

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, June 10, 2009, 9:20 a.m.

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Bill 090074 - Amending Chapter 9-600 of the
Philadelphia Code, entitled "Service and Other
Businesses," by adding a new Section 9-614,
entitled "Mandatory Use of Recyclable and
Compostable Checkout Bags."

Bill 090075 - Held at request of sponsor.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

James F. Kenney, Chair
Blondell Reynolds Brown, Vice Chair
Curtis Jones, Jr.
Donna Reed Miller
Frank Rizzo
Maria D. Quiñones-Sanchez

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Good

3 morning, ladies and gentlemen.

4 The Council Committee on the
5 Environment is now in session to take
6 testimony on:

7 Bill No. 090074, which is an
8 ordinance amending Chapter 9-600 of the
9 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Service and
10 Other Businesses," by adding a new
11 Section 9-614, entitled "Mandatory Use of
12 Recyclable and Compostable Checkout
13 Bags," all under certain terms and
14 conditions.

15 Bill No. 090075 will be held at
16 the request of the sponsor, and there
17 will be no testimony taken on that bill
18 today.

19 I'd like to make an
20 announcement that since this bill has had
21 hearings in the past, we will be
22 accepting additional testimony that is
23 different from the testimony that's been
24 given in the past. The record is
25 extremely clear on the position of both

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2 sides of the issue, and it serves no one
3 any purpose to read into the record again
4 the same testimony that was given at
5 prior hearings.

6 So if there's any other
7 additional testimony to be given or a
8 paraphrase of the testimony you want to
9 offer, we'd be happy to hear that not,
10 but we will not be taking extensive
11 testimony based on what has already been
12 said and is a part of the record.

13 So that being said, the witness
14 list that I have is: Shari Jackson. Is
15 she here? Would you please come forward?

16 (Witness comes forward.)

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
18 identify yourself for the record and
19 proceed.

20 MS. JACKSON: Sure. I'm Shari
21 Jackson. I'm the director of the
22 Progressive Bag Affiliates of the
23 American Chemistry Council. I represent
24 the major bag manufacturers, their raw
25 material suppliers and recyclers of

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2 plastic bags.

3 I just wanted to -- as you've
4 stated, my comments have been submitted
5 for the record on the 090075. I just
6 wanted to address the bill at issue here,
7 090074, the proposal to ban plastic
8 carryout bags.

9 But I want to state at the
10 outset that the PBA is committed to
11 working with communities throughout this
12 country to promote recycling and the
13 proper disposal of bags. But I really
14 kind of wanted to make three main points
15 regarding this bill that's the subject of
16 the hearing today:

17 Basically, that bag bans do
18 have unintentional consequences that can
19 result in more environmental harm. There
20 is a requirement in this bill for
21 compostable bags that can cause some
22 potential problems for the City. And,
23 again, I wanted to note that plastic bags
24 are fully recyclable and are being
25 recycled throughout this country and also

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2 right here, in Philadelphia.

3 Regarding the unintended
4 consequences of bag bans -- and, again,
5 this was stated before: We do support
6 the objective of this bill to reduce
7 litter, but we don't believe that a bag
8 ban is the right approach to getting at
9 this issue primarily because, as I've
10 stated, there are unintentional
11 environmental consequences. The most
12 important is this:

13 If you ban plastic carryout
14 bags, you're going to force retailers to
15 use the traditional paper alternatives.
16 Now when compared to paper, plastic bags
17 do have a lighter environmental
18 footprint. They require 70 percent less
19 energy to manufacture, they generate half
20 the greenhouse gas emissions, 80 percent
21 less waste. For every seven trucks
22 needed to transport a volume of paper
23 bags, only one truck is needed for the
24 same number of plastic bags.

25 So they save energy in

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2 transport (indiscernible) emissions, and
3 it also requires 31 percent less energy
4 to recycle one pound of plastic as
5 opposed to paper.

6 So there are environmental
7 consequences if you're forced to go to
8 the paper alternative that are real and
9 really should not be ignored.

10 Another thing I want to mention
11 here is that there was a recent view of
12 life-cycle data on both disposal,
13 biodegradable, and reusable bags. This
14 was done by Robert Lilienfeld, who is the
15 author of Use Less Stuff. And he has a
16 Website that I certainly can provide to
17 you to check out the information that
18 he's provided and his review of this
19 like-cycle study, but what he says in
20 essence is this:

21 Legislation that is designed to
22 reduce the environmental impacts and
23 litter by outgrowing grocery bags, based
24 on the material from which they are
25 produced, will not deliver the intended

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2 results. While some litter reduction
3 might take place, it would be outweighed
4 by the disadvantages that would
5 subsequently occur in increased solid
6 waste and greenhouse gas emissions.

7 So ironically, reducing the use
8 of traditional plastic bags would not
9 reduce the reliance on fossil fuels and
10 paper and biodegradable plastic bags;
11 that's because they consume just as much
12 non-renewable energy during their life
13 cycle.

14 Another thing I wanted to point
15 out regarding San Francisco's ban on
16 plastic carryout bags, there was a litter
17 audit done in 2008 on the effect of this
18 ban, and their city litter audit showed
19 that there was an increase in overall bag
20 litter, but the bag litter related to
21 plastic bags remained the same before and
22 after the ban.

23 And the last issue I'll address
24 regarding this legislation is the
25 provision for compostable plastic bags in

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2 this bill. And we do recognize
3 compostable plastic as an innovation and
4 a potential good end-of-life option, but
5 according to the Biodegradable Products
6 Institute, compostable retail bags must
7 be matched with collection and composting
8 infrastructure; and, unfortunately, in
9 Philadelphia, there's no such collection
10 on industrial composting infrastructure
11 that will accommodate these bags.

12 So those are the main concerns
13 that I wanted to emphasize concerning
14 this bill.

15 I do want to note again that
16 recycling is a workable solution for
17 reducing bag waste and that, again, these
18 bags are fully recyclable and are being
19 recycled in stores right throughout this
20 city and throughout the country.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
22 very much for your testimony.

23 MS. JACKSON: Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And just
25 one comment regarding recyclables:

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2 We have had this discussion
3 over the course of more than a year now.
4 And after our first set of hearings,
5 stores that were using the plastic bags
6 stopped their recycling programs.
7 People -- there were larger supermarkets
8 that actually stopped their recycling
9 program so that when people with good
10 intention wanted to bring their plastic
11 bags back to the store, the bins were
12 removed.

13 So I know it's being -- I know
14 that recycling is going on around the
15 country, but here, it seems the trend
16 with the larger chain stores is that
17 they're stopping their recycling.

18 So that argument, while I
19 understand that from a theoretical
20 standpoint, it may be accurate, but from
21 a practical standpoint, they're just not
22 doing it anymore.

23 MS. JACKSON: Well, there
24 are -- you'll hear from people here.
25 There are stores doing that here.

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2 I would like to know about
3 those stores that have stopped recycling
4 their bags.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
6 DiCicco can tell you about it.

