interests want to prevail, and the
16 challenge for us as policymakers and as
17 enthusiasts and/or activists require us
18 to find a delicate balance. And we also
19 live in a world where we cannot operate
20 in silos. And so to see the partnership
21 here certainly speaks volumes.

22 Has there been any conversation
23 at all, Christine Knapp or Katherine Ott
24 Lovell, with the Redevelopment Authority
25 or City Planning in how we frame out and

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2 factor in urban gardening and

3 agriculture?

4 MS. KNAPP: I would say yes to
5 both of those, and I'd say beyond the
6 Redevelopment Authority, any of the
7 land-holding agencies in the City are at
8 the table and part of the discussion that
9 we're having.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

11 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL:
12 Absolutely. We just met last week, as a
13 matter of fact. We all just met last
14 week, as a matter of fact, to continue
15 that discussion. So I think --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: With?

17 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: With
18 the planning agencies.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And with
20 RDA at the table?

21 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Not
22 last week, but representation, folks who
23 were in conversations with them.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Who are
25 those at the table?

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2 MS. KNAPP: So the Office of
3 Planning and Development is led by Anne
4 Fadullon and the Redevelopment Authority
5 reports through her. So we met with Anne
6 and Cathy Califano, who I just saw walk
7 in a minute ago, but they represent the
8 land-holding agencies, including the
9 Redevelopment Authority.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very good.
11 Councilman Green.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair. And I want to thank my
14 colleague Councilman Taubenberger for
15 introducing this resolution. I know you
16 started your career as an agronomist
17 going to Penn State University in that
18 regard, and something we both share,
19 having a grandfather and a father that
20 were farmers. And so we still do have
21 the family farm in North Carolina, so
22 I've always had an interest in farming.

23 And I'm actually glad that,
24 Dr. Sheely, you are here, because one of
25 the reasons why I wanted to ask this

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2 question as it connects to farming and
3 also agriculture, because recently this
4 body had hearings regarding medical
5 marijuana. So I'm curious, has there
6 been any interaction or intersection
7 between your office and the Department of
8 Health in reference to the medical
9 marijuana question because of the fact
10 that as that industry continues to grow
11 in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that
12 will have to be -- you can't import
13 seeds. You actually have to grow the
14 products. So I'm curious, has there been
15 any initial conversation in that regard?

16 MR. SHEELY: I think there's
17 been initial conversations. Again, the
18 Department of Health is taking the lead
19 on it, and I don't really think they've
20 gotten to the point of how we're going to
21 grow that and what are the rules and all
22 the rest. We actually are working a lot
23 more on hemp right now and looking at
24 hemp as an alternative crop, that kind of
25 thing.

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2 So I think those will go
3 forward in parallel. So I would expect
4 in the next three to six months you'll
5 see more regulations and more
6 conversation about that.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Since you
8 raise the issue of hemp, because my
9 understanding is that there is at the
10 federal government through the Department
11 of Agriculture, there is actually a pilot
12 that various states can engage in for
13 industrial hemp, and I guess the
14 Commonwealth is going through the process
15 of putting together regulations in that
16 regard?

17 MR. SHEELY: Again, most of
18 that is being led -- actually it's
19 through the Department of Agriculture
20 through our Bureau of Plant Industry. So
21 the people who know the most about
22 actually doing the growing are there
23 first, and then I think it will go beyond
24 that in terms of other interdepartmental
25 conversations and such. But keep in

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2 mind, the wheels turn slowly and they
3 will eventually get there.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. Thank
5 you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:
7 Councilman.

8 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
9 just want to thank you all for being
10 here, not that this is a close, if you
11 have anything else or any of my
12 colleagues have questions, but each of
13 you in your own way have great influence
14 here and particularly the state,
15 Mr. Sheely, because I think you can get
16 the information out of some of our
17 universities, particularly the land-grant
18 college, which of course is where we're
19 alumni, the Chair and I, from Penn State
20 University, to get them even more engaged
21 in urban agriculture and urban job
22 development as well. Because as I quoted
23 earlier from the Department of Agronomy,
24 for every two graduates, there are five
25 jobs waiting them. That's significant,

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2 and there's very few industries that have
3 that kind of job growth, something we
4 have not looked at ever from an urban
5 perspective as far as job development.

6 MR. SHEELY: If I could add,
7 Councilman, the Department is projecting
8 in just agriculture and food jobs in the
9 next ten years a minimum of 75,000 job
10 openings across the Commonwealth, and
11 many of those will be here in the metro
12 area. So your point about how do we get
13 young people connected to those jobs is a
14 really, really important one, and I think
15 we have not done the work that we need to
16 do with career pathways and actually
17 being much more specific about how we do
18 the skill training that leads that way.
19 Again, you have a great resource here
20 with Saul High School and with the group
21 that's beginning to do some work at the
22 elementary and intermediate school level
23 in Fox Chase. So two great programs,
24 great assets to build on, and I think
25 they will get us there in terms of those

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2 pathways to the better jobs.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: On the
4 note of training, are you familiar with
5 the Philadelphia OIC, a well-known
6 program, more than 50 years old, founded
7 by Reverend Leon Sullivan, principally
8 for the purpose of training all types of
9 citizens and guiding their hand, if you
10 will, to jobs in that particular training
11 area?

12 MR. SHEELY: I think one of the
13 things that happens -- and we're becoming
14 more and more aware of this -- is that
15 when it comes to thinking about jobs,
16 oftentimes agriculture gets left behind.
17 People don't think of us, in spite of the
18 fact it's one of the leading industries
19 in the Commonwealth. So I think we have
20 a lot of work to do, and as an adult
21 educator, what I'm interested in is how
22 do we actually find for those existing
23 programs that are up and running doing
24 skill training, how do we find a way to
25 connect the skills, which could be a part

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2 of another career pathway, to the
3 pathways that lead to agriculture jobs,
4 and I think that's a real challenge. It
5 requires us to be assertive as an
6 industry.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To think
8 outside of the box.

9 MR. SHEELY: To think outside
10 of the box, and we all know how difficult
11 that is sometimes. But we're really
12 pushing this idea of the career pathways.

13 I'll also tell you that October
14 9th through 15th, the Governor will
15 declare as Agriculture and Food Career
16 Week in Pennsylvania, and that's actually
17 going to be announced also the week
18 before that by the White House on October
19 6th. So we're getting there in terms of
20 more awareness, but some of that is the
21 industry just needs to be more vocal as
22 well about where are the jobs and what
23 are we talking about and also advertise
24 the fact that these are good jobs. They
25 are not -- I mean, there are some

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2 entry-level ones that lead to pathways,
3 but there are many, many good
4 opportunities going forward.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
6 one last thing, Mr. Sheely. When it
7 relates to OIC -- and I certainly would
8 love to have you come out to OIC. They
9 don't have an agriculture initiative at
10 this point, but I am on the Board there.
11 I'm very honored to serve on the Board
12 and would like to make that connection,
13 because there is opportunity here.

14 MR. SHEELY: Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that
16 will be an actionable follow-up item that
17 we will make sure happens. Very, very
18 good.

19 MR. SHEELY: Thank you very
20 much.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
22 all for your testimony.

23 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Thank
24 you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Will the

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2 Clerk please read the next panel.

3 THE CLERK: The next panel is
4 Amy Laura Cahn from the Food Policy
5 Advisory Council; Matt Rader,
6 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society; and
7 Kirtrina Baxter, Soil Generation
8 Coalition.

9 (Applause.)

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
13 afternoon.

14 MS. CAHN: Good afternoon.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please
16 state your name for the record and you
17 can proceed with your testimony.

18 MS. CAHN: Thank you.

19 Thank you, Chairwoman Reynolds
20 Brown, Councilman Taubenberger, and all
21 of the members of the Committee for the
22 opportunity to testify today. My name is
23 Amy Laura Cahn. I'm a staff attorney
24 with the Public Interest Law Center and
25 Director of our Garden Justice Legal

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2 Initiative. I also sit on the Board of
3 Neighborhood Gardens Trust, and I am here
4 today on behalf of the Philadelphia Food
5 Policy Advisory Council as FPAC's
6 Co-Chair.

7 Philadelphia is fortunate to
8 have a robust tradition of urban
9 agriculture, rooted in our African
10 American, immigrant, and refugee
11 communities and nurtured across the City
12 by residents for generations. In the
13 words of our city's many growers, urban
14 agriculture heals communities and gives
15 them a path to self-reliance. Urban
16 agriculture means empowerment and making
17 your voice heard. It means getting to
18 choose what nourishes you and your
19 community.

20 Urban agriculture is Bhutanese
21 refugees cultivating Thai Roselle in
22 South Philly; beehives in Mount Airy;
23 elders and youth tending an 80-year-old
24 garden in Grays Ferry; thousands of
25 pounds of produce shared with families

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2 who do not have enough to eat; young
3 people selling vegetables to neighbors in
4 Kensington, Mantua, Kingsessing, and
5 across North Philly. Here they are.
6 Fruit trees and berry bushes tended by
7 and feeding residents and passers-by;
8 thousands of gallons of stormwater
9 managed; a network of farmers across
10 race, class, and generation supplying
11 markets and restaurants, exploring
12 opportunities for cooperative ownership.

13 We have at least 470 gardens on
14 almost 600 parcels distributed citywide
15 and concentrated in historically
16 disinvested neighborhoods. You've got
17 maps up here. You've got maps by
18 district.

19 Of these parcels, almost half
20 are publicly owned surplus, what we call
21 vacant, but we know are not vacant. Over
22 one-third are privately owned and many
23 tax delinquent and abandoned. Slightly
24 less than 30 percent are owned by our
25 non-profit and faith-based sectors or

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2 Parks and Rec or the School District.

3 Hundreds of these spaces
4 emerged as neighbors transformed
5 abandoned and disinvested places into
6 vibrant community assets, and hundreds of
7 these spaces are still at risk of being
8 lost. This simultaneous push-pull of
9 possibility and precariousness reflects
10 the overall picture of urban agriculture
11 today in Philadelphia.

12 Zoning changes in 2012 made
13 gardening and farming permissible
14 activities on most land in the City. The
15 Philadelphia Land Bank law of 2013
16 identified urban agriculture as a
17 priority community beneficial use for
18 vacant land. And just this spring, you
19 all, City Council, voted to approve a
20 stormwater fee exemption for gardens.
21 FPAC applauds City Council and the
22 Administration for these critical
23 victories. But we are simultaneously
24 losing and gaining ground in the effort
25 to ensure that all Philadelphians have

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2 access to fresh, healthy, and affordable
3 food.

4 Many cities across the country
5 have committed to urban ag. The City of
6 Chicago is investing a one million dollar
7 U.S. Department of Agriculture grant in
8 land trusts, cooperatives, training and
9 capacity building for urban farmers. The
10 Cities of San Francisco, Seattle, and New
11 York are making urban agriculture more
12 accessible by establishing coordinating
13 offices, which support growers with
14 resources, tools, and education. And
15 many cities facilitate new projects by
16 pre-approving land for urban agriculture.

17 We implore our city to take
18 leadership in ways like these. FPAC asks
19 City Council to consider the following
20 recommendations:

21 Commit to creating one to five
22 acres of new urban agriculture space,
23 which may include destination gardens or
24 market farms, in every City Council
25 district. This could mean designating

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2 specific public parcels or creating an
3 urban agriculture overlay.

4 Create and fund an office to
5 support and coordinate the City's ongoing
6 urban agriculture work, including
7 covering land transfer costs and
8 contributing to infrastructural or
9 capital casts.

10 Contribute City Council
11 district capital and activities funds
12 toward urban agriculture.

13 Appoint an urban agriculture
14 advocate to the Philadelphia Land Bank
15 Board and support the Philadelphia Land
16 Bank and conservatorship as tools for
17 garden preservation.

18 And, finally, explore
19 incentives for urban ag projects such as
20 property tax credits for private owners
21 who make their property available for
22 growing.

23 Thank you so much for
24 considering FPAC's recommendations and
25 for the opportunity to testify today. I

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2 look forward to answering any questions
3 you have and to hearing from my
4 colleagues.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. RADER: Good afternoon and
7 thank you, Councilwoman Reynolds Brown
8 and members of the Committee. My name is
9 Matt Rader. I'm the President of the
10 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. PHS
11 is a community of literally tens of
12 thousands of people in our region who are
13 committed to one mission, which is to
14 connect people to horticulture and
15 together create beautiful, healthy, and
16 sustainable communities.

17 Now, getting people involved in
18 urban agriculture, in gardening, and in
19 creating gardens that transform
20 communities lies at the very heart of
21 PHS's work. Since the early 1970s, PHS
22 has supported Philadelphians across the
23 City to create community gardens and
24 productive green spaces that bring
25 communities together to grow fresh food,

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2 and in turn these gardens have grown some
3 of our city's strongest community
4 leaders, closest knit community
5 organizations, and a real sense that
6 gardening and greening are core strands
7 of Philadelphia's civic DNA.