7 MS. JACKSON: Okay.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: 'Cause it's
9 one of his -- the store around the corner
10 from him.

11 Councilman DiCicco.

12 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 Good morning, Miss Jackson.

15 I was trying to follow your
16 testimony; we don't have any written
17 copies of it, do we? So I want to try my
18 best to go back over a couple of issues.

19 How many plastic bags are
20 produced in this country a year?

21 MS. JACKSON: How many are
22 produced? Countrywide, it's close to
23 80 billion.

24 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Close to
25 80 billion.

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2 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: What
4 percentage of that 80 billion are being
5 recycled.

6 MS. JACKSON: Currently,
7 according to the US EPA, it's about
8 12 percent.

9 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: About
10 12 percent.

11 MS. JACKSON: Plastic bag and
12 film, mm-hmm.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And what?

14 MS. JACKSON: Plastic bag and
15 film; that means other product overwraps
16 and dry-cleaning bags --

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Right,
18 right.

19 MS. JACKSON: -- and the like.

20 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: But what
21 percentage of plastic bags of the
22 80 billion are being recycled?

23 MS. JACKSON: That's more like
24 8 percent.

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: 8 percent.

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2 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: How many
4 bags were being recycled two years ago?

5 MS. JACKSON: How many bags
6 were --

7 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: What
8 percentage of the bags that were being
9 produced two years ago?

10 MS. JACKSON: I don't have -- I
11 don't have that information for two years
12 ago.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Is it safe
14 to say it's about the same percent?

15 MS. JACKSON: No. I mean, it's
16 increasing. It has grown.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: 5 percent?

18 MS. JACKSON: As I said, I
19 don't have that information.

20 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So it's 8
21 percent of 80 billion. Do you think that
22 your industry has really done its job in
23 trying to educate people, as they were
24 promising us two years ago they would
25 have done, to get people to be more

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2 conscious about these issues?

3 MS. JACKSON: The industry is
4 doing what it can.

5 This is -- the way we -- the
6 best way for us to collect this material
7 for recycling is through stores. So we
8 need the partnership of those stores.
9 When they are not working with us to put
10 in place programs to educate people about
11 recycling, it's harder for us to
12 accomplish that.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: But for
14 two years, since Councilman Kenney and I
15 have been dealing with this issue, I have
16 not seen any increase, and Councilman
17 Kenney just spoke about a couple of
18 situations where there actually has been
19 a decrease in the number of stores that
20 provide recyclable bins.

21 My point is -- and I don't mean
22 this to be disrespectful -- the industry
23 has not done anything, in my opinion, to
24 educate the public about the need to
25 recycle, the need to recycle, because of

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2 the impact on our environment.

3 And I understand that there are
4 those on the other side who claim or
5 maybe have statistical information that
6 says that paper bag create more pollution
7 because they're heavier and you have to
8 use more trucks to transport 'em.

9 But at the end of the day, the
10 paper bag is disposable, it's
11 biodegradable, it breaks down, while the
12 plastic bag never goes away.

13 MS. JACKSON: Well, the plastic
14 bag --

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Unless
16 somebody takes the time to recycle it.

17 MS. JACKSON: Well, we can talk
18 about, but plastic bags, that's just a
19 misnomer [sic] that it doesn't go away or
20 that it doesn't decompose; it does.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: How long?

22 MS. JACKSON: Again, we
23 could -- it's not -- it's not the
24 thousands of years you hear.

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: How long,

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2 hundreds?

3 MS. JACKSON: No. It's three
4 years tops.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Three
6 years?

7 MS. JACKSON: Three years.

8 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: A plastic
9 bag will biodegrade in three years?

10 MS. JACKSON: (Indiscernible.)
11 But just like the paper bag, it has to be
12 the right conditions as well.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Has to
14 what?

15 MS. JACKSON: Have the right
16 conditions to decompose.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Well, what
18 are the right conditions?

19 MS. JACKSON: I mean, you know,
20 appropriate sunlight and circumstances
21 like that for it to decompose.

22 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I guess
23 I'm a little bit frustrated about this
24 whole thing 'cause --

25 MS. JACKSON: And I understand

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2 that.

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: -- hearing
4 the same thing for two years.

5 MS. JACKSON: Well --

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And your
7 last -- towards the end of your
8 statement, you mentioned something that's
9 unfortunate, that the City of
10 Philadelphia does not have a facility
11 to -- what was that about?

12 MS. JACKSON: For composting.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And it's
14 the City's fault?

15 MS. JACKSON: I'm not saying
16 it's the City's fault.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Well, no,
18 you said it's unfortunate.

19 MS. JACKSON: It's unfortunate
20 because that's a requirement in this
21 bill, that compostable bags be allowed
22 for -- there's an option to the plastic
23 bag. There needs to be a facility to
24 accommodate those bags; otherwise, they
25 just go right into the waste stream.

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2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: All right.

3 I'm --

4 MS. JACKSON: That's the point.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I hear
6 you.

7 Again, I don't want to belabor
8 the record. As Councilman Kenney said,
9 the Chairman said earlier, we've already
10 had this testimony.

11 I just want to close by saying
12 that for me, this has always been an
13 issue of trash and about the environment.
14 And if the City of Philadelphia, under
15 this administration, has been making
16 claims that we are going to be the
17 greenest city in the country, I don't see
18 how we will ever accomplish that if we do
19 not address the issue of plastic bags,
20 plastic bottles, and other types of
21 material that end up in our streets, in
22 our sewers, in our rivers, and just
23 causing major environmental problems for
24 us. I don't know how we get to that
25 goal.

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2 And that may not be your
3 problem, but that's something I think
4 that we need to address.

5 MS. JACKSON: No, I too -- go
6 ahead.

7 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And one
8 other point, and I'll end.

9 The last hearing we had, I
10 think it was the gentleman behind you --
11 it may have been him, I don't remember
12 his name -- who has a company that
13 manufactures plastic bags. I had
14 suggested that maybe through your
15 lobbyists maybe spending a little more
16 time in Washington than in the halls of
17 City Hall in Philadelphia, talking to the
18 Obama Administration about stimulus money
19 that might be able to be used to set up
20 facilities to deal with the issue of
21 recycling plastic and turning 'em into
22 other products. I don't know if that's
23 been done. I haven't heard anything from
24 anyone.

25 But there's a lot of time

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2 that's been spent by lobbyists in this
3 building, but I don't know much time, if
4 any, has been spent in Washington to
5 address this issue. You have an
6 administration in Washington who's
7 extremely environmentally-friendly, not
8 like the last administration that was in
9 Washington.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

12 Before I recognize
13 Councilmember Brown, just one question
14 relative to recycling.

15 Over the last five years, what
16 has been the increase in plastic bag
17 production year by year?

18 MS. JACKSON: I don't have
19 that, the year-by-year production?

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Has it gone
21 up or gone down?

22 MS. JACKSON: It's -- it's -- I
23 think over that period, it has been about
24 the same; it's been steady.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So where's

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2 the recycling effort, where's the
3 recycling effects? If we're producing as
4 many or more bags we do the year before
5 over the past five years, how has
6 recycling impacted plastic bag production
7 if it's being -- are you including
8 recycled material also in this?

9 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is there
11 some way you could find that information
12 out.

13 MS. JACKSON: Sure, but again,
14 I mean, there were 830 million pounds of
15 this material recycled in 2010. It is
16 recycled.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And how
18 much has been produced in 2010?

19 MS. JACKSON: As I said, it's
20 probably about -- it's been steady at
21 about 80 billion.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And what
23 percentage of that is recycled material?

24 MS. JACKSON: Of bags only?

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Yes.

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2 MS. JACKSON: About 8 percent.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

4 MS. JACKSON: But, again,
5 another point that needs to be made
6 that's often overlooked when you're
7 talking about recycling of these bags:
8 92 percent of these bags are reused in
9 the household. You have to have that
10 material available to recycle it.

11 If most people are reusing it
12 for trashcan liners, pet pickup, and
13 other uses, it's not available to
14 recycle. Those bags that are not being
15 reused, those are the bags we're
16 encouraging people to recycle at their
17 stores because that is the best way to
18 get a clean stream of this material.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So if it's
20 a trashcan liner, it's likely going in a
21 landfill.

22 MS. JACKSON: Yes.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay. In
24 my own home, I use a paper liner.

25 MS. JACKSON: Well, I mean,

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2 that's fine, but my point is, the bag has
3 a second life after shopping; it is being
4 used and avoids having to purchase
5 another bag for that purpose.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

7 Councilmember Brown.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good

9 morning.

10 You stated in your opening
11 commentary that Progressive Bag
12 Affiliates is committed to the intent of
13 this bill, and then you proceeded to cite
14 various provisions of the bill and spoke
15 to unintended cons -- unintentional
16 consequences.

17 So then, tell me, what are you
18 committed to?

19 MS. JACKSON: As I said, the
20 commitment is to reduce bag waste; that's
21 the intent of the bill, to reduce litter,
22 to reduce waste associated with bags.

23 And as I testified before, we
24 have been working with communities
25 throughout this country on efforts to

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2 increase recycling and partnership with
3 retailers and partnership with City
4 government.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay, if
6 you could just stop right there.

7 MS. JACKSON: Yeah.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Cite
9 specific strategies that you're using
10 across the country with retailers and
11 others.

12 MS. JACKSON: Okay. What we're
13 using is a reduce-reuse-recycle approach.
14 Austin is a good example, where the
15 retailers, the industry, the
16 environmentalists, the government got
17 together and came up with a plan. The
18 plan is to reduce the amount of bags that
19 are given out at stores through proper
20 bagging practices so there's not excess
21 and wasteful bagging.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And those
23 three constituencies again were
24 government...

25 MS. JACKSON: Government,

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2 retailers, environmentalists. That was
3 the stakeholders group.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

5 MS. JACKSON: And then another
6 component of that is the reuse component,
7 which they did work to promote reusable
8 bags as another option.

9 And then the third component
10 was to recycling -- through recycling
11 education. The retailers worked to
12 promote the recycling in their stores of
13 plastic bags through public education
14 efforts, and the recycling increased as a
15 result of that.

16 That's just one example. We
17 can --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

19 Elaborate on the education piece, because
20 that is a factor that I am deeply
21 concerned about.

22 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Speak to
24 that in greater detail.

25 MS. JACKSON: In terms of what

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2 that involves?

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What
4 education --

5 MS. JACKSON: That involves,
6 you know, signage at the stores, bins at
7 the stores that say, you know, these are
8 the types of materials that are accepted
9 for recycling here.

10 That also involves their
11 checkout people having things to say
12 like, "You can recycle this bag. We have
13 bins in the store to do that." Their
14 checkers are saying often reminders that,
15 again, "Don't forget to recycle your
16 plastic bags."

17 'Cause what we're finding out
18 is that a lot of people don't realize
19 that these bags are recycled. Once you
20 educate them that, one, they are
21 recyclable and, two, where to do it,
22 people are more than willing to
23 participate; at least that was what we
24 found out in that example.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Who

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2 assumes the cost for all of what you just
3 spoke about? Who picked up the tab for
4 that whole education component?

5 MS. JACKSON: It's primarily
6 the retailers.

7 The PBA does have signage and
8 whatnot that they can provide and they
9 can help them with to show them the
10 proper materials that should be in those
11 bins, so we did provide that signage, but
12 they put it up and they displayed it and
13 they encouraged their customers to
14 recycle the bags.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And what
16 would prohibit you from executing those
17 same strategies should this bill, in
18 fact, become law?

19 MS. JACKSON: I mean, nothing.
20 As I said, we need partners to do this,
21 we need retailers who are willing to say:
22 Yes, we will promote that in our stores;
23 yes, we will use your signage; yes, we
24 will encourage, right along with
25 promotions of reusable bags, promotion of

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2 recycling.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Is that
4 not a leadership opportunity for the
5 Progressive Bag Affiliates?

6 MS. JACKSON: Yes, it is. And
7 that's something, again, that we are
8 reaching out to retailers to do, but it's
9 going to require their participation in
10 that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
12 doing that now currently in the county,
13 in Philadelphia County?

14 MS. JACKSON: In the City, yes,
15 we have reached out to some stores to do
16 just that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Such
18 as...?

19 MS. JACKSON: That's why I
20 wanted to know the stores who have
21 stopped providing those kinds of
22 recycling opportunities.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Stores
24 such as...?

25 MS. JACKSON: ShopRite and, um,

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2 I'm sorry I don't have the list here; it
3 was in the white paper, and I'm sure you
4 all got a copy, but there's a list of the
5 stores here that are promoting recycling
6 of plastic bags, and those are the stores
7 that we're working with.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How old is
9 that initiative?

10 MS. JACKSON: It's been going
11 on over the past year.

12 And we fully acknowledge that
13 there's more that needs to be done with
14 that. I mean, it's in its infancy, it's
15 new.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Mm-hmm.

17 MS. JACKSON: There's more that
18 needs to be done and more that we want to
19 do to help (indiscernible) --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Such as
21 what?

22 MS. JACKSON: Welcome more
23 stores, bring more stores into this
24 effort. You know, encourage more of them
25 to use the signage, to have the education

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2 as part of their promotion of reusable
3 bags.

4 So -- and, again, it requires
5 the stores as partners in the effort. If
6 they don't, you know, adopt that attitude
7 or pick up on that policy, then you just
8 have bins without no guidance as to what
9 to do with them. It will affect the
10 stream. In fact, people will put
11 anything in the bins and contaminate a
12 potential recycling stream.

13 So we need willing partners to
14 in that education effort.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
16 for your testimony.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

19 Before Councilmember Jones,
20 just anecdotally, I mean, I was in a
21 retail drug store last week, and the
22 clerk tried to put my box of Tic Tacs in
23 a plastic bag.