8 Our reach is broad and our
9 impact large, as is the work of the
10 entire gardening community. Through
11 PHS's City Harvest program, we work with
12 our partners to grow 250,000 seedlings
13 each year in four community greenhouses
14 across the City and distribute these
15 seedlings to more than 100 growing sites.
16 In turn, these sites contribute a portion
17 of the produce they grow to food
18 pantries, families in need, and other
19 sources that can get this produce to
20 people who need it. Since 2006, we've
21 also trained 800 Green City Teachers in
22 Philadelphia schools to integrate
23 horticulture and school gardens into
24 their educational institution. Our work
25 is founded in extensive research

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2 documenting the health, social, economic,
3 and ecological benefits of urban
4 agriculture, from encouraging healthy
5 eating and increased physical activity to
6 job readiness, youth empowerment, and
7 stormwater management.

8 Gardens and gardeners create a
9 lot of benefits.

10 I want to echo Amy Laura's
11 three important requests that would
12 better support urban agriculture in
13 Philadelphia. First and foremost, we
14 need a more coordinated resource point
15 for urban agriculture in the City. We
16 love doing this work, but we can't do it
17 alone, even with all of these wonderful
18 people gathered here. We have terrific
19 government allies with whom we work every
20 day to maintain, grow, and innovate urban
21 agriculture in Philadelphia, but
22 community gardeners and growers still
23 crave a transparent and clear process for
24 securing land access and land tenure and
25 accessing other resources to support

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2 community gardeners and urban
3 agriculture. These resources come both
4 from non-profit partners but also from
5 across City government, departments
6 including OHCD, Parks and Rec, Health,
7 the Office of Sustainability, the Land
8 Bank, the Redevelopment Authority and
9 more, and that's just the ones within
10 government. Plenty of non-governmental
11 agencies, from ourselves to Neighborhood
12 Gardens Trust to others, provide
13 important tools that support community
14 gardens and gardeners. We are willing
15 and eager to provide leadership and work
16 together with City agencies and our
17 partners to figure out how to create a
18 more centralized destination or resource
19 for all the resources that support urban
20 agriculture.

21 Secondly, I echo Amy Laura's
22 encouragement to support the Land Bank in
23 preserving land for urban agriculture.
24 We've been thrilled to watch the
25 development of the Land Bank as a tool

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2 for land preservation. It takes time for
3 urban greening sites to develop into hubs
4 for community activities and stable
5 gardens. Land preservation is crucial to
6 support the long-term investment that we,
7 the growers and the organizations that
8 support them, make in these sites. Great
9 agriculture also requires investment in
10 infrastructure, including water access
11 and other amenities, and all of these
12 investments are only possible on land
13 secured with long-term leases.

14 Whether planning for a stable
15 market site or building equity in an
16 urban farm site, it's crucial to
17 long-term business planning for
18 entrepreneurial ventures that can provide
19 jobs. The Land Bank strategic plan
20 properly identified that the Land Bank
21 can be a vital tool in preserving land
22 for urban agriculture and in prioritizing
23 this use on appropriate sites. We
24 encourage City Council to support the
25 Land Bank in preserving land for urban

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2 ag.

3 Finally, we need your help to
4 expand space for urban agriculture in our
5 city. It's a citywide resource and it's
6 one that doesn't take up a lot of space
7 and it's one that creates innumerable
8 benefits for Philadelphians, from the
9 food produced itself, to the community
10 bonds, to all of the externalities
11 created through this work. Therefore, I
12 again echo Amy Laura's push that each
13 District Councilmember commit to creating
14 one to five new acres of space for urban
15 agriculture in each councilmanic
16 district.

17 This year our City Harvest
18 program completed urban agriculture
19 training for beginning farmers. We
20 worked with refugees, primarily of
21 Congolese and Nepalese descent, to design
22 business plans and foster skills to help
23 them start their own market farms. Many
24 of these participants are newly resettled
25 Philadelphians and have agrarian roots in

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2 their home countries. With support of
3 further open space and market farms, we
4 are easing their transition to a new
5 country, giving them opportunities to
6 learn and grow, and improving the
7 communities they have settled in and
8 bringing them into this tradition of
9 gardening and urban ag that is so
10 Philadelphia. With suitable space
11 distributed across our Council districts,
12 the success can be replicated citywide.

13 As I wrap up, I just want to
14 invite you and everybody on the Committee
15 and your staff to join us for a tour of
16 gardens and growing sites at your
17 convenience. We're happy to take you
18 around. It's a pretty empowering and
19 exciting way to see the City. Please let
20 me know if you're interested and we'll be
21 happy to show you around.

22 On behalf of our 21,000-member
23 households and our hundreds of City
24 Harvest growers, thank you for your time
25 and consideration. Happy to answer your

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2 questions. Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
4 for your testimony.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. BAXTER: Thank you,
7 Council, for having us here today and,
8 Councilman Taubenberger, for allowing
9 this to happen in support of urban
10 agriculture. So we're all pretty excited
11 about being here today.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
13 you. Thank you for being here.

14 MS. BAXTER: I'm Kirtrina
15 Baxter and I am a community organizer
16 with the Public Interest Law Center and I
17 also co-organize Soil Generation.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You
19 organize what? I need you to slow down.

20 MS. BAXTER: Slow down. I am a
21 community organizer with the Public
22 Interest Law Center and I also
23 co-organize Soil Generation Coalition.
24 So I'm about to tell you who we are.

25 So the testimony that I have

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2 today is actually not just my words but a
3 combination of voices from across the
4 City who are growers who have been
5 growing in the City for a while.

6 So Soil Generation is a
7 black-led gardening coalition who
8 supports equity and social justice for
9 community-managed green space, gardens,
10 and farms through advocacy, grassroots
11 organizing, and community education. We
12 are over 30 members strong and represent
13 more than 20 organizations that include
14 young people and elders. Members of the
15 Coalition are, first and foremost, local
16 residents who participate in growing food
17 for the communities in which we work or
18 live. We do this in every section of the
19 City. We're in West Philly, we're in
20 South Philly, we're in Southwest, we're
21 in North. We are working to build the
22 cohesive grassroots movement needed to
23 change our food system by combining our
24 experiences, ideals, and clout to build
25 the radical movement needed to reform

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2 City policies and address racism that
3 affects the health of our community. We
4 can help our city, state, and federal
5 government to create policies that are
6 reflective of what is happening on the
7 ground in Philadelphia's neighborhoods.
8 We are gardeners and farmers, and we are
9 also lawyers, teachers, organizers,
10 artists, travelers, researchers, and
11 writers.

12 We ask that our government work
13 with communities to support the land uses
14 that are already there. We need lots
15 donated to viable groups. We need
16 gardens that are able, through
17 Councilperson assistance, to offer free
18 plots to young and under and unemployed
19 and the elderly. We need complementary
20 efforts for land access and waste
21 management.

22 Soil Generation would like to
23 work with the state to help Philadelphia
24 tax agricultural land at a lower tax rate
25 like they do in Lancaster County.

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2 Community agriculture produces
3 food, flowers, and herbs for the people,
4 by the people. We value our neighbors'
5 diversity of green space. We have bees
6 and chickens. Our spaces provide cool
7 temperatures in a warming climate, and we
8 de-stress when we enter our gardens.
9 When we see vacant land, we see the
10 potential for plants growing and helping
11 our city to connect to its long history
12 through planting native species. We are
13 able to travel to a time before violent
14 reliance on broken systems by growing
15 with ancient plants and sharing them with
16 the next generation. We contribute to a
17 more perfect ecological system when we
18 tend to the land, and we are inspired
19 that another way is possible. Harmonious
20 and challenging, complicated and highly
21 fruitful, we, the people, see prosperity
22 and democracy in action when we work the
23 land.

24 Through the Land Bank, there's
25 a real opportunity to reduce the

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2 bureaucracy and simplify the steps needed
3 to acquire land and put it to productive
4 use. We also recognize that other
5 programs in our city such as painting
6 murals or projects that highlight
7 businesses are also supported by
8 opportunities to produce food for
9 communities. We want pathways for legal,
10 affordable ownership for those who have
11 already been doing the work to steward
12 the land. The Land Bank has the
13 potential to do this, and we want to make
14 this a functional and equitable land tool
15 for Philadelphians.

16 Growing a city into its
17 potential does not have to be done only
18 by those with resources already. We know
19 that this system is built on inequity,
20 and so as a remedy, we acknowledge that
21 the ecological systems of growing space
22 are unbiased and full of potential for
23 all people, especially when supported by
24 local government. We all deserve to be
25 here. We are worthy of the investment.

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2 We are worthy of equitable practices.

3 Some specific concerns that

4 Soil Generation would like Council to

5 consider are prioritizing preservation of

6 existing community-based gardens, fewer

7 barriers to access land, longer leases,

8 pathways to ownership, a community person

9 on the Land Bank, and also a

10 representative specifically for urban

11 agriculture on the Land Bank Board,

12 transparency and Council goals and

13 objectives with regards to urban

14 agriculture, and transparency and

15 development of policies and procedures

16 through the Land Bank. We also would

17 like Council to support funding for

18 resources like water, storage, and

19 refrigeration, which are very important

20 for our farms.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're

23 welcome.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We want to

1 9/21/16 - ENVIRONMENT - RES. 160387
2 acknowledge that Councilmember Cindy Bass
3 and Councilmember Helen Gym have joined
4 us as well, who are members of this
5 Committee.

6 I want to thank you all for
7 your testimony and your very excellent,
8 concise, but direct recommendations, all
9 of which from where I sit are doable, and
10 with him being the leader, I am so sure
11 that many of them will be realized.

12 I want to ask Councilman
13 Taubenberger.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Just
15 once again thank you for taking the time.
16 Your enthusiasm shows. Your concern on
17 how we can make this better is very
18 self-evident in your testimony. I look
19 forward to working with you and working
20 out the problems that there are and
21 eliminating -- I wouldn't say all of
22 them, but most of them. We want to make
23 this work.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

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2 all again for your testimony.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I am going
5 to ask the Clerk to please read our next
6 panel, and I am going to offer a friendly
7 reminder that we need you to honor the
8 clock so that we can get through all
9 eight panels and so that we don't have an
10 empty table here by the end of the
11 hearing. And because we're not here
12 physically doesn't mean we're not
13 listening. Oftentimes members are in
14 their offices watching this on TV. So
15 please help us sustain an audience by
16 honoring the clock.

17 All right. With that, I'll ask
18 the Clerk to please bring up the next
19 panel.

20 THE CLERK: The next panel is
21 Ryan Kuck, Greensgrow Farms; Jerome
22 Shabazz, Overbrook Environmental
23 Education Center; Sherrill Davison,
24 Director, Penn Vet Laboratory of Avian
25 Medicine and Pathology. Can we also

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2 please have to sit directly behind them
3 Maureen Breen, Philadelphia Backyard
4 Chickens; Yinka Adededeji, Beekeeping,
5 Philly Urban Creators; Tim Bennett,
6 Bennett Composting; Josh Bullock, Farmers
7 Keep; and Carly Freedman and Allison
8 Blansfield, The Enterprise Center. Would
9 you please sit behind the panelists in
10 that first row. Thank you very much.

11 (Witnesses approached witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And we
14 want to ask the Clerk to tee up the next
15 panel so they'll be prepared to move.

16 THE CLERK: The next panel will
17 be Jamillah Meekins, Master's Garden, and
18 Juliane Ramic, Nationalities Service
19 Center/Growing Home Gardens.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
21 afternoon. Thank you for your interest
22 as is evidenced by your presence, and we
23 want to ask you to proceed with your
24 testimony. We can start with Ryan --
25 help me out.

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2 MR. KUCK: Hi. Kuck.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Kuck,
4 okay. Thank you very much.

5 MR. KUCK: Thank you all for
6 welcoming us today and for the
7 opportunity to share with you the passion
8 and vitality we have for Philadelphia,
9 and thank you to all the speakers today
10 for sharing your stories and for your
11 contributions to this movement and to my
12 panelists here for joining me up here.

13 You have heard a lot today
14 about the social and nutritional benefits
15 of urban ag for our city. We are here to
16 share an oft-overlooked part, which is
17 how agriculture contributes to fostering
18 innovation and economic development.

19 Greensgrow helped launch a
20 social entrepreneurship movement in
21 Philadelphia with the idea that urban ag
22 can create jobs and contribute to a
23 better city for everyone. Today we
24 employ over 40 people and generate more
25 than \$2 million in economic activity each

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2 year on a block in Kensington that was
3 written off and abandoned for decades.
4 We have helped put Philadelphia on the
5 map as a place where anyone with a vision
6 can make a name for themselves and have a
7 major impact in the world and in their
8 neighborhood.

9 Even as my business card or at
10 least one of them still says urban
11 farmer, I will be the first to tell you
12 that I don't believe the primary goal of
13 incorporating growing space in a city is
14 to feed people. But it is part of a
15 larger system that make cities possible
16 and an essential part of making happy,
17 healthy, and prosperous cities possible.
18 A city needs to breathe and have room to
19 grow and change just like any other
20 complex system, and green space provides
21 those opportunities for people living in
22 dense urban environments to take a breath
23 and shift perspectives.

24 Farmers manufacture life on a
25 daily basis, the most complex thing we

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2 know. It is no accident that many of our
3 society's greatest inventors were farmers
4 and came from farmland. From George
5 Washington Carver to Eli Whitney, the
6 farm has always been an engine of
7 innovation. The act of cultivation takes
8 endless iterations of patience and
9 careful attention, allowing for endless
10 opportunities to dream and tinker. It
11 also incorporates endless smaller
12 systems, hydrology, climate, power,
13 economics, transportation, communication,
14 and community building. And so a farmer
15 must become proficient in all of these if
16 they are to succeed.