24 So, I mean, the public
25 education has a long way to go, 'cause --

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2 MS. JACKSON: I agree.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: -- I mean,
4 I said, "I don't need the bag," and he's,
5 like, you know, trying to put the --

6 MS. JACKSON: And we support
7 that.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I
9 understand that.

10 MS. JACKSON: That's wasteful
11 bagging, and we don't support that.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: All right,
13 I understand. Thank you.

14 Councilmember Jones.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 I can't tell you how frustrated
18 some of my colleagues here are with the
19 lack of progress that has been made by
20 way of the plastic bag industry, whether
21 it's the retailers' fault, whether it's
22 the manufacturers' fault, whoever's fault
23 it is.

24 The unintended consequences
25 that there are Councilpeople up here that

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2 walk through districts that are looking
3 at tumbleweeds rolling down the street
4 and are becoming increasingly more
5 frustrated as we start to try to reduce
6 our burden of cleaning this city through
7 a more sensible approach to dealing with
8 the plastic bag situation.

9 Having said that, because I
10 have to hear these guys who are kicking
11 me under the table about my position and
12 some of the considerations that I have as
13 a District Councilperson. Having said
14 that, a couple of quick questions:

15 If, in fact, this bill was
16 passed with a timetable of something in
17 the neighborhood of two to three years,
18 would that be more acceptable, with a
19 review annually as to the progress of the
20 industry in recycling and things like
21 that?

22 I'm just trying to get some
23 feedback as to, would that be less
24 onerous to our ability to move towards
25 degradability, biodegradable plastic, to

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2 move towards a sound recycling process?

3 Would that be a little more palatable?

4 MS. JACKSON: I'm not clear on
5 what you're proposing. A ban on bags?

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: For example,
7 if, in fact, there was a 2 percent
8 redeeming rate for plastic recycling as
9 an incentive to recycle plastic, is that
10 something that would be --

11 MS. JACKSON: So you're saying
12 the retailers would provide a financial
13 incentive --

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Whether it's
15 the retailers or the manufactures, a
16 2 percent stamp on return of plastic
17 bags; is that something that would
18 incentivize people to recycle?

19 MS. JACKSON: In terms of the
20 industry, I mean, there are various
21 incentives that we can put forward or we
22 can consider for recycling.

23 Right now, we're finding that
24 public education and aggressive public
25 education works in other areas to

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2 increase recycling.

3 There are retailers providing
4 incentives, rebates. If you bring your
5 reusable bag back or if you bring your
6 plastic bags back for recycling, they do
7 -- they do provide certain incentives for
8 their customers.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: And back to
10 that frustration, and I don't want I
11 don't mean to interrupt you, but I can go
12 through major parts of my district where
13 you won't see any recycling effort on
14 plastic bags at all.

15 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: So that
17 frustration that they feel is that it's
18 not moving quick enough, we are not
19 making progress.

20 And I'm asking you: If we were
21 to, as a body, say that a 2 percent -- a
22 2-cent, not 2 percent, a 2-cent return on
23 bags --

24 MS. JACKSON: For like a bottle
25 deposit --

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

3 MS. JACKSON: -- type --

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's
5 correct.

6 MS. JACKSON: -- approach?

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

8 MS. JACKSON: I mean, we're
9 open to incentives. We'd have to -- you
10 know, again, I'm not sure how that would
11 work --

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

13 MS. JACKSON: -- because you
14 have collection issues around -- I mean,
15 just like with the bottle issue, you
16 know, again, that's something that the
17 retailers would have to --

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.
19 That's my first question.

20 My second question is: If, in
21 fact, they ban it, if it were three
22 years, with the idea towards annually
23 evaluating where those recycling
24 efforts -- what progress we've made,
25 would that be something that was more

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2 obtainable or more palatable to folk to
3 try to get their act together, if you
4 would, by way of recycling?

5 MS. JACKSON: So you're a
6 saying a limited ban --

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: No --

8 MS. JACKSON: -- or --

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: A ban but
10 with a implementation date sometime in
11 the near future if we did not make
12 progress --

13 MS. JACKSON: Oh, on the
14 recycling.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Point of
17 information, Mr. Chairman.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Yes. Go
19 ahead.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To use
22 that time for some of the strategies --

23 (Indiscernible; parties talking
24 over each other.)

25 MS. JACKSON: For efforts to

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2 increase recycling.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Exactly.

4 MS. JACKSON: Yeah, I see what
5 you're saying, I see what you're saying.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I mean,
7 that's 36 months. I mean --

8 MS. JACKSON: I mean --

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Why is
10 that --

11 MS. JACKSON: I'm not saying
12 that there couldn't be progress at that
13 time. The pilot that Austin did, they
14 achieved results in 18 months.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: So 36 would
16 be even more time.

17 MS. JACKSON: But it would have
18 to be something that would have to --
19 because, again, they -- well, I didn't --

20 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Point of
21 order, point of order.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: The sponsor
23 has a point of order.

24 Councilman DiCicco.

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Point of

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2 order.

3 They've had two years, which is
4 24 months. The bill gives them another
5 12. There's their 36.

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Point of
7 information.

8 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I'm not
9 trying to be sarcastic, but this has been
10 going on for two years, and we're still
11 talking about the same things that we
12 talked about two years ago.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Point of
14 information.

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And not a
16 thing has changed.

17 MS. JACKSON: Well, again --

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Why do we
19 have to reinvent the wheel here? We have
20 a recycling program in the City of
21 Philadelphia. We should start by --

22 You know, I thought I did
23 something wrong when I put a plastic bag
24 in my recycling container. I took it
25 back out and put it in the trash

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2 container.

3 I think we need to educate --
4 start with what we already have --

5 MS. JACKSON: Well --

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: -- and have
7 the Streets Department communicate to the
8 residents that it's appropriate to put a
9 plastic bag in a recycling bucket.

10 MS. JACKSON: And that's
11 perfectly reasonable and certainly
12 something that we could get behind.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well --

14 (Indiscernible; parties talking
15 over each other.)

16 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And in 36
17 months, we'll have the same conversation.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But then,
19 again, if you didn't have them at all --

20 MS. JACKSON: Well --

21 (Indiscernible; parties talking
22 over each other.)

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: -- you
24 wouldn't have to worry about anything
25 about recycling or composting; they

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2 wouldn't be in the City.

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Right.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It would be
5 one less thing they have to deal with.

6 Councilmember Miller?

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Oh, I'm
8 sorry, Councilman.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seniority.

10 I just wanted to get a sense of
11 what alternatives we have. This is a --
12 this has, as you said, unintended
13 consequence.

14 MS. JACKSON: Yes, it does.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: I think that
16 was your phrase.

17 MS. JACKSON: Yes.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: I had a
19 opportunity to go to several grocery
20 stores since we had our last hearing, and
21 what I noticed was people putting food
22 back on the shelves based on a recession.

23 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: So as I
25 looked at other things that are going on

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2 and other options and we talking about 25
3 cents and a 1 percent sales tax increase
4 at the state level, consumers are making
5 choices of whether or not to be good
6 citizens, to recycle, or whether to take
7 the hit in their pockets.

8 So I'm looking at every option
9 there is to achieve the goal of recycling
10 without providing an onerous kind of
11 burden financially on poor people in the
12 City of Philadelphia. So that's where
13 I'm at.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 MS. JACKSON: Appreciate it.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY:

17 Councilmember Miller.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay,
19 thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 Miss Jackson, I just want to
21 get clarity on how many states or cities
22 in the country are moving towards this
23 type of legislation.

24 MS. JACKSON: In terms of
25 recycling?

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: On a ban.

3 MS. JACKSON: On a ban?

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes.

5 MS. JACKSON: There are
6 countless jurisdictions, local
7 jurisdictions, that are considering bans,
8 but the vast majority have not decided to
9 go that route.

10 There are a handful cities in
11 California that have actually banned
12 plastic bags, and that occurred last
13 year, but, as I said, it's a handful.

14 This has been considered for
15 the past couple of years throughout the
16 country in many jurisdictions. And most
17 of them have decided not to go the ban
18 route.

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Well,
20 maybe a ban with a fee. You know, you
21 can use the bag but charge a fee.

22 MS. JACKSON: The fee is even
23 less popular.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.
25 How many countries? Are there any other

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2 countries?

3 MS. JACKSON: There are a
4 number of countries that have put in
5 place policies outside of this country to
6 either ban or impose a tax on bags.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. In
8 the manufacturing industry, the industry
9 that manufactures these bags, are any of
10 them moving towards not using the bags
11 that we're accustomed to seeing and
12 moving more into a biodegradable bag?

13 MS. JACKSON: Among our
14 manufacturers, they have looked at that
15 issue. There have been some issues
16 identified with that. And, you know, I
17 can only speak for the PBA.

18 Again, it's something they have
19 considered, but it's not something
20 they're embracing. You have to realize,
21 when you have -- when you change the
22 material like that and you recycle it,
23 that will affect the ability of it to be
24 a recyclable product.

25 And one of our manufacturers, a

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2 major recycler of these bags, back into
3 bags themselves and back into other
4 products. So if, you know, if you have
5 that particular component to it, it's
6 going to affect the recyclability of that
7 bag.

8 It's something that is being
9 looked at by our members that's not
10 something that's used.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay,
12 because it seems to me that this country
13 is moving more and more to being green,
14 more and more to get people to recycle
15 and to use recyclable goods. And I would
16 think that the industry would be changing
17 with how the country and how the people
18 are changing.

19 MS. JACKSON: It -- I mean,
20 we're -- we still see recycling as a
21 viable option, so that's why industry is
22 moving in that direction and doing things
23 to enhance that. That's what we see as a
24 more viable option as opposed to the
25 biodegradability of a bag.

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2 And not to say to say that
3 that's not an option to consider; just
4 saying that we're finding that recycling
5 is a better option.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay,
7 because I think more and more people are
8 becoming more and more conscious of this.
9 Sure, education, of course, is key.

10 I've even noticed it in
11 watching TV. I saw a commercial, and
12 this company has been, of course, having
13 commercials for years on TV, but now I
14 notice that they've changed the bag.
15 It's a commercial of people purchasing
16 something from a store, and now it looks
17 like they've changed the bag -- well,
18 they have changed the bag that they
19 normally showed in the commercial a few
20 years ago.

21 And so it seems to me that more
22 and more people are becoming, you know,
23 more and more aware and actually visually
24 showing the changes on TV.

25 And so, I would think, though,

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2 that, you know, the companies would be
3 repositioning themselves so that they
4 can, you know, survive if --

5 And I know that everybody's not
6 going to change at once, but I think if
7 there's a big movement to change this,
8 the -- and I'm glad that you did mention
9 that the when the supermarkets and other
10 stores talk about recycling the bags, and
11 my question, I was sitting here thinking,
12 Well, what happens when you put the bags
13 in those bins, what happens then? What's
14 the next step? Do they actually do
15 anything with the bags?

16 Sure, I'm familiar with those
17 incentives where they ask you to bring
18 the bag back in, and I think you get two
19 cents off when you use a recycled bag for
20 your groceries. But other than that, I
21 was wondering what actually are the
22 companies doing with the bags that are
23 placed in the bins?

24 MS. JACKSON: I mean, the bags
25 are -- there's a system put in place

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2 where the bags are picked up by a hauler
3 and taken either to a storage facility
4 where they are compacted, and then that
5 is picked up by another company. Right
6 now, the largest recycler of these bags
7 is Trex; they make outdoor decking and
8 construction materials, and they take
9 that material back and they use it in the
10 manufacturer of their product.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

12 MS. JACKSON: And, you know, in
13 terms of the innovations you're talking
14 about on the bags, one of the innovations
15 that the PBA has just announced and
16 launched is to increase the recycled
17 content in their bags. It's a brand-new
18 initiative, and the goal is to increase
19 it by 40 percent, 40 percent recycled
20 content, by 2015.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

22 All right. Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY:

25 Councilmember Rizzo.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Again, I
3 want to repeat that I don't think that
4 we've communicated well enough in-house
5 to our constituents that the plastic bag
6 is something that can be put into the
7 recycling container that's collected by
8 the City.

9 And, again, the reuse of the
10 bag, I think, is significant.

11 The -- I think the convenience
12 of having a plastic bag, especially for
13 an impromptu stop at a convenience store
14 or a drugstore to pick up a couple of
15 items, you don't have a reusable bag with
16 you. It's -- to me, it would not be
17 something that I would be supportive of,
18 eliminating the plastic bag.

19 But I have a couple questions.
20 What would be the unintended consequence?
21 I recently shopped in, I think it's,
22 Whole Foods, that when I checked out,
23 they gave me a paper bag. I don't even
24 think I saw a plastic bag in the store.

25 What is the unintended

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2 consequence of switching to paper? And
3 if that was a alternative, would it be
4 recycled?

5 And I know you don't represent
6 the paper industry, but do you have
7 any -- I'm sure that you're prepared to
8 discuss what the unintended consequence
9 would be to give me a paper bag.

10 I -- you know, really, I don't
11 care if it's paper, if it's plastic. All
12 I know is, I don't want to walk down the
13 street with a toot brush in one hand and
14 a bottle of shampoo in the other; I want
15 to something to put it in. And I'm not
16 going to carry a reusable bag with me all
17 the time in the event I want to stop at a
18 store.

19 So what would -- do you have
20 any -- does your industry know what the
21 unintended consequence would be to switch
22 to paper bags? Would it raise the price
23 that you pay at the store? I'm sure
24 you're prepared to --

25 MS. JACKSON: Well, again, I go

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2 back to the San Francisco example, where
3 they banned plastic bags, so the only bag
4 that was available was paper bags, and
5 one of the results of that, one of the
6 consequences is, there was excess use of
7 paper, there was more litter of paper
8 bags than there was of plastic bags, you
9 know, following the ban, and that
10 resulted in excess packaging from the
11 paper bag, because that plastic bag is a
12 much more durable bag.