17 I always thought Greensgrow
18 should have a blog titled "Today's
19 Disaster," simply chronically what went
20 wrong on any given day. I think better
21 than anything else, it would show the
22 incredible challenges that a farmer or
23 grower faces and the incredible
24 resiliency that farming can breed in
25 people.

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2 Greensgrow is a place that
3 people want to work because they thrive
4 on challenges that engage the body and
5 the mind, challenges that bring people
6 together to find solutions, and these are
7 the types of people and experiences we
8 want to cultivate in our citizenry. It
9 is these people that feel included,
10 empowered, and experienced in tackling
11 tough challenges that will rise to fix
12 our school system, our infrastructure
13 deficiencies, our crime issues, and the
14 other challenges that can strain the
15 social fabric.

16 Food is at the center of
17 everything we do as living creatures, and
18 so it should be held at the center of our
19 activity as social beings. All people,
20 and especially those living in cities,
21 should be surrounded by and encouraged to
22 engage in the practice of growing.
23 Ensuring that gardens and farms have an
24 equal place in the planning priorities of
25 our neighborhoods allows equal access to

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2 these opportunities, and thus we will
3 nurture a community of resilient,
4 creative, and, yes, well fed
5 problem-solvers able to tackle any of the
6 complex challenges that stand in the way
7 of growing a healthier, happier, and more
8 prosperous city for everyone.

9 Thank you. I know my other
10 panelists have something to say, so I'm
11 going to let Jerome here speak, and I
12 encourage you to direct your questions to
13 them if they don't have a chance to share
14 their opinions.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
17 afternoon. Thank you. Did I miss it?
18 Did you tell us where you were located in
19 the City?

20 MR. KUCK: So Greensgrow is
21 based in Kensington and we have a site in
22 Southwest Philadelphia.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Terrific.

24 Okay.

25 Good afternoon.

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2 MR. SHABAZZ: Good afternoon.

3 Thank you very much, Council and

4 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

5 You're very familiar with our site. You

6 were one of the first to acknowledge and

7 to help us to settle in this area, as

8 well as Cindy Bass. So we appreciate you

9 both.

10 My name is Jerome Shabazz and I

11 am the Executive Director of the

12 Overbrook Environmental Education Center,

13 and we are located on Lancaster Avenue in

14 West Philadelphia.

15 I'm here just as with my

16 colleague Ryan here from Greensgrow to

17 offer testimony on the ancillary issues

18 that are associated with urban

19 agriculture and open space development.

20 Much of what we've been able to identify

21 in our work has been the innovations and

22 the opportunities around job creation

23 and, as such, ten years ago, my

24 non-profit acquired a blighted site on

25 Lancaster Avenue. It was about an acre.

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2 And our objective was to publicly
3 demonstrate how to safely remove the
4 potential hazards and to prepare the land
5 for the purposes of innovation and for
6 agricultural benefit, as well as
7 stormwater management. And we were
8 successful with that. We achieved our
9 goals, and as a result, we now have a
10 very clean site. It was actually a
11 brownsfield site. We were able to clean
12 up the site and we were able to introduce
13 butterfly gardens. We have a greenhouse
14 now, and Philadelphia Orchard Project has
15 orchards there. So it's this wonderful
16 reuse for agricultural green space and
17 stormwater management benefit.

18 But although the aforementioned
19 targets that we initially wanted to
20 achieve were satisfied, there's some not
21 so obvious benefits that I want to talk a
22 little bit about today, and they are the
23 economic and the job creation that was
24 associated with this work. As a result
25 of the need to prepare and to make sure

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2 that the area was safe, we had to hire
3 landscape architects and architects and
4 geologists and biologists, and these were
5 people oftentimes, although we benefited
6 from a great deal of in-kind service
7 around this work, these were people who
8 were paid, and it was part of our
9 objective to see that there were local
10 people being paid in this work. So 80
11 percent of all of the folks who worked on
12 our site to enable it to become safe and
13 viable and now a productive green space
14 and educational facility, these people
15 were from the community and they were
16 minorities.

17 So my message today is simple.
18 We want to take serious -- take a serious
19 look or ask you to take a serious look at
20 the economic and social benefits of
21 innovative land use, and at best,
22 innovative land use has to become our new
23 normal. We want to try to change the
24 trajectory that open space, open land use
25 is just -- agriculture is just a

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2 repository until we can find some brick
3 and mortar development to put on it, but
4 the open space development is, in effect,
5 a contribution that's worth preserving.

6 So, ideally, as I close, my
7 concern is that we look at the job
8 benefits. We have now this great deal of
9 work around stormwater management, and we
10 have hired young people to do this work,
11 even post high school. We have this
12 great innovation working with
13 universities, and as a result, we've gone
14 beyond, so far beyond just producing
15 urban agriculture. All of these
16 ancillary benefits are part of the
17 measure of value that we have to include
18 in this work in order to truly understand
19 its worth to our city.

20 Thank you very much.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
22 welcome.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
25 afternoon.

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2 DR. DAVISON: Good afternoon.

3 My name is Dr. Sherrill Davison. I am a
4 poultry veterinarian. So we're going to
5 switch gears a little bit and look at the
6 animal side of this. I am the Director
7 of the poultry lab at the University of
8 Pennsylvania, Penn Vet, and also their
9 agriculture spokesperson. And I do want
10 to thank you, Councilwoman Reynolds
11 Brown, for this testimony and then also,
12 Councilmember Taubenberger, for this
13 resolution.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
15 you.

16 DR. DAVISON: We're going --
17 and the members of the Committee.

18 So we're going to talk a little
19 bit about poultry. Over the past five to
20 ten years, there has been an increase in
21 the number of people who have small
22 groups of birds, and there are two
23 different populations. One that have
24 small farms where they may have maybe 100
25 to 200 different types of poultry. It

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2 could be chickens. It could be turkeys.
3 It could be ducks. Then you have that
4 other population where you have owners
5 that keep the birds as pets, and these
6 are primarily chickens that are the layer
7 birds, the ones that lay your eggs, and
8 they may keep just a few in their
9 backyard. And as you as government
10 officials and as government officials
11 across the Commonwealth in different
12 municipalities look at the issue of
13 allowing chickens into the community,
14 there's some concerns that have been
15 raised, and so what I'd like to do is
16 just mention some of those concerns and
17 go over what other municipalities have
18 offered as some solutions and some
19 solutions that I can offer to you.

20 So as we look at some of those
21 concerns, one is noise. And most of the
22 municipalities will not allow roosters.
23 And just for educational purposes for all
24 in here, for a chicken to lay an egg, you
25 don't need a rooster. It's based on

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2 daylight. It's not based on the rooster.

3 So the roosters make the noise, so most

4 communities don't allow them. And then

5 also depending on the size of the

6 property, it depends on how many birds

7 you want to allow, and there should be

8 parameters on the number of birds

9 allowed. So many people that have pets

10 as chickens will only maybe have four or

11 five, six birds on that property. So it

12 depends on the property situation.

13 There's also concern about the
14 odor and the flies, and a key here is the
15 housing that those birds are kept in.

16 The coop area, the run, wherever they're
17 kept, it must be kept very clean so it's
18 dry. And many of the owners know this,
19 because that's for the health of the
20 birds also and that it also will decrease
21 the odors and will decrease any flies
22 that could cause adverse effect on their
23 neighbors.

24 The last thing -- one of the
25 extra things that people talk about is

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2 predators, because predators will be
3 attracted to poultry. And depends on
4 where you live as to whether they are
5 going to be hawks or whether they are
6 going to be raccoons or other predators.
7 Again, the cleanliness of the coop is
8 important and building a coop where those
9 predators can't get in and making sure
10 that your food source, whatever you're
11 feeding your birds, is properly enclosed
12 so you don't have that.

13 And then one other concern that
14 many people have. They ask, Well, can
15 poultry give a disease to a person? And
16 so people are concerned about that. And
17 the good news is poultry in general and
18 chickens have very few diseases that go
19 to people, and most of them are very,
20 very rare. But you probably heard on the
21 news recently from the CDC, the Center
22 for Disease Control, about salmonella.
23 And not all chickens have salmonella, but
24 a few may, and the important thing for
25 control is, if you're handling your birds

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2 or somebody is handling your birds, you
3 wash your hands. Or if you're cleaning
4 out your coop, you go ahead and wash up
5 after that.

6 So to have poultry, there may
7 be -- we need to have some parameters in
8 place, whether it's the number of birds,
9 et cetera, on a property, but poultry
10 many times are kept as pets. The eggs
11 are a good source of protein. They're
12 good pets to have out there, and these
13 larger farms do supply products to local
14 restaurants, and that also will be good
15 for the community.

16 So I offer my assistance to
17 your Committee if you need additional
18 information about poultry. I also offer
19 to the public myself as a resource if you
20 do have poultry and you have questions
21 about poultry. The owners that I have
22 dealt with are very responsible owners,
23 do keep their properties clean, do keep
24 and understand the importance of keeping
25 those clean for the health and welfare of

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2 the birds and also to decrease any
3 negative effects on their neighbors.

4 So I want to thank you again,
5 and if you have any questions, I'll be
6 more than happy to answer them.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well,
8 thank you for that lesson.

9 DR. DAVISON: Yes.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I do want
12 to say thank you also to Ryan and Jerome
13 and your leadership but, more
14 importantly, your allegiance to looking
15 local for professionals and folks who
16 just really want to work and really want
17 an opportunity. That should never go
18 unrecognized. It really is appreciated.

19 Councilman Taubenberger.

20 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
21 you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

22 Mr. Shabazz, exactly where are
23 you located? I'd like to maybe view the
24 operation.

25 MR. SHABAZZ: Sure. 6130 to

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2 6150 Lancaster Avenue.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
4 before you depart, I'd like to have
5 contact information so I can call you
6 that we can arrange this.

7 MR. SHABAZZ: Absolutely.

8 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
9 That's great. Thank you very, very much.

10 And, Doctor, in regards to
11 poultry, you certainly, coming from the
12 University of Pennsylvania, have a sense
13 of what the City looks like as far as the
14 density and population. What would you
15 say -- although the hearing is not only
16 on poultry, but if you were to give a
17 number on chickens in an urban backyard,
18 what would that number be?

19 DR. DAVISON: It would be
20 between four and six birds for those
21 types of properties.

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
23 That's it. Thank you.

24 DR. DAVISON: You're welcome.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I do see

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2 Carly Freedman, Allison Blansfield
3 representing The Enterprise Center. Give
4 me the elevator pitch on what you're
5 doing at The Enterprise Center on this
6 issue. Can you move to the witness
7 table, please.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
11 again, Jerome Shabazz and Ryan Kuck.
12 Thank you very much.

13 Just tightly tell us -- I'm
14 struck that this issue resonates at The
15 Enterprise Center, which is a great
16 thing.

17 MS. FREEDMAN: Sure. So hi.
18 I'm Carly Freedman. I'm the West Philly
19 Foods Manager at The Enterprise Center.
20 I run the Walnut Hill Community Farm, the
21 West Philly Food CSA, and a garden at the
22 CHOP Karabots facility.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: At the
24 where?

25 MS. FREEDMAN: The CHOP

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2 Karabots facility.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That's
4 located where?

5 MS. FREEDMAN: That's right at
6 48th and Market.

7 So the Walnut Hill Community
8 Farm is right at 46th and Market, and
9 that's on the property owned by SEPTA
10 right next to the 46th Street El Station.

11 So, yeah, I'm here today to
12 talk about the importance of green
13 stormwater infrastructure, renewable
14 energies, and community partnerships in
15 relationship to urban farming. So -- you
16 look confused.

17 So we have -- we're off the
18 grid on our property, and we have worked
19 in collaboration with SEPTA to set up a
20 2,200 gallon green stormwater
21 infrastructure, cisterns. And so we
22 harness our own energy from solar power
23 to run our pump and move the rainwater to
24 water our garden. So, yeah, this is a
25 big issue obviously for urban farmers, is

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2 access to water and electricity.

3 The property that we're on is
4 owned by SEPTA. We've signed a 30-year
5 lease, which is wonderful, and we have
6 been able to access energy and water
7 through alternative methods since we have
8 no access on the property itself.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So is
10 there an opportunity to teach the
11 residents from that community what you
12 just described so that it's integrated
13 into that community?

14 MS. FREEDMAN: Absolutely. We
15 have events on the park and farm
16 throughout the year and we are looking to
17 increase our outreach and education into
18 the community, but we work very closely
19 with the Walnut Hill Community
20 Association, so the park and farm was the
21 residents' desires coming to fruition.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that's
23 on the south side of Market. Is there
24 any effort, consideration for residents
25 who live on the north side of Market so

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2 that they can benefit from what you're
3 talking about?

4 MS. FREEDMAN: Sure. So The
5 Enterprise Center focuses on the Walnut
6 Hill community, which is the south side
7 of Market. So at this point, we don't
8 target that area, but we do have a farm
9 stand every week, and so residents from
10 all over come, and the park is open to
11 the public, so people come onto it all
12 the time.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Great.
14 Okay.

15 Any other questions from
16 members of the Committee?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
19 then. Thank you all very, very much.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We'll now
22 ask the Clerk to please invite up Panel
23 No. 4.