13 So the consequences there
14 showed there was more excess bagging and
15 an increase in litter following the
16 result of that ban on plastic only
17 initiative.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So what is
19 the resistance? I mean, I could be
20 supportive of a bag that degrades within
21 a few years in a landfill versus one that
22 might take three, five, six, eight years.

23 What is the hesitancy to move
24 to a plastic bag to avoid a ban, to avoid
25 a charge, that would satisfy the mission

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2 of the ordinance of the bill to go to a
3 product that would degrade quicker?

4 MS. JACKSON: Well, in terms of
5 degrading in a landfill, the -- that's
6 not the issue because most things that go
7 in a landfill, they're designed for
8 nothing to biodegrade. Nothing
9 biodegrades in a landfill, in a properly
10 designed landfill; they're not designed
11 that way -- not paper, not plastic, not
12 anything. That's just the way they're
13 designed.

14 The issue you're talking about
15 with biodegradability has a concern with
16 the environment, with it being left out
17 in the environment as litter and how long
18 it takes to degrade once it's out of that
19 environment.

20 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well --

21 MS. JACKSON: And, as I said,
22 that's something that the industry looks
23 at that's considered, but it's not
24 something that's embraced as a kind of
25 solution to the issue.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So then,
3 based just on that point, what is the
4 resistance in going to a bag that would
5 degrade that is on a vacant lot?

6 I mean, I've picked up plastic
7 bags at the curb near my home. And, you
8 know, they've deteriorated every quickly.
9 I lifted it up, there was water, it
10 broke, so it was starting to deteriorate
11 right there in the street.

12 So I don't understand what the
13 resistance is; is it more cost?

14 MS. JACKSON: Again, it's an
15 option that (indiscernible), that the
16 issue that we're trying to get at is, it
17 shouldn't be littered in the first place.
18 We're trying to put in practice things
19 that will discourage people from
20 littering in the first place.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Point of
22 information. What exactly are you doing
23 to discourage people from littering?
24 Tell me what --

25 MS. JACKSON: We --

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Tell me
3 what -- look, I don't want to continue to
4 argue this thing because -- and I'm sorry
5 to interrupt, but what have you done,
6 what has this industry done to keep
7 people or to educate people from
8 littering?

9 Because the reason we're here
10 is because the stuff is all over the
11 place: It's in the street, it's in the
12 trees, it's in the river. There's an
13 island in the Pacific twice the size of
14 Texas. And that's why we're here.

15 And so if you guys aren't going
16 to incentivize people or educate people
17 to recycle or not to litter, what is it
18 you're doing? 'cause I don't see it. All
19 I see is what I trip over the curb or
20 what's hanging out of every tree in my
21 neighborhood.

22 MS. JACKSON: We are doing
23 things. We are working with Keep
24 Philadelphia Beautiful. We are putting
25 programs in place to discourage people

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2 from littering. We work with these types
3 of groups all over the --

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Well, it's
5 not working, I'll tell you.

6 MS. JACKSON: Well --

7 (Indiscernible; parties talking
8 over each other.)

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
10 Rizzo? I'm sorry.

11 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: No problem.

12 MS. JACKSON: -- we're just
13 starting to work with that group --

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's been
15 two years.

16 MS. JACKSON: -- a litter
17 prevention program.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's been
19 two years. Don't tell me it's started to
20 be working --

21 MS. JACKSON: No. We're
22 starting on --

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We've been
24 talking about it for two years.

25 MS. JACKSON: -- litter

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2 prevention programs. We have been
3 working with them and the other groups
4 here on recycling, and the recycling is
5 occurring in places in the City.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Then why is
7 it still in my street and in my trees?

8 MS. JACKSON: Well --

9 (Indiscernible; parties talking
10 over each other.)

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Why is it
12 still in my river?

13 MS. JACKSON: Obviously,
14 there's more --

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Why does
16 the City of Philadelphia have to buy a
17 piece of equipment to skim the river to
18 get them out of there?

19 MS. JACKSON: 'Cause,
20 obviously, there's more that needs to be
21 done.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Like
23 banning it.

24 Councilman Rizzo?

25 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: The --

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2 MS. JACKSON: That's not what
3 we're for.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Again, I
5 think that an alternative and the
6 educational piece. Maybe the retail
7 outlets like the Wawas or the CVS's or
8 the others honestly need to maybe have
9 signage or a pamphlet that they put
10 inside the bag; maybe some people will
11 read it and it will have an effect on
12 some, a statement that the bag can be put
13 into the recycling bucket.

14 MS. JACKSON: Absolutely.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I agree
16 there needs to be more done, but I think
17 the convenience of having a receptacle to
18 carry your purchases home at the outlet
19 is so important, whether it be paper,
20 whether it be plastic.

21 So I don't understand why Whole
22 Foods can replace the plastic bag with a
23 paper one; it didn't matter to me. All I
24 know is, I had one in each hand and I was
25 on my way.

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2 So, these degradable bags, are
3 they as strong? I noticed that the
4 quality of some of the bags, the handles
5 break on them when you only -- when you
6 just put a few items on them.

7 What is the hesitancy to making
8 a switch to a plastic that is more
9 degradable, for lack of, you know, the
10 proper terms here? I don't know what a
11 whole lot about this issue, but what is
12 the hesitancy in making the shift to a
13 material that is more forgiving to the
14 environment?

15 MS. JACKSON: Part of the issue
16 will come down to the integrity of the
17 bag. It's made, it's designed for its
18 strength and light weight. So the more
19 you add to the bag that will allow it to
20 break down, that's going to affect the
21 strength of that product.

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So that's
23 the reason that it isn't --

24 MS. JACKSON: That's the
25 problem --

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: -- as strong

3 as --

4 (Indiscernible; parties talking
5 over each other.)

6 MS. JACKSON: That's part of
7 it, yes. When you add something to that
8 product to make it break down, you're
9 affecting the strength of that product.

10 So I'm saying that that is
11 something that the industry is looking
12 at, that is something that the industry
13 is working on, but it's not there as the
14 solution.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, they
16 should get with it because, you know, if
17 one city, Philadelphia, the next bans the
18 product, you know, it's going to be very
19 hurtful to the industry.

20 MS. JACKSON: Well, again, as I
21 say, recycling is still an option that
22 we're pursuing, because, in other cities,
23 it's working.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
3 very much.

4 I would like to have the
5 Administration to at least come up and
6 explain -- talk a little bit about
7 quickly the issue relative to plastic bag
8 recycling and why it's not in the bin
9 now.

10 (Witness comes forward.)

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
12 identify yourself for the record.

13 MS. MILLER: Good morning. My
14 name is Suzanne B. Miller, and I work
15 with the Mayor's Office of
16 Sustainability.

17 Currently, I think City Council
18 knows, the Administration, the Streets
19 Department introduced curbside recycling,
20 weekly curbside recycling, in every
21 neighborhood this past January.

22 However, the only plastics that
23 are currently able to be recycled in
24 those recycling bins are those labeled
25 "1" and "2."

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2 It's a little complicated, but
3 there are sort of different types of
4 plastic, if you will. And, currently,
5 the City will only pick up those labeled
6 "1" and "2."

7 So plastic bags cannot be put
8 into the curbside recycling bins.

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Why?

10 MS. MILLER: It just -- it has
11 to do with the market for plastic
12 materials. Even now, the market for 1's
13 and 2's is a little weak. The market for
14 3's, 4's, 5's, 6's, and 7's is even
15 weaker just given how plastic needs to be
16 broken down and recycled into products.

17 So plastic bags, it's my
18 understanding that they're just even more
19 difficult to recycle. And the City,
20 therefore, it just doesn't pick them up.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay, thank
22 you.

23 Councilmember Brown.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: To the
25 Administration: The witness indicated in

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2 the body of her testimony, Miss Jackson
3 from Progressive Bag Affiliates, talked
4 about Austin?

5 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And how
7 eventually there had to be a stakeholders
8 group including government, retailers,
9 and environmentalists -- and I would
10 consumers so that we actually get a
11 consumer's perspective on this measure to
12 assist in defining how they would roll
13 out or how they did roll out the
14 educational piece, which I think is vital
15 anytime you're trying to change anybody's
16 behavior.

17 So could you simply speak to,
18 where do you see value in that? When
19 we're talking about growing a sustainable
20 city, it's not going to happen at the
21 snap of a finger; it really requires
22 changing thinking, which ultimately
23 changes behavior.

24 MS. JACKSON: Mm-hmm.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And it

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2 takes a minute.

3 So with that, could you just
4 speak to why that might be of value?

5 MS. MILLER: Well, I think
6 anytime you have an educational program
7 that encourages recycling and reuse of
8 materials, that's value.

9 I think, though -- I mean, with
10 all due respect, I think that there needs
11 to be a change, however, in the
12 industry's perspective as well.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: No doubt,
14 no doubt.

15 MS. MILLER: And speaking from
16 a personal issue here, you know, there's
17 a local supermarket in my neighborhood
18 that when you ask for paper, you can't
19 get it.

20 Now, to me, that's a problem
21 when -- you know, here I am a consumer
22 who wants to do the right thing and I've
23 forgotten my reusable bag that day and I
24 try to ask the supermarket to give me a
25 paper bag, and it's unavailable. So --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It takes a
3 long --

4 (Indiscernible; parties talking
5 over each other.)

6 MS. MILLER: I also think that,
7 you know, in some instances, legislation
8 of this nature can also get you educated
9 a lot more quickly.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Oh,
11 there's no doubt that it certainly serves
12 as an incentive in another way.

13 MS. MILLER: Certainly.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
15 very, very much.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
17 Rizzo.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Do you think
19 you could go back to whoever handles our
20 recycling and indicate that we want to
21 include the plastic bags into our
22 recycling?

23 The point being is, most people
24 that recycle use the plastic bag to load
25 it up with plastic bottles, take it to

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2 the -- carry it with four or five bottles
3 in it, and they throw it in the recycling
4 bin. The plastic bag's in there, so what
5 do they do; take it, out ignore it?

6 Why don't we see if we can't
7 get this included into our collection
8 process. I don't think that this is a
9 big deal to get that done.

10 MS. MILLER: Well, I -- I will
11 try to answer that question as best I
12 can, but I think the Streets Department
13 can probably address it more accurately.

14 My understanding, as I said
15 earlier, is that it's sort of the market
16 for those materials. So currently -- I
17 mean, let me back up a little bit.

18 The City used to be paid for
19 its recycling. Currently, the City pays
20 to have that recycling collected under a
21 contract that's renegotiated every six
22 months. We're still paying less for
23 recycled materials to haul those away
24 than we are for regular municipal trash,
25 so we're still saving money the more that

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2 people recycle.

3 Yet, again, it's really the
4 market for the 1's and 2's that is the
5 strongest. It would cost the City money
6 to collect the 3's, 4's, 5's, 6's, and
7 7's in those bags and get rid of them.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So what --

9 MS. MILLER: So it's -- let me
10 just finish.

11 It's less expensive now for the
12 City if people just put them in the
13 trash.

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So, when
15 Mr. So-and-So walks to the recycling
16 container with four plastic bottles all
17 in the plastic bag and he puts the
18 plastic bag and the milk bottle, the soda
19 bottle into the container, you're telling
20 me somebody goes and takes all of the
21 plastic bags out?

22 MS. MILLER: Yes.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, that's
24 kind of --

25 MS. MILLER: Well, that's -- I

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2 mean, again, it's education of the
3 consumer that they -- the Streets
4 Department clearly states that only 1's
5 and 2's can go into --

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: But --

7 MS. MILLER: -- the recycling
8 bin.

9 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: But -- but
10 we have to get with it and do what -- go
11 back to what people do. And I think many
12 people listening to this -- what I'm
13 saying here is, you know, I do that.

14 MS. MILLER: It --

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So we ought
16 to figure out a way --

17 MS. MILLER: The City --

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: We can't
19 solve a problem if the City isn't a part
20 of the solution.

21 MS. MILLER: I understand that.
22 The City is -- the Administration is
23 committed to, once the market has
24 rebounded, to collecting 3's, 4's, 5's,
25 6's, and 7's. But, again, plastic bags

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2 is a whole different type of thing.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I would bet
4 that nobody ever asked, I would bet.

5 MS. MILLER: Asked?

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: About
7 putting plastic bags in there, because I
8 can't see that that would really create a
9 issue for the people that collect our
10 recycling.

11 MS. MILLER: Well --

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I would like
13 to know when we asked that question. If
14 you could get back to the Chair with that
15 information, I'd appreciate it.

16 MS. MILLER: Sure. I could
17 speak to the Streets Department, but I do
18 understand that it's a different issue of
19 recycling plastic bags versus the 1's and
20 2's that are collected.

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: To the
22 industry, what number is a plastic bag?

23 MS. JACKSON: 2's and 4's.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: And we
25 collect 1 and 2?

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2 MS. MILLER: Mm-hmm.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Well, let's
4 change -- let's go to 2 and then we can
5 recycle it.

6 MS. JACKSON: Well, as I stated
7 earlier, the best way -- often curbside
8 is not the best way to get this material
9 because it's not clean material. And --
10 no, it's not. People will not -- they
11 will put things in the bag, the bag will
12 be dirty, then they'll put it in the
13 recycling bin.

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I'm talking
15 about clean bags.

16 MS. JACKSON: That's a part of
17 the difficulty, is to get clean bags
18 through that process. They're best
19 collected through the at-store collection
20 process. That's why we promote that as a
21 good, viable option.