24 THE CLERK: The next panel is
25 Jamillah Meekins, Master's Garden;

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2 Juliane Ramic, Nationalities Service
3 Center/Growing Home Gardens. And then if
4 this next group could please sit behind
5 them: Ike Franks, Strawberry Mansion
6 neighborhood market gardener; Victor
7 Young, Five Loaves Two Fishes Garden;
8 Winnie Harris, Holly Street Garden;
9 Adolphe Alexander, Norris Square
10 Neighborhood; Jenny Greenberg,
11 Neighborhood Gardens Trust; James Carter,
12 Greater Brewerytown CDC; and Muneerah
13 Harris, Girarden Community Garden in the
14 seats that is directly next to them.
15 Thank you.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
19 afternoon. Thank you for joining us this
20 afternoon. We will ask Master's Garden
21 to proceed. State your full name and
22 proceed with your testimony.

23 MS. MEEKINS: Good afternoon.
24 My name is Jamillah Meekins. I'm the
25 Garden Coordinator for the Master's Work

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2 Community Garden located at 2502 to 2506
3 West Master Street. And I've been a
4 lifelong resident of the Brewertown/
5 Sharswood neighborhood of Philadelphia,
6 and I'm here because I care deeply for
7 the rich family-oriented community in
8 which I was raised. So I would like to
9 share this story of our community garden.

10 My grandmother came to
11 Philadelphia from the South in the 1940s
12 and settled in the Sharswood community
13 where she worked, raised my mother, my
14 aunts, and my uncles. She grew food for
15 her family on three plots of vacant land
16 on our block for many years. As the
17 years passed and my grandmother was no
18 longer able to work in the garden, the
19 land became overgrown with weeds and
20 trash. I watched as the entire community
21 became neglected and infested with urban
22 blight.

23 My neighbors and family decided
24 to work together to turn the Master's
25 Work Community Garden back into the

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2 community food source it once was. We
3 worked diligently to clear the weeds and
4 trash to set up planting beds in their
5 place. Several neighbors began to grow
6 food to supplement the nutritional needs
7 of their families. Historically, there's
8 been no neighborhood supermarket
9 available to the Sharswood community.
10 However, there's a plethora of corner
11 stores that peddle unhealthy foods to our
12 children. The Master's Work Community
13 Garden was our answer to the lack of food
14 access. We were aware that two plots of
15 the land that we grew on were owned by
16 absentee landholders and the other was
17 owned by the City of Philadelphia. We
18 made attempts to request legal use of the
19 land through the EOI process, but there
20 was no success.

21 One day we received notice that
22 one of the plots of land was going up for
23 Sheriff Sale. Once again, our neighbors
24 pulled together and gathered their
25 financial resources to make a bid on the

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2 gardens lot. Unfortunately, we were
3 outbid at the Sheriff's auction.

4 Our neighborhood has seen an
5 influx of new developers and individuals
6 with interests in making a profit from
7 the blight that has been allowed to exist
8 in our community. I'm requesting that
9 the City of Philadelphia prioritize the
10 needs of the community by preserving
11 these gardens that are supporting the
12 health and wellness of its families. I
13 ask that there be both financial and
14 physical resources available to these
15 existing gardens.

16 Community growers must also
17 have a reasonable process in place for
18 access to land ownership and legal land
19 use. Families and neighbors are working
20 together to create a true community
21 through gardening, but it all can be
22 taken away in an instant in the name of
23 urban development.

24 The City of Philadelphia has an
25 obligation to its residents to support

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2 them in helping our city become a healthy
3 and a safe place to live and grow with
4 our families.

5 Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So we'll
8 hear from you, Juliane, and then we'll
9 open it up to question and comment.

10 MS. RAMIC: My name is Juliane
11 and I am from Nationalities Service
12 Center. We are an organization that
13 resettles refugees here in Philadelphia.
14 We are seeing a global refugee crisis
15 worldwide, and in that response to that
16 crisis, unfortunately many governors of
17 states actually are making efforts to
18 block refugees from coming into their
19 states. We are so grateful to live in a
20 state and a city that not only welcomes
21 refugees but gives them a place to grow.

22 We help refugees grow at two
23 gardens, one at, we call it, Growing
24 Home, which is at 8th and Emily in South
25 Philadelphia where Burmese and Bhutanese

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2 refugees have been growing for about
3 seven years. We have 99 families growing
4 on about less than a third of an acre
5 now.

6 Our second garden, which is now
7 in its first full growing season, is at
8 26th and Reed, which is about half
9 refugees and about half community
10 residents, and there we have refugees
11 growing from Burma, from Bhutan, and from
12 the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
13 Our gardens give places not only for
14 refugees to grow food but to grow
15 community. They're safe places for them
16 to explore, building relations with their
17 neighbors, and where they can begin to
18 plant specialty crops that remind them
19 of -- where they can grow foods that
20 remind them of home.

21 So here we've been able to
22 bring some of our harvest from our
23 Growing Together Garden. We have African
24 eggplant that we've shared with all of
25 you. We have more here. This is

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2 actually the first time that this is
3 being grown in the City of Philadelphia,
4 and it was actually cultivated by
5 Maretuce (ph), who is one of our
6 entrepreneur growers. He is a refugee
7 from the Democratic Republic of the
8 Congo. Philadelphia has been his home
9 for about 18 months. He is one of the
10 entrepreneurs growers that PHS mentioned.
11 Also, Thai Roselle is actually an herb
12 that is beloved by Burmese refugees.
13 When they first arrived in Philadelphia,
14 they would travel to New Jersey where
15 they would pay about \$6 for a fourth of a
16 pound, and they were living on low
17 incomes and this was just a struggle.
18 Through PHS's support and access to
19 greenhouses and other things, we were
20 able to cultivate the seeds and grow them
21 here. By having these foods represented,
22 it helps refugees to feel that
23 Philadelphia is their home and a way for
24 them to give to others and to share their
25 rich cultural histories.

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2 We love growing together. We
3 love that refugees are growing food next
4 to their neighbors. And, yes, there
5 might be tension or there might be ways
6 that they're exploring each other's
7 identity and how to communicate across
8 language barriers, but nothing brings
9 people together like food, and especially
10 food that maybe we want to learn about or
11 maybe we want to grow or maybe we want to
12 see if I can test this in my kitchen and
13 see how it grows.

14 So with all of the backlash
15 against refugees and the concerns that
16 are happening, we are so grateful for
17 these gardens and so grateful that
18 refugees have an opportunity to
19 contribute back to their local
20 communities.

21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I want to
24 thank you both for your heartfelt
25 testimony, and both of you have a

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2 wonderful story. And culture, food,
3 music really does bring us together,
4 contrary to the belief of some. I'll
5 leave that there.

6 We'll ask Councilwoman Bass to
7 please offer any questions or comments.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I want to
9 thank you also for your comments today,
10 and I was struck by a couple things that
11 were said. And, number one, I wanted to
12 just mention in terms of folks coming in
13 from other cultures, other places and
14 bringing culture with them, which really
15 only makes our lives better. It makes us
16 so much more exposed to opportunities to
17 see different things and to taste
18 different things. And I have to tell
19 you, coming up there was -- as I think
20 back now, it seemed very limited in terms
21 of what was available to us, and it was,
22 for the most part, pretty fresh, but it
23 was only what was in season and only what
24 was really local. And then we've grown
25 and grown and grown, to the point now

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2 where I walk into a store and see a
3 particular piece of produce and say, What
4 is that, how do you fix that, and the
5 great experiment in my kitchen begins
6 from there.

7 And so I just wanted to thank
8 you for bringing that particular
9 conversation to the table.

10 And also, Ms. Meekins, in terms
11 of your comment regarding how food brings
12 people together, and I have to say just
13 amen to that, because nothing brings
14 people together like food. I mean, it's
15 a wonderful thing that we can sit down
16 and we can engage, we can conversate.
17 But one of the problems that we have
18 right now is, as you mentioned, you have
19 a lot of people who purchase food, their
20 regular groceries, from a corner store
21 and do not have access to a farmers'
22 market or a plot of land where they're
23 growing produce in their neighborhood and
24 things of that nature. So there's a lot
25 of work that needs to be done. One of

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2 the things that is an issue right now in
3 the City of Philadelphia is, we have some
4 supermarkets that have closed and
5 actually are attempting to put deed
6 restriction so that another supermarket
7 can't go into that location. And it's
8 just abominable that that would even be a
9 conversation and put on the table,
10 because we know that often these are
11 neighborhoods where they are food
12 deserts, where the income level is lower,
13 on the lower scale, and people need to be
14 able to purchase food from a supermarket
15 in their neighborhood. And so we've
16 actually introduced a bill that would
17 make restricting those deeds illegal in
18 the City of Philadelphia, because we want
19 folks to be able to get fresh food no
20 matter where they live in the City and it
21 shouldn't be restricted by your income,
22 your access to a car or things of that
23 nature.

24 So I just wanted to also
25 applaud you and all the work that you're

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2 doing around food and food security,
3 because it's a huge issue. So thank you.

4 MS. MEEKINS: Thank you.

5 MS. RAMIC: Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Ms.

8 Meekins, I am curious to know what's the
9 status or progress of the dilemma you
10 shared in your testimony?

11 MS. MEEKINS: As of right
12 now --

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: With
14 regards to the lots.

15 MS. MEEKINS: The lot, it has
16 gone up for Sheriff Sale, so it is owned
17 now by a developer, and as of this point,
18 we know that they're going to one day
19 tell us to leave the property.

20 The other two properties are,
21 from what we've been told, are in the
22 Land Bank. So it's a question mark as to
23 what the status is and how we can access
24 it. We are not clear on the process as
25 to how do we gain legal access for use of

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2 the property through the Land Bank at
3 this point.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What I
5 would suggest is you speak with a
6 constituent service rep in, I believe
7 that would be, President Clarke's
8 district, who can take your hand and walk
9 you through that Land Bank process so
10 that you can become informed and
11 knowledgeable about the process, which
12 arms you with the information you need to
13 have that community try to hold onto
14 those lots.

15 MS. MEEKINS: Okay.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And my
17 staff will make sure you get those staff
18 persons' names in President Clarke's
19 office.

20 MS. MEEKINS: Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
22 very much.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We do want
25 to thank the others - Strawberry Mansion

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2 neighborhood market gardener, Five Loaves
3 Two Fishes Garden, Holly Street Garden,
4 Norris Square Neighborhood Association,
5 Neighborhood Gardens Trust, Greater
6 Brewerytown CDC, and Girarden Community
7 Garden. We want to thank you all for
8 providing your presence this afternoon
9 with this panel.

10 Okay. We want to ask the Clerk
11 to please call up the next panel.

12 THE CLERK: The next panel is
13 Chris Bolden-Newsome, Bartram's Farm and
14 Community Resource Center; Petry
15 Carasquillo, Norris Square Neighborhood
16 Project. And can the next group also
17 please come up and sit in the seats next
18 to them: Noelle Warford, Urban Tree
19 Connection; Miciah Hall, Mill Creek Farm;
20 Alex Epstein, Philly Urban Creators;
21 Malaika Reid, One Art Community Garden;
22 and Nati Passow, Co-Founder and Executive
23 Director of the Jewish Farm School.

24 Thank you very much.

25 (Applause.)

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2 (Witnesses approached witness
3 table.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I am going
5 to commend Councilman Taubenberger and
6 his staff again for making sure that we
7 had culturally rich and diverse attendees
8 for this public policy issue this
9 afternoon. It really is commendable and
10 it's not always the case. So he really
11 should be saluted for making sure that
12 we -- because it adds to the richness of
13 the discussion where there's diversity in
14 the mix of things, and his office really
15 needs to be commended for that.

16 Okay, then. Please proceed
17 with your full name and the name of your
18 organization and offer us your testimony.

19 MS. CARASQUILLO: Good
20 afternoon. My name is Petry Carasquillo.
21 I'm from the Parcelas, Palethorp Street
22 in North Philadelphia. I'm part of the
23 Campesinos of Norris Square. We are a
24 group of neighbors who support Las
25 Parcelas Garden, which was founded by the

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2 Grupo Motivos Women's Collective in 1993.

3 We do educational work for the community
4 and kids. In addition, we provide a
5 place for community members to grow food.

6 Our garden is a place of unity among
7 newer and older residents of Norris
8 Square. We are a collective of diverse
9 people who come from different nations
10 working together for the health and
11 beauty of our community.

12 Las Parcelas is a place to
13 celebrate culture. We come from Puerto
14 Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico,
15 Colombia, Palestine, Virginia, Kentucky,
16 New Hampshire, New Jersey, and
17 Philadelphia.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. CARASQUILLO: When we meet
20 in the garden, we change preconceptions
21 about each other. We are an
22 intergenerational space that preserves
23 and honors each of us and where we come
24 from.

25 We believe in the necessity of

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2 growing our own food. We want control
3 over our food system, to know where our
4 food comes from and that it was grown
5 ethically and affordably. When buying
6 food in the grocery store, it is hard to
7 know the supply chain and working
8 conditions of the farm workers. It is
9 also very expensive to buy organic food.
10 Growing our own food is the only way to
11 make our most necessary products more
12 affordable.

13 Our garden also gives us a
14 place to practice a sustainable
15 lifestyle. Living in a city, we do not
16 often have control over our water source,
17 our housing or our electricity. In the
18 garden we can irrigate with rainwater,
19 install solar panels, and use ecological
20 growing practices. We cultivate the
21 earth from vacant land that is unvalued
22 by local authorities. We put it into
23 production ourselves because the
24 government doesn't give necessary help to
25 develop agriculture in each neighborhood.

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2 We love our garden as an essential green
3 space and a community of choice.

4 We would like Council to
5 consider programs that incentivize garden
6 programs through grants and stipends,
7 similar to the ways that participation in
8 stormwater infrastructure are
9 incentivized. Do not tax land with
10 gardens. Property in the NGT should be
11 rezoned as open space, SPOA, so there is
12 less incentive to develop it. Mobilize
13 resources with the state Department of
14 Agriculture to support urban agriculture.
15 Levy taxes on luxury goods to generate
16 funds that support an equitable food
17 system. Review and revise laws that
18 don't protect agricultural workers. We
19 need legislation that protects farm
20 workers and gardeners.

21 Thank you for your support. We
22 look forward to working with you to
23 preserve and build gardens throughout the
24 City.

25 Thank you. Have a good day.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
4 you for your testimony.

5 MS. CARASQUILLO: Thank you.
6 Have a good day.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.
8 Good afternoon.

9 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Good
10 afternoon. First giving honor to the
11 most high and all of our ancestors who
12 have made sure that we stayed healthy
13 enough to be alive for this moment.

14 Thank you so much, Councilwoman
15 Brown, Councilwoman Bass, gentlemen, for
16 your time today, and I'm going to try to
17 be brief. My name is Chris
18 Bolden-Newsome and I am originally from
19 Mississippi where my people have farmed
20 for ourselves since emancipation. I've
21 been in Philadelphia since about 2009,
22 and I was attracted to the City because
23 it has a long history of urban gardens.
24 You know, that's something that folks who
25 are in the know from outside of Philly do

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2 know about this city, long history of the
3 commons, you know, common garden. But I
4 also was enticed to come here because the
5 little islands of black southern culture
6 that are tucked away into many, if not
7 most, of our neighborhoods in
8 Philadelphia. There always was somewhere
9 that was a place that could remind me of
10 home.

11 Currently, I manage and I'm the
12 Co-Director of the community farm at
13 Bartram's Garden in sunny Southwest
14 Philadelphia. Our farm is a
15 community-based urban agricultural
16 operation situated right next to
17 Bartram's Village Apartments. I want
18 that to stay in your minds for a second.
19 Bartram's Village Apartment is the
20 largest, to my knowledge, public housing
21 campus in the City. Somebody who might
22 know more than me can correct me. It's
23 certainly one of the largest. And we are
24 located within Bartram's Botanical
25 Garden. That's a historical garden. It

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2 was established in the 1700s.

3 Now, we grow chemical-free food
4 all year round on about three acres, and
5 we have a crop field, a full-scale
6 greenhouse, community garden where over
7 65 families have grown their food over
8 the past five years, with the help of our
9 institutional partners, some of whom have
10 spoken before me, such as Philadelphia
11 Horticultural Society, Bartram's Garden,
12 and Fairmount Park. Our farm provides
13 educational sessions, natural gardening
14 supplies, plants and seedlings to
15 neighbors free of charge.

16 In addition to running the
17 daily operations of a small-scale
18 chemical-free farm, I'm also providing
19 regular educational sessions to our youth
20 and local elders. This is an important
21 combination. We believe strongly in
22 intergenerational work. It has
23 historically been the primary means in
24 the African American communities by which
25 social capital is passed on. And so

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2 staying in that vein, we recognize the
3 importance of this work. So regular
4 education sessions with the young people
5 and the elders.

6 Alongside my Co-Director and
7 Program Manager, Ty Holmberg, we teach
8 African Diaspora culture, agriculture,
9 and healthy eating to a group of students
10 year round, majority of whom come from
11 Bartram High School. So we keep it all
12 local. Our food stays in the
13 neighborhood. Our youth come from the
14 neighborhood. And we provide this farm
15 education internship throughout the year.
16 We also provide monthly garden-to-table
17 classes to our community gardeners as
18 well. All of this is without charge in a
19 part of town where backyards are scare or
20 often unfit for planting and very poor
21 produce options in our stores. Our
22 neighborhoods are very grateful for the
23 plots and the field that we offer.

24 Now, in Southwest, our
25 community has grown its roots deep into

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2 our farm, and increasingly folks want to
3 grow their own family's food on their
4 blocks in the lots left empty and ruined
5 on their streets. I am giving or
6 returning to them the skills to grow, but
7 what they need is space and ability to do
8 so. The people who today make up our
9 City, especially in Southwest Philly,
10 largely came from farming families.

11 Now, I always make a point as a
12 teacher to say that you all came from
13 farming families, right? That's
14 something we have to remember. Sometimes
15 whenever this seems like a strange notion
16 to some of us -- why would they want to
17 grow food -- well, that's what your folks
18 did. You know, maybe --

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Say it
20 again.

21 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: -- it was
22 50 years ago, maybe it was 100 years ago,
23 maybe it was under coercion, maybe it was
24 for yourselves, but your folks grew food.
25 So that's where we are with that.

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2 And that's the same story for
3 Philadelphia. And so largely folks
4 coming from farming areas, African
5 Americans from the deep South, which I
6 count myself one, West and East Africans
7 in our neighborhood in Southwest. We
8 have large Liberian populations, Sierra
9 Leone, Cameroon, Irish families who made
10 up such a large population of original
11 immigrants, all came from farming
12 families, including the Southeast Asian
13 population.

14 Now, these people who
15 traditionally took care of their own
16 families in times of plenty and in times
17 of lean with the food they grew, that's
18 what they knew how to do. That's what
19 they continue to do for as long as they
20 could.

21 Today, Southwest Philadelphia
22 has a well-known deficit of healthy food
23 options and even fewer high-quality
24 grocery stores. The knowledge that we
25 just received with Councilwoman Bass,

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2 which was very disturbing, yet another
3 blow to hear what's happening with the
4 grocery store. So you see the need is
5 obviously there.

6 What we do have, however, is a
7 wealth of abandoned lots, and they're
8 often filled with debris and attracting
9 all manner of evil. Now, in the past
10 five years, our farm has developed
11 several hundred -- rather, has helped
12 several hundred community members to grow
13 and prepare their own fresh and healthy
14 produce. So we don't just grow the food
15 or show people how to grow the food. We
16 are returning the skills and pulling from
17 those elders who are still in the
18 community. That knowledge is there,
19 folks. It's not gone somewhere. I think
20 we have this idea of a big city and
21 everyone has sort of a particular urban
22 mindset, and that knowledge is still
23 there. Those people are still here. And
24 they come out. So we're teaching people
25 not just to grow food, but also to

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2 process their food in traditional ways
3 that don't depend necessarily on our
4 carbon-based economy. Can your food like
5 grandma did. Put it in jars. All you
6 need is water and fire for that. So the
7 lights go out, you'll be able to eat.

8 You know, learn how to prepare
9 your foods and your herbs. Identify the
10 things that grandma and great-grandma
11 knew how to use before there were
12 hospitals that would admit you. Learn
13 how to use those things.

14 We have neighbors who have
15 never spoken to one another, who have
16 come together to build deep connections
17 all around the garden. People who have
18 had health conditions or serious health
19 conditions have been inspired to take
20 charge of their health, even beyond their
21 diet. When you get out there and start
22 working in the field, when you start
23 communicating with other people and,
24 again, this notion of social capital -- I
25 want to thank one of my community elders

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2 and gardeners behind me, Dr. Sylvia
3 Briscoe.

4 Raise your hand, Dr. B.

5 Who has turned us on to the
6 understanding of how social capital has
7 been passed on throughout African
8 American communities and what the threats
9 are to it, how necessary it is for us to
10 have this, where we don't have access to
11 other forms of capital.

12 But folks have been inspired to
13 do this when they get together. These
14 same community members have also taught
15 their families and neighbors, and as they
16 learn, they continue to ask how can I
17 grow food on my block.

18 Now, I care about my neighbors'
19 health because I'm connected to them. As
20 a southerner, I followed in my lifetime
21 the path to Philadelphia that also
22 brought so many of my neighbors. Many of
23 these families left farming because
24 growing food for others was literally
25 killing them. Now we find that we need

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2 to grow food to help save our own health
3 and restore community to some of our
4 toughest blocks.

5 I'm overwhelmed with joy when I
6 see my neighbors taking care of their own
7 families by growing healthy food as their
8 grandparents did. In Southwest and in
9 all of Philadelphia, our neighbors are
10 definitely willing, but they can't grow
11 food and build the tight, safe, and
12 vibrant blocks that come with this
13 heritage skill if they don't have the
14 protection for the gardens they've
15 established or the vacant lots they'd
16 like to plant.

17 So what I want to ask today
18 from this august body is that you help us
19 with this. From my neighbors who grow
20 food in Southwest, gardening is not a
21 hobby, and I want -- I hope that that
22 notion -- and if the ghost of that notion
23 is somehow floating around, I want to
24 dispel it. In Southwest, we're not hobby
25 gardeners. We're not growing beautiful

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2 flowers just for -- no disrespect to
3 that, you know, but we're growing food to
4 feed our families in the cheapest and the
5 healthiest ways that we know how. So
6 we're asking the Council's help to remove
7 barriers to land access for gardeners
8 first. That's the first thing. We have
9 to remove it. It feels like a particular
10 kind of torture to know that you have
11 lots lying empty next to you that there's
12 somehow -- that if you attempt to grow on
13 them, you will have no protection for
14 that, and that that could be developed,
15 that could be taken from you, you know.
16 When people just want to do for self,
17 that's the emotion that in our community
18 is what's going to help us survive. So I
19 want to help first with that. Remove the
20 barriers to land access.

21 And then create accessible
22 legal pathways to ownership for folks who
23 are growing on City lots. Because the
24 truth is, some folks have already started
25 growing. They didn't wait for the shot

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2 or for the permission or whatever. They
3 started growing, right?

4 I don't know if we're supposed
5 to say that. Is that okay? That's all
6 right, okay. So, I mean, I guess you all
7 know that, right?

8 But for those people who are
9 growing food and building, I don't have
10 to tell you all. You've seen the
11 studies. And if you haven't, you could
12 talk to a few of our professionals who
13 will be happy to fill you in, that these
14 spaces -- when you put community gardens,
15 when you put gardens in a space, you
16 immediately lower the crime rate. That's
17 not fantasy. That's not hocus-pocus.
18 That's real life. That's a very easy
19 connection. And I don't have the studies
20 to cite this, but I've read them and I
21 could easily supply them to you. We need
22 that desperately.

23 In this age right now of
24 violence, of so much public and televised
25 violence, let me put it that way, because

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2 the violence is the roots of our country,
3 but the televised violence and in the
4 hottest summer on record -- I don't
5 disconnect those two, by the way -- I
6 want us to think about the ways that we
7 can actually help to support communities
8 wanting to build themselves.

9 So I want to close with this.
10 The same black farmers from the South, I
11 know the importance of land and what it
12 means to lose it. I know what it means
13 to not have access to available land for
14 one reason or another. My grandfather
15 was run off his land in Sunflower County,
16 Mississippi. That's a story for many of
17 y'all, and for some of y'all, that's why
18 you're here in Philadelphia. So I'm
19 talking to you.

20 And as a son of these same
21 farmers, I also know the pride and the
22 power of growing my own delicious food
23 and building up the health of my
24 community and my neighbors. I can't
25 convince high-quality grocery store

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2 chains to open up stores in Southwest.

3 Now, nor can I lure the education or the

4 jobs that we would need to keep this

5 strong business in our community, but I

6 can grow a seed. I am not alone in this.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Thank you.

9 We have gardeners behind me.

10 I'm not speaking for myself. I'm

11 standing on the shoulders of ancestors,

12 your ancestors, my aunts. I'm talking to

13 everybody. I'm not talking to people

14 from a certain place here. And I'm also

15 coming in the name of the people who are

16 growing food and want to grow food and

17 will grow food and for those young people

18 who will be nourished by that. We need

19 to have access to vacant land in

20 Philadelphia, not just to grow food but

21 to build safer and more involved

22 neighborhoods. And because we've taught

23 our children to grow this food, we expect

24 them to do it. Now we need the legal and

25 accessible pathways to ownership of the

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2 land, because we actually plan on
3 continuing to grow our blocks.

4 So on behalf of the gardeners
5 at our farm, on behalf of all of our
6 people and all of your people, we want to
7 ask the City's help in securing these
8 goals.

9 And I thank you for your time.
10 I thank you for listening. God bless you
11 all.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, let
14 me say to the both of you that you are
15 both -- you both have a powerful voice of
16 advocacy for gardeners, and Philadelphia
17 is well served by the work that you do
18 every single day. I'm delighted to hear
19 that you decided to stay in Philadelphia
20 after coming here in 2006. I have to ask
21 you, what persuaded you to stay?

22 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Initially
23 it was because it's a very reasonable
24 city economically to live in. That was
25 part of it, you know. And other than

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2 that, I mean, you've become a part of a
3 community and it's hard to leave once you
4 have roots, you know. It's hard to think
5 about that. And when you get busy, you
6 know, you get busy.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, you
8 should -- well, I'm pleased to say that
9 my staff and I did our retreat three
10 years ago at Bartram's Gardens. So I
11 know well of what it is and what it means
12 to that community in a really, really big
13 way.

14 One final question for you,
15 Chris. Are you familiar with the men
16 that meet every Tuesday night at the
17 Kingssessing Recreation Center? They're
18 known as the Southwest Community
19 something, something, something.
20 District Services, right. They meet
21 every single Tuesday night at the
22 Kingssessing Recreation Center. Their
23 membership is not primarily but largely
24 returning citizens, men who left that
25 community, have come back and have made a

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2 commitment to be deeply, actively,
3 consistently engaged. That is a group I
4 think where there would be mutual benefit
5 for all the good work you're doing in
6 Southwest and what they're trying to do
7 in redirecting a lot of the young men and
8 women out there.

9 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So my
11 staff will make sure that you get that as
12 well.

13 And so to all of you who
14 accompanied Chris and Petry --

15 MS. CARASQUILLO: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- thank
17 you for your testimony as well.

18 Excellent, excellent. Authentic,
19 important testimony of folks on the
20 ground doing the real work. We
21 appreciate what you do. Thank you all.

22 MS. CARASQUILLO: Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Councilman
25 Taubenberger, sponsor of the resolution.

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
3 you very much, and thank you both for
4 coming as well. And Mr. Bolden-Newsome,
5 I believe I was at Bartram Gardens with
6 Secretary Redding, and I actually saw
7 what you're doing and was very motivated
8 by what you have done. So you were
9 actually right there on the cusp of all
10 of this. But you mentioned something --
11 and I'm always trying to learn. I'm an
12 advocacy of learning as much as I can.
13 You said something that I find
14 remarkable. You had said in
15 neighborhoods where there are gardens,
16 there's less crime.

17 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Oh,
18 absolutely.

19 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
20 how do you base that? What are you
21 using -- I mean, I want to know more. I
22 think it's a great argument, but someone
23 eventually is going to say to me --

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Based on
25 what.

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Yeah.

3 What is that based on?

4 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Well, I am
5 sure that there are people who are more
6 qualified to talk about the exact
7 dynamics of that, and I apologize that I
8 would throw out, you know, something like
9 that without bringing -- citing some
10 studies. I'd be more than happy to get
11 that to you, though.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
13 in time. I mean, there's no rush. I
14 don't need it today.

15 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: But,
16 again, I would encourage people -- but
17 basically how this works, you know, is
18 that when you have involved gardeners,
19 you have people who are working.

20 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
21 couldn't agree more. Absolutely.

22 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: You get
23 it, right? And I think in our
24 neighborhood in particular where this
25 played out is that it's the idea of eyes

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2 on the street. People are paying
3 attention. When you have a space that's
4 a common space, we don't have many of
5 those anymore. I mean, I think that when
6 I -- where I'm from and when I grew up,
7 there were spaces that were more common.
8 People are afraid to go to their parks.
9 People don't know their neighbors
10 anymore. That seems like that's a
11 regular thing.

12 So, again, you know, I think
13 you can see the connections drawn easily
14 from that, that folks who are active and
15 have something going on and there's a
16 spot that's sacred in the neighborhood,
17 you know, for all sorts of people, people
18 tend to watch out for it. People tend to
19 know what's going on around it.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That's
21 true.

22 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: And --

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
24 couldn't agree more with you on that.

25 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME:

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2 Absolutely. So these are some of the
3 powerful effects that often don't get
4 included in the discussion. I think
5 oftentimes it's much more salient to talk
6 about the creation of jobs, and those
7 things too are absolutely important, but
8 for me and my neighborhood, what I need
9 more than anything first and foremost is
10 a sense of security, you know, when I lay
11 my head down at night, that somebody is
12 not coming through my window, and I know
13 that because my neighbors are watching,
14 you know, because I know them, because I
15 grow food with them, you know. So yeah.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: But
17 I'd like -- and that's everyone here.
18 We're easy to find. We're in the
19 directory. If you come by a certain time
20 during the directory at the doors, you'll
21 find our pictures up there. But my point
22 is, my big point here is, I'd like it to
23 be an ongoing dialogue. I mean, you can
24 call my office or any of the offices, I
25 believe, of any Councilmembers, but

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2 particularly those that are on the
3 Committee here and Madam Chair. Keep
4 that information flowing, because that's
5 how we learn. That is -- I mean, I will
6 be once again direct with you. That is
7 the first time I heard that from anyone,
8 although I get your logic behind it, and
9 at some point if you come with some
10 statistics, send them our way as well.

11 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Yes, sir.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
13 you again so much.

14 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Thank you.
15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Councilman
17 Green.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
19 Madam Chair.

20 In both of your testimonies I
21 really had a lot of personal reflections.
22 In fact, this weekend I'll be driving my
23 parents eight and a half hours to our
24 farm for the weekend. My father had a
25 stroke and normally he drives three or

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2 four times a year down to the farm. So I
3 will be driving him down this weekend and
4 then flying back, and then the following
5 weekend, I'll be flying down and driving
6 back.

7 And so some of the things that
8 you talked about in reference to farming
9 in Philadelphia, it also made me reflect
10 on when I started my career at Meridian
11 Bank at Broad and Glenwood right by
12 Glenwood Gardens. And so when you talked
13 about what drew you to Philadelphia, you
14 talked about how it's well known outside
15 of Philadelphia from the farming
16 historical context, and I know there are
17 a lot of people in the City who came from
18 North Carolina in particular, where my
19 family is from. My wife's family is from
20 North Carolina. So that's that
21 agricultural perspective.

22 So I'm curious, what is the
23 perspective that others have about the
24 City from a farming or agricultural
25 perspective? That's one question. And

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2 then, two, when you talked about security
3 and safety and the concerns on not being
4 able to continue to farm, have there been
5 conversations in reference to creating
6 co-ops to try to bring farmers together
7 that have been farming in a location to
8 create a business entity that's
9 cooperative in nature as a way to protect
10 that farm going forward? I'm having
11 actually hearings on co-ops in a few
12 weeks with PACA, which is Philadelphia
13 Area Co-Op organization. So I'm curious
14 about that conversation, as well as a way
15 of trying to protect people who want to
16 participate in urban agriculture.

17 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME:

18 Absolutely. Yeah. Thank you for that.
19 Yeah. Well, in terms of sort of the
20 opinions of people from outside of
21 Philadelphia, I don't know how qualified
22 I am to speak now since I've been here
23 for so long. Because for the second one,
24 I actually do want to bring other folks
25 in. I mean, I will say that in terms of

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2 Philadelphia, just speak to your first
3 question, Councilman, what I know and
4 what I knew about Philadelphia and I
5 think that especially people from
6 particular parts of the South -- now not
7 so much. I'm from a minority of southern
8 immigrants, I think. I always say that
9 if one throws a stone in Philadelphia,
10 you'll hit a Carolinian. I mean, that's
11 right. In fact, if you're black in
12 Philadelphia and, you know, you're
13 African American, I don't even ask where
14 you're from. I say, which Carolina are
15 you from or where in Carolina?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: South.

17 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
18 North.

19 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: Exactly.
20 And for me, that was one of the things
21 that was most powerful. When I got
22 here -- even my young people, they may
23 not know how to grow food. They didn't
24 like okra, God forbid, sacrilege, you
25 know, or whatever, but when I ask them

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2 where were their people from, they knew
3 down to the county where they were from.
4 My kids know where they're from. They
5 know where their people are from,
6 grandparents and great-grandparents. So
7 that gave me hope that something, there's
8 still a toehold, you know, to what we
9 know.

10 So I think that largely
11 Philadelphia has been seen as a place
12 where you can make a living. That was
13 for me. You can make a living here. You
14 can make a decent living. You can raise
15 a family. And it was an opportunity
16 particularly for African Americans and,
17 like I say, not necessarily -- my people
18 tend to go to Chicago or Detroit. I
19 don't care for either. Sorry. You know,
20 but Philadelphia, you know, seems like
21 just the speed for somebody, plus, again,
22 there was a large community of
23 southerners here.

24 So I think that people tend to
25 know this is a place where you can live,

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2 you can survive. You know, it's not the
3 rat race of New York. It's not the
4 madness of DC, you know, both places that
5 I know.

6 In terms of collaborations, I
7 will say too and then I want to ask -- I
8 would like to ask Noelle to speak about
9 that. But farmers here are organized.
10 Farmers in Southwest, farmers throughout
11 Philadelphia are organized. And a large
12 collaboration is a sole generation, which
13 they'll speak to, but I do want to just
14 speak to the fact that people -- it's
15 happening all over on grassroots as well
16 as more sort of larger scale situations
17 too. And I'm going to go ahead and move
18 back and let Noelle speak to that.

19 MS. WARFORD: My name is Noelle
20 Warford. I work at Urban Tree Connection
21 as the Program Director. We're a
22 non-profit farming organization. I'm
23 also a member of Soil Generation.

24 So regarding the question of
25 PACA, there are at least four farming

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2 agriculture organizations that are here
3 in the room today that have applied for
4 that and have been awarded as the
5 learning study group. Planted Planet
6 from Chester.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. WARFORD: Neighborhood
9 Foods Farm, where I'm from, Urban Tree
10 Connection.

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. WARFORD: VietLead, our
13 group over here.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. WARFORD: With Resilient
16 Root Farm and Soil Generation as a group
17 again of over 20 organization, individual
18 growers who are also thinking about how
19 do we support farmers, gardeners, folks
20 in agriculture and being able to own our
21 own labor and think about.

22 And I just want to amen what
23 Chris said regarding we all know each
24 other and we all work closely together
25 and are already very organized. So we're

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2 really excited about the opportunity of
3 the City to explore cooperations, yes.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That's
5 wonderful, because one of the -- to me
6 one of the biggest issues, if not the
7 biggest issue, in our city is poverty,
8 and one of the best ways to address that
9 is by small business development, and
10 there's been a huge growth. If you look
11 at an article that was in yesterday's
12 Inquirer, about one out of every four
13 real estate transactions are a
14 restaurant, and that provides some
15 opportunities from a farming perspective,
16 especially considering we have a strong,
17 from Judy Wicks and others, kind of a
18 food-to-table type of environment here in
19 the City of Philadelphia. So for
20 organizations and farmers to come to work
21 collectively in a cooperative perspective
22 that can sell to restaurants -- and I
23 think of my good friend Holly Johnson and
24 Tatiana from Common Market. Now they are
25 starting in Philadelphia, in DC, Atlanta,

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2 and those type of opportunities and
3 initiatives I think can help find another
4 way to address poverty in our city
5 through something like farming. So
6 that's why I'm always trying to think of
7 what is the small business/cooperative
8 angle of all these different type of
9 initiatives, and I think that provides an
10 opportunity. So I'm glad to hear there's
11 cooperation and organization going on.
12 We just need to continue that factor.

13 And one small point. My staff
14 had our retreat at Bartram's Gardens this
15 year.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Is that
17 right?

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So thank
19 you.

20 MR. BOLDEN-NEWSOME: And we
21 know you had a good time.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Just a
23 point of information for Councilwoman
24 Jannie Blackwell who has joined us,
25 you'll be pleased to know, Councilwoman,

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2 that Chris Bolden-Newsome represents
3 Bartram's Farm and Community Resource in
4 your backyard, in your district, and
5 brilliant, wonderful, authentic testimony
6 about what they're doing there in
7 Southwest as he represents a beautiful,
8 richly diverse mix of gardeners here in
9 Philadelphia. And I thought it wise to
10 suggest to him that he connect with the
11 Southwest Community Services District and
12 Michael Ross given the work that you do
13 and the work that they do.

14 So, again, thank you all for
15 your very, very, very, very informative
16 and instructive testimony. Thank you
17 very much.

18 We'll call up our next panel.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I might
21 add parenthetically we're going to take a
22 couple of minutes to hear from Pastor
23 Lola, who actually can comment and
24 respond to the statement made by Chris
25 Bolden-Newsome regarding the connection

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2 between the beauty of gardening and how
3 that does indeed have an impact on
4 reducing criminal behavior.

5 So if you could come and
6 provide us with some quick comments on
7 that, please. And then we need our next
8 panel to be teed up.

9 (Witness approached witness
10 table.)

11 PASTOR BLOUNT: Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: State your
13 full name.

14 PASTOR BLOUNT: Lola Blount.
15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
17 welcome.

18 PASTOR BLOUNT: And while I'm
19 speaking, if possible, I just wanted to
20 share this with the panel so they can
21 look at it.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sure.
23 We'll ask the Clerk to provide that for
24 us, please.

25 PASTOR BLOUNT: My name is

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2 Pastor Lola Blount and I and my daughter,
3 we do a garden at -- we started at
4 Germantown and Hilton Street in 2014.
5 Her name is Sonia Blount. And at Hilton
6 Street and 13th Street -- and you will
7 probably recognize it by the landmark of
8 the old Common Skate Rink in North
9 Philadelphia. But there, if I'm to talk
10 about the statement that -- the question
11 the young man had asked in terms of the
12 crime and how it relates to urban gardens
13 and how that helps with the behavior of
14 some of the criminal activities or the
15 behavior management. Within the last two
16 years, we have been gardening in that
17 area, and on Hilton Street alone, there
18 has been ten deaths, and six of them has
19 been murders, and that's within 24
20 months. And on the street that joins
21 that, on 13th Street, there have been
22 three deaths, and two of them have been
23 murders.

24 So I have put a lot of physical
25 time and energy and care into that

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2 community. And if you can think back
3 about two years ago, I'm going to share
4 with you an incident with the carjackers
5 that killed the mother, Keisha Williams,
6 and her three children as they were
7 gardening -- or selling the produce at
8 Germantown and Allegheny. And they were
9 there to sort of claim a space for
10 families to have a safe place to be. And
11 we were gardening at Germantown and
12 Hilton and we were moved over to
13 Germantown and Allegheny, where we would
14 do exercise in the lot, and we had
15 permission, you know, from the City to
16 utilize the space. But one of the things
17 that happened in terms of gardening in
18 that particular -- and there are others
19 that I can share, but I'm just sharing
20 the ones that I think that people can
21 perhaps relate to.

22 One of the things that happened
23 out of that tragedy and also with the
24 urban garden piece that the families were
25 participating in, that it opened up a

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2 social and a spiritual time for the
3 community to come together for a common
4 cause, for a positive cause. And right
5 now that particular garden from that lot
6 has grown into the front porch and the
7 backyard of at least 12 homes between
8 13th Street and Hilton Street, and over
9 20 homes, households, senior citizens,
10 families participate in front porch
11 garden, backyard garden,
12 intergenerational activities where the
13 young people come and help the seniors
14 with their planting. And I've also
15 touched base with Home Depot, where they
16 are going -- where they are providing
17 beautiful plants on 13th Street and
18 Hilton Street as a memory of the Williams
19 family and for those that has passed.
20 And when I spoke to Home Depot, I used
21 the phrase that "God will give us beauty
22 for ashes," and I said to them that this
23 particular block and a lot of blocks in
24 the City of Philadelphia have seen plenty
25 of ashes, and the garden brings beauty.

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2 It brings flowers. It brings herbs. It
3 brings life. And it's something that
4 when you are grieving as a community,
5 it's something -- a positive activity
6 that you take your children to, that the
7 seniors come to, that the families
8 participate in, and it's also a therapy.
9 When you deal with gardening and art,
10 it's a way to release energy and stress.

11 So when you combine the
12 positive -- and I'm going to conclude.
13 When you combine the positive energy and
14 the positive interaction and the
15 alternative to the negative behavior,
16 then it creates a reason for people to
17 latch on to, to move forward in a way
18 that they receive that which is good
19 versus that which is bad, and it brings a
20 collective effort of looking out for your
21 neighbors.

22 So I wanted to share that. And
23 so that's -- as far as Eagle's Wings
24 Outreach Ministry, right now we have what
25 we call a red bucket growth into the

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2 community, and every time we see a red
3 bucket or a flower pot on the porch of a
4 family on Hilton Street or 13th Street on
5 Fridays, they receive a free bag of fruit
6 and vegetables that's being donated by
7 Love Kitchen. And I went out. I had
8 about ten buckets to start, and now you
9 see over 20 buckets where the neighbors
10 are participating in that project. One
11 of the young ladies that works with the
12 seniors moved to the Logan area and she
13 took her bucket and she's starting an
14 urban garden in Logan that started from
15 that little small strip of lot that the
16 City allowed us to use at Hilton Street,
17 that the Hilton -- that the Williams
18 family helped to start. It is growing
19 throughout the City.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Where is
21 Hilton Street?

22 PASTOR BLOUNT: Are you
23 familiar with Broad and Allegheny?

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

25 PASTOR BLOUNT: It is two

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2 blocks before Broad and Allegheny.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

4 PASTOR BLOUNT: And it's right

5 across the street from the Common Rink.

6 We wasn't able to utilize it this year.

7 A big tree fell there, and we just didn't

8 have the energy and the manpower and the

9 funds to get it together. So we started

10 planting on porches.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, I

12 would urge you, encourage you, beg you to

13 please stay around and connect with

14 others from other parts of the City,

15 because imagine a city where you see red

16 buckets in every single neighborhood and

17 to know that the contents have come right

18 from the block where it sits.

19 PASTOR BLOUNT: Yes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

21 very, very much for your testimony.

22 Councilman Taubenberger.

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank

24 you.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

3 Pastor, I just want to thank you. I have
4 no question, but a comment. Thank you
5 for answering my question that I asked
6 earlier. It was very well done. Thank
7 you.

8 PASTOR BLOUNT: Darkness should
9 never comprehend light.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Councilman
11 Green.

12 Okay. So no experience or
13 gathering is complete without testimony
14 from young people.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: For indeed
17 the urban gardening community in
18 Philadelphia is leading by example. And
19 so we want to invite up our next panel,
20 please. And then I understand we have
21 written testimony being provided by a
22 number of organizations. So we will
23 acknowledge you as well. In fact, we'll
24 do that first.

25 Chief Clerk, can you please

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2 acknowledge the additional testimony,
3 written testimony, that is being
4 submitted and then proceed to our last
5 panel.

6 THE CLERK: Additional
7 testimony was submitted by Mary Cox;
8 Susan Saxe, Philadelphia Backyard
9 Chickens; Zein Nakhoda, Philly Thrive;
10 Ari Rosenberg, Guild House Farm; Michael
11 Muehlbauer, Grumblethorpe; Jacques
12 Sapriel, PhillyEcoCity; Alexis Brown,
13 Smart Garden; and Domenic Vitiello,
14 Associate Professor, Assistant Chair,
15 University of Pennsylvania, Department of
16 City and Regional Planning.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Awesome.

18 THE CLERK: The next panel is
19 our school children panel; that is, Ngan
20 Tran from VietLead, Karyn Hopkins from
21 Saul, Maurice Carter from Norris Square,
22 Jake Smith from Saul, and Paul Mendoza
23 also from Saul.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

3 Welcome, young people. Good afternoon.

4 (Good afternoon.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I can't

6 hear you.

7 (Good afternoon.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We're

9 delighted to have your testimony and

10 inspired and are hopeful when we see

11 young people who take an active interest

12 and show up to offer your voice on what

13 we know already is a big deal and with

14 your involvement can continue to grow in

15 years ahead.

16 So what we want to ask you to

17 do is to please state your full name for

18 the record and then speak directly in the

19 mic and give us your testimony.

20 MR. CARTER: My name is Maurice

21 Carter.

22 MISS TRAN: My name is Ngan

23 Tran.

24 MISS HOPKINS: I'm Karyn

25 Hopkins.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And we
3 don't want you to be shy. Okay?

4 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: This
5 is not a place to be shy. You're not
6 allowed to be shy here.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
8 then. Please start. Maurice Carter.

9 MR. CARTER: Yes. Start with
10 my school, why I'm here. I go to Central
11 High School, 276. The reason that -- I
12 am affiliated with Norris Square, of
13 course. And the reason why I came here
14 is because I want to be a voice of the
15 youth and I also want to be a messenger
16 and show what we know about our city and
17 what we know about urban gardening and
18 how we can apply it to the community and
19 make -- bring it together as one.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Anything
21 else you care to share?

22 MR. CARTER: My testimony would
23 be that -- I'm so sorry. I'm so nervous.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: This is
25 all good.

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

3 Relax.

4 MR. CARTER: I say that the
5 reason -- where I live, I live in West
6 Philly. I lived there for like seven
7 years now. So I got the gist of like how
8 it is, and over the years I noticed
9 there's lack of access to farm fresh
10 foods such as like from stores, big time
11 stores, like Trader Joe's or Whole Foods,
12 and even then, it's really expensive to
13 obtain them. And the one thing I notice
14 where I live along Baltimore Ave, I
15 notice a distinct, how would you say,
16 separation between races, because like
17 one side is -- the majority of the
18 demographics in that region is black,
19 where I live in. The other part is
20 mostly like white and Asian community,
21 and they have more access to -- they have
22 their own little personal gardens. They
23 have their own little personal gardens
24 and they have one certain supermarket
25 that sells very good produce but is

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2 really expensive. They're only able to
3 afford it. Our community isn't able to
4 afford that.

5 What we have as a farm fresh
6 market is called a poppy store where I
7 live and all we --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What kind
9 of store?

10 MR. CARTER: A poppy store.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Spell
12 that.

13 MR. CARTER: Poppy? P-O-P-P-Y.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

15 MR. CARTER: And what we get
16 from there is unhealthy junk food such as
17 chips, soda, cakes and stuff.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All
19 unhealthy.

20 MR. CARTER: All unhealthy.
21 They don't advertise no healthy food, and
22 even when they do have healthy food like
23 bananas, it's like rotten. No one wants
24 it.

25 So like I want to be the voice

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2 of the youth to like let people like you,
3 important people like you, to understand
4 what we're going through and how can we
5 fix it.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So where
7 is the closest supermarket close to where
8 you are?

9 MR. CARTER: The closest
10 supermarket, any supermarket would be
11 Fresh Grocer.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And that
13 is where?

14 MR. CARTER: Fresh Grocer would
15 be around 56th and Market, I think.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

17 MR. CARTER: It's a while,
18 actually.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
20 very much.

21 Please proceed.

22 MISS TRAN: My name is Ngan
23 Tran. I am a student with the
24 organization VietLead. Our mission is to
25 improve the health of our community and

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2 develop self-determination and build
3 leadership in youth in the Vietnamese and
4 Southeast Asian community in
5 Philadelphia. We are from North, South,
6 Southwest, and Northeast Philadelphia.

7 Now, I've been living in South
8 Philly for eight years. We as low-income
9 family are forced to live in that area
10 because we couldn't afford to live
11 anywhere else. Instead of having grocery
12 stores that are nearby and having fresh
13 produce to eat, we have the oil refinery,
14 gas station, and the poppy store, which
15 only sell junk food.

16 Living around an oil refinery
17 has already impacted our health by
18 putting us at a higher risk of getting
19 cancer. We could at least have access to
20 healthy food.

21 I remember walking around South
22 Philly seeing all these vacant lots
23 around me, ugly vacant lots that can
24 actually become a beautiful garden. All
25 we want is a community garden that we can

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2 rely on when it comes to eating healthy
3 and resources for food. If we can't
4 afford a nicer place to live, we
5 definitely can't afford to travel back
6 and forth or have access to healthy food
7 stores such as Trader Joe's or Whole
8 Food. I want to give back to my
9 community, and a community garden would
10 solve it all.

11 During the summer, I, with 24
12 other students, conducted over 60
13 interviews with our Southeast Asian
14 community on our view toward urban
15 agriculture and food justice. We also
16 collected over 200 community signatures
17 in support of building a community garden
18 in South Philadelphia. This is important
19 for a community to control, especially
20 during the gentrification that had raised
21 our rent and made it too expensive to
22 live in our own neighborhood.

23 Our conversation shows that
24 community is already growing in whatever
25 small space they have in their backyard,

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2 even in buckets. However, the biggest
3 obstacle to growing in our conversation
4 have been a lack of land. As refugee
5 from the war in Southeast Asia, our
6 community also believe that land and
7 garden hold a very precious meaningful
8 place in our heart. It's a very
9 therapeutic escape for us to heal from
10 the scar of the Khmer Rouge genocide and
11 the Vietnam War. With the power of
12 gardening, it gives us strength to
13 believe that those memories may scar us,
14 but it will not be a permanent mark.

15 We've been using a step-by-step
16 process outlined by the Land Bank, but
17 still face difficulty. Removing barriers
18 to land for community garden is like
19 giving us a chance to live healthier
20 physically and emotionally. We have the
21 same right and we have the right to live
22 healthy.

23 Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

1 9/21/16 - ENVIRONMENT - RES. 160387
2 for your testimony.

3 Please, state your full name
4 and your school and proceed.

5 MISS HOPKINS: Okay. My name
6 is Karyn Hopkins and I go to Saul
7 Agricultural High School.

8 Hello. My name is Karyn
9 Hopkins. I found out about gardening and
10 farmer through Urban Tree Connection when
11 living in West Philly on Pearl Street
12 near the Pearl Street Conestoga
13 Children's Garden. I was affiliated with
14 Urban Tree Connection as a Veggie Kid in
15 their youth gardening program where we
16 learned how to grow food, cook with it,
17 and sold it at a low cost to our
18 neighbors. Now I live in Germantown and
19 I'm a freshman at Saul Agricultural High
20 School.

21 Being a part of Urban Tree
22 Connection opened several opportunities
23 for me. It gave me the opportunity to
24 work with my mom in the garden. My mom
25 was introduced to Urban Tree Connection

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2 because of me. When I was at the youth
3 program, my mom would come out sometimes
4 and volunteer at the garden. Soon she
5 realized that she loved what she was
6 doing and began working for Urban Tree
7 Connection as a youth teacher. It made
8 me very happy because she was happy.
9 I've learned a lot about agriculture
10 since I was working in the garden. I
11 even got into an agricultural high
12 school. I want to major in food science
13 or animal science, because I love food
14 and animals. I also want to make all
15 fruits and vegetables affordable. Not
16 everyone can afford the prices in the
17 grocery store, and food stamps only go
18 but so far. Some people decide not to
19 even eat healthy because of the prices.
20 Why does a Tastykake cost 50 cent, but an
21 apple costs \$1 or \$1.50? Think about
22 that.

23 My demand is that City
24 Council --
25 (Applause.)

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2 MISS HOPKINS: My demand is
3 that City Council provide funding for
4 resources like water, storage, and
5 refrigeration to our community gardens
6 and farms. Farmers and gardeners need a
7 lot of things to keep our food fresh and
8 consistent. So refrigeration and storage
9 is a big deal. Without refrigeration and
10 storage, farmers only have a limited
11 amount of time to sell the food or crops.
12 Water is also limited to some community
13 farms and gardens too. Because the City
14 doesn't provide water, some gardens need
15 to rely on residents as a water source.

16 I also think it is important
17 that the City provides funding for
18 education programs like the youth program
19 I attended at Urban Tree Connection.
20 Through this program, my family and I
21 have learned how to grow food, and I
22 think more students my age and their
23 families should have the opportunity as
24 well.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please, do
3 we have additional Saul students?
4 Please. We welcome your testimony.

5 MR. SMITH: First off, I'd like
6 to say thank you for having our school.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
8 welcome. We're delighted you're here.

9 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Very
11 delighted.

12 MR. SMITH: Hello. My name is
13 Jake Smith. I'm a senior at W.B. Saul
14 High School of Agricultural Sciences. I
15 live in Northwest Philly and my
16 Councilmember is Curtis Jones, Jr., the
17 5th District.

18 I'd first like to say ag in
19 Philly? Really? Well, just ask me about
20 it. Four years ago I might have said
21 something different, but now I'd like to
22 say that I am an urban gardener and a bit
23 more versed.

24 Urban gardening should be
25 important to Philadelphia. Greening

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2 should be explored because it is a
3 proactive way of using vacant lots that
4 are often used for throwing trash and are
5 used by drug dealers. Gardening in these
6 lots would give kids of all ages
7 knowledge of positive effects of growing
8 their own food. It would give them a
9 sense of pride in their community. I
10 know this would help, because in my
11 neighborhood, kids my age fight and use
12 drugs. It would give them something
13 positive to do. Not everyone goes to the
14 rec or plays basketball.

15 One summer my mom, my neighbor,
16 and I set out to build a small garden in
17 an alley next to our home. We had the
18 plan, but we did not have enough hands to
19 do so. I asked friends of mine, and they
20 asked friends of theirs, and we all came
21 together to build a small workable
22 garden. At the end of the season, all of
23 our families had fresh produce to eat.
24 This is an example of a positive effect
25 that urban agriculture can do.

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2 As a student with ADHD, it
3 really helps to do hands-on work. Before
4 I came to Saul, I didn't do very well
5 with paying attention. Now that I've
6 found a school that has an agricultural
7 class, I can recognize that I am quite
8 suitable and thrive in this environment.
9 I do well and I'm liked by most of my
10 teachers. This makes me a better
11 student.

12 I am proud to get my hands
13 dirty and went from a goof-off to a
14 leader. I recycle, I fish, and I grow
15 things that I once never even heard of.

16 When you give students, kids,
17 teens, and young other people an outlet
18 such as gardening, it makes them happier
19 and more engaged kids. We can get into
20 trouble, but why would we do so when we
21 have something positive to do? Greening
22 and gardening is yet another undeveloped
23 pathway for kids like me to succeed. We
24 are out there, city kids, that know a
25 thing or two about gardening. You may

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2 have to call us out or just find our FFA
3 shirts, but we are here and we are
4 waiting to apply our knowledge. Now just
5 give us a chance.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So does
8 testimony like that not make you hopeful?

9 (Yes.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You
11 students, all of you, have done a
12 splendid job. Splendid.

13 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

15 MR. MENDOZA: Good afternoon.

16 My name is Paul Mendoza. I am a senior
17 at W.B. Saul High School of the
18 Agricultural Sciences. I live in
19 Northeast Philadelphia and my
20 Councilperson is Cherelle Parker.

21 Going around Philadelphia and
22 taking the time to visit some
23 neighborhoods will shock many people.
24 Vacant lots where houses used to stand
25 and other abandoned buildings are taking

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2 up space in a lot of neighborhoods in
3 Philadelphia. That doesn't sound right,
4 does it? Well, how about having to watch
5 those lots go to waste? How about having
6 to avoid those lots at night due to the
7 activities that take place there? How
8 about allowing the children to watch as
9 those lots waste away as time goes on?
10 What if there was a way to change all of
11 that?

12 At the age of six, I watched my
13 grandmother tend to a very tiny garden in
14 her backyard. Due to the space, only
15 peas grew there. My grandmother was at
16 her happiest when she brought in buckets
17 full of peas to use whenever she wanted.
18 I had no idea why she was so fascinated
19 with the empty lot next door to her
20 house, but today I know why. My
21 grandmother wanted to take that lot and
22 do something positive with it, and I'm
23 here today to represent that.

24 Attending W.B. Saul High School
25 has opened up my eyes to so many

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2 different aspects of the world that I
3 never even knew were important. Urban
4 agriculture being one of them. Walking
5 down any neighborhood in Philadelphia and
6 having to constantly cross the street due
7 to -- excuse me; due to the sketchy and
8 vacant lot that is active at night is not
9 something that anybody wants to do.
10 Imagine a healthy, green, and flourishing
11 garden in place of that. How about
12 walking down a neighborhood and seeing a
13 whole bunch of people tend to a garden
14 that they are proud of?

15 The children are the future,
16 and they will grow up and improve this
17 world. Now, that is something that I've
18 heard as a child. Why is it that we're
19 constantly waiting for the children to
20 grow up to improve this world?

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. MENDOZA: Why are we
23 waiting for the children to grow up and
24 improve this world when we can do
25 something about it today. Instead of

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2 having children and teenagers running
3 around in the streets acting as if they
4 are doing good, we should put that to use
5 and have them do something that is
6 better. Taking kids off the street and
7 having them work in a garden that they
8 will be proud of is priceless. Children
9 have the chance to finally feel safe in
10 their neighborhoods. They can get their
11 hands dirty in a positive way, and they
12 will begin to have pride for living in a
13 neighborhood in Philadelphia.

14 Allowing urban agriculture to
15 be a real thing within the neighborhoods
16 of Philadelphia will benefit so many
17 people who don't even know they need this
18 yet. Enhancing the image of
19 neighborhoods in the City, eliminating
20 negative threats in the neighborhoods,
21 and giving people a reason to feel proud
22 about the positives that will come from
23 their neighborhood will be a win for the
24 City of Brotherly Love.

25 Thank you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I am going
4 to ask the sponsor of this resolution to
5 provide closing remarks and then I'll let
6 you know what our next steps are.

7 This has been for Blondell an
8 outstanding, outstanding hearing, and we
9 get a chance to sit through many, many,
10 many, many topics.

11 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Very
12 true.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: But in the
14 years I've been here, I have sat here
15 struggling with the last time I saw --
16 and I'm now going to repeat myself. We
17 know that. As a former teacher, folks
18 have to hear something how many times
19 before they get it?

20 (Three.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Actually,
22 the educational psychology research says
23 six. I learned that in graduate school.

24 So at the risk of repeating
25 myself, I have struggled as I sit here

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2 trying to figure out and remember the
3 last time we had an audience of
4 witnesses, testifiers, and advocates that
5 were richly diverse in terms of age, in
6 terms of cross sections of the City, in
7 terms of ethnicity, in terms of energy
8 and enthusiasm. This is -- it's
9 remarkable. It's absolutely remarkable,
10 and I cannot congratulate Councilman
11 Taubenberger enough for putting this
12 issue up on the radar screen in a way
13 that has not resonated before. But I can
14 assure you that given the testimony that
15 we've learned and heard, that this is
16 probably the first chapter in a series of
17 subsequent actionable steps that can and
18 should be taken around this issue.

19 I really commend you,
20 Councilman Taubenberger.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
22 thank you. Thank you very much.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM:
25 Councilwoman?

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Stay
3 there for a moment. I want these young
4 people to stay here for a moment. And,
5 Madam Chair, that's what you get when you
6 have a Penn State ag major in the halls
7 of Council. Because I know the power
8 behind this.

9 I want to thank everyone that's
10 come, but I particularly want to thank
11 the young people. Because you know with
12 the young people now, we sit here,
13 particularly I do, with some less hair
14 than I had years ago and it's grayer.
15 It's all gray, I think. But what your
16 testimony allows us to do is to look into
17 the future, and I feel pretty good about
18 it, the things that I have heard, your
19 wishes, your desires, things that you
20 have learned. And I'm glad you pointed
21 out that you're wearing your Future
22 Farmers of America T-shirts, because let
23 me -- you can applaud, because that's a
24 good thing. Because you can go to almost
25 any county, any county in the State of

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2 Pennsylvania and they'll know exactly
3 what that means. It's unfortunate in
4 Philadelphia we've moved away from
5 agriculture in such a way that most
6 people have no idea what that FFA means,
7 but it's your responsibility to help
8 teach them. It's also your
9 responsibility to continue the work that
10 you have started here, with us, because
11 we cannot do this alone.

12 Philadelphia was really the
13 main spring, the genesis, ground zero of
14 agriculture in the State of Pennsylvania.
15 The Farm Journal was started in
16 Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin knew
17 early on how important agriculture is and
18 was. And we are very blessed to have the
19 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society here
20 in Philadelphia. Most urban cities do
21 not have this at all. So we have a
22 tradition of agriculture that we can
23 build on, and we should. And I feel
24 very, very, very delighted and supported
25 and motivated to go even further to

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2 develop this in many ways. It's teaching
3 opportunities. It's economic
4 opportunities. It's healthy
5 opportunities. We'll all benefit greatly
6 by it. And I thank you.

7 And, Madam Chair, thank you for
8 having these hearings today and
9 supporting this bill early on, and we're
10 going to continue the work. This is not
11 finished. And for those that may know,
12 particularly those from Saul, the farm
13 show in Pennsylvania, you want to see
14 what kind of rich state Pennsylvania is
15 and how important agriculture is? Go
16 there once. In fact, I urge all
17 Philadelphians one time in their life to
18 go to Harrisburg early in January and see
19 what this state really does produce. We
20 feed a lot of people. And quoting from
21 an old professor that I had, Ernest
22 Bergman, who was my plant nutrition
23 professor, when you feed someone, when
24 you feed people, you're doing God's work
25 on earth. So we want to continue doing

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2 that.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: In

5 conclusion, I look forward to working

6 with you for a brighter and more

7 agriculturally diverse City of

8 Philadelphia.

9 Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Don't go

12 anywhere. We're going to hear from

13 Councilwoman Gym. I'm going to instruct

14 you, the former teacher, to make sure you

15 tell your grandmother that story and make

16 sure that your school, for all of you, in

17 your school newsletter mention that you

18 were here, you participated and the

19 quality and content of your testimony.

20 It matters. Okay?

21 Councilwoman Gym.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. Madam

23 Chair, I just wanted to thank you and

24 Councilman Taubenberger. I am going to

25 reecho your comments that this was an

1 9/21/16 - ENVIRONMENT - RES. 160387
2 amazing panel. I had a chance to sit
3 down and review the testimony ahead of
4 time and just really was wowed by the
5 richness and actually the quality of the
6 recommendations. And especially for the
7 young people who are here, their friends
8 and their supporters, it's great to have
9 you here.

10 A couple things. It would be
11 great to see some of this printed in the
12 papers, you know, and don't just stop at
13 your school newsletters. You're moving
14 on an issue that you're at the forefront
15 of and at the vanguard of. So this is
16 not something that is driven by youth or
17 inexperience or anything like that. This
18 is one in which you're helping shape and
19 form and push on a vision for which the
20 School District can invest in, the state
21 can invest in, we as a city should be
22 investing in.

23 So I strongly encourage you
24 that you both -- all of you presented
25 really incredibly powerful testimony and

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2 it resonates a lot. It was very
3 personally moving and it was an honor to
4 listen to it.

5 And, you know, we are not the
6 only vehicle. I think this is a very
7 powerful place for us to have this
8 conversation, but I would definitely urge
9 you if you have the energy and attention
10 that chambers of commerce, that halls of
11 business, that these should not be shut
12 to anybody. It's going to take a big
13 drive to kind of reorient a major city
14 into a new direction and help shape it,
15 and the broader the coalition gets, the
16 more that we and all of you hold together
17 to really push yourselves into spaces
18 where not enough of these conversations
19 are happening, I think it's also
20 extremely powerful.

21 So, Councilman Taubenberger and
22 Madam Chair, this has been an
23 extraordinary panel. So thank you very
24 much.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It

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2 certainly has.

3 And so with that, we want you
4 to know that we are encouraged. With
5 that, you should know that this is the
6 first chapter, that members of this
7 Committee led by Councilman Taubenberger,
8 since this is his issue, will guide us on
9 what the next steps are, and this
10 Committee is in recess to the call of the
11 Chair when we will return on this public
12 policy issue.

13 Thank you all for showing up.
14 There's a book that says half a life is
15 about showing up. To the young people
16 here, thank you for showing up. To the
17 five that testified, stand over here, as
18 I want my social media person to take a
19 picture so that we can post it.

20 Thank you all very much.

21 (Applause.)

22 (Committee on the Environment
23 concluded at 3:35 p.m.)

24 - - -

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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