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I think
23 dirty bags go in the normal trash. Most
24 people that put the coffee grinds in just
25 throw it into their trash.

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2 MS. JACKSON: Right, but I'm
3 just saying for that curbside system,
4 people tend to put contaminated bags in
5 that system.

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

7 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 very much.

10 Any other questions for this
11 witness?

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yeah, just
13 I need one final follow-up, Mr. Chairman.

14 Speaking again to the value of
15 the education component, is there
16 anything else we need to know, or should
17 know, that involves the stakeholders you
18 mentioned -- government, retailers, and
19 environmentalists that participated in
20 crafting the rollout of this measure in
21 Austin?

22 MS. JACKSON: I mean, again,
23 the key to that was that it was a
24 partnership. Everybody in that effort
25 was committed to that effort and to

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2 making it work, and that's why it worked.

3 They had the same goal, they wanted to
4 reduce the waste and the litter
5 associated with the bags. They took that
6 comprehensive approach.

7 And everybody played a role in
8 that. You know, the retailers played a
9 roll and stepped up to the education that
10 was needed to, you know, encourage people
11 to recycle those bags. And industry
12 stepped up in providing the signage and
13 the tools and what was needed to help
14 with that education effort.

15 The City has to promote, you
16 know, the recycling of bags --

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: The City
18 actually has already been in that
19 business for many, many years.

20 MS. JACKSON: Yeah, but I'm
21 saying that it should do more through
22 public service announcements and the like
23 just to further enhance the education
24 around that effort.

25 They stepped up, they made it a

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2 much more aggressive effort, and it
3 worked.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
5 for your testimony.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
8 Jones.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chairman.

11 One of the reasons why we have
12 these hearings is to hash out ideas,
13 exchange views, and one of the things I
14 was really looking to hear was a
15 proactive "how we're going to get it done
16 better in the future." The frustration
17 that my colleagues have is that we've
18 done all of this before and talked about
19 this before, and we're here again, with
20 very little, very little progress and
21 movement.

22 And what I hoped to have heard
23 today from the industry and from others
24 is how we kind of get to a place where we
25 get to a win/win scenario, where the City

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2 isn't -- the environment isn't suffering
3 from this.

4 And I really hear -- I hear
5 buzz words like "education" and
6 "recycling," but no action steps,
7 tangible action steps, in my opinion,
8 towards that. And that -- that concerns
9 me deeply.

10 MS. JACKSON: Well, again, we
11 need everyone involved in this
12 partnership and this effort. And until
13 we get that, it's kind of hard to move
14 forward with that.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
18 very much.

19 Any other questions for this
20 witness?

21 (No further questions.)

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Seeing
23 none -- I just want to make sure we
24 understand. We have a 10 o'clock Finance
25 Committee hearing, which is now overdue,

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2 as we speak, so I would ask any witnesses
3 to please do not give us testimony that
4 was given in the last hearings but to
5 give us new testimony, 'cause I also
6 understand that there may be an agreement
7 for an amendment to the legislation,
8 which is pending.

9 So Randy St. John and Rocco
10 D'Antonio, please.

11 (Witnesses come forward.)

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
13 identify yourself for the record and
14 proceed.

15 MR. D'ANTONIO: Good morning.
16 I'm Rocco D'Antonio.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Good
18 morning.

19 MR. D'ANTONIO: And I'm the
20 Business Development Manager for Penn
21 Jersey Paper, in Philadelphia.

22 MR. ST. JOHN: Randy St. John,
23 from the Pennsylvania Food Merchants
24 Association; we represent the grocery
25 stores and the convenience stores.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
3 proceed, whoever would like to go first.

4 MR. ST. JOHN: I passed on my
5 written testimony to you.

6 Perhaps I could start by
7 reacting to Councilmember Jones. We
8 would be very, very, very happy to meet
9 formally, informally, discuss all of the
10 ideas that have been brought forward
11 today. We're totally open to that.

12 We would be happy to join you
13 or any of the other members of the
14 Council and discuss any of the
15 suggestions that you or Mr. Rizzo have
16 raised today. So please know that we're
17 willing to do that at any moment.

18 We want to do what's best for
19 the City, the same way that you do. Our
20 members live here, the same way that you
21 do. And today's question concerns the
22 best way to bring things home from the
23 store, Mr. Rizzo your question.

24 When we consider all of the
25 alternatives, we still think that plastic

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2 is the best way to do it. It's
3 recyclable, each new bag is clean, it's
4 sanitary, plastic bags are cheaper and
5 more environmentally-friendly to produce
6 and transport than paper.

7 Let's consider what the
8 alternatives are:

9 Compostable bags. I think
10 we've covered that. We think that
11 there's a problem because there's not a
12 facility in Philadelphia to compost them.
13 If there were a facility here, we'd have
14 to address the question of how we're
15 going to get them from consumers to a
16 composting facility, and I think that's a
17 problem haven't really solved yet.

18 We think that reusable bags are
19 a good idea as long as they're kept clean
20 and sanitary, but I worry that reusable
21 bags aren't regularly cleaned, and they
22 have the possibility of contaminating
23 food that's brought home in them.

24 When you go to a grocery store,
25 the bagger puts the raw meat in one

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2 plastic bag and your fruits and
3 vegetables in another plastic bag for a
4 reason: Unpackaged foods like fruit can
5 easily be contaminated by being
6 co-mingled with potentially hazardous
7 foods like raw meat. When you put all of
8 these things together in a reusable bag,
9 there's a possibility of
10 cross-contamination.

11 We think that paper is harder
12 on the environment to produce and
13 transport than plastic, and the plastic
14 industry people have already addressed
15 that. Paper bags also leak, they tear
16 easily when wet, something that plastic
17 doesn't do.

18 But what's good about
19 plastic -- that it doesn't fall apart,
20 that it doesn't leak when it's wet -- is
21 also what's bad about plastic. When it's
22 littered, it persists, it blows around,
23 it becomes an eyesore.

24 So what are we going to do?
25 Are we going to ban plastic because its

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2 good qualities are also its bad qualities
3 when its littered? Or should we build
4 upon plastic recycling programs that are
5 already in place, develop stronger
6 programs to encourage more recycling and
7 develop better and more comprehensive
8 programs to prevent littering?

9 We think that when all of the
10 alternatives are considered, we should
11 stick with the plastic.

12 If we think that we're going to
13 do social engineering on Philadelphians
14 to change their behavior by the use of
15 penalties and incentives, then let's use
16 those techniques to encourage recycling
17 and prevent littering.

18 We think it's the most
19 effective to get people to get their
20 products home without contamination and
21 while causing the least amount of
22 environmental harm. So if we can
23 strengthen current plastic bag recycling
24 programs, add new programs to discourage
25 littering, we think that we have a

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2 realistic strategy to make Philadelphia a
3 better place for all of us to live.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
5 very much for your testimony.

6 Please identify yourself for
7 the record.

8 MR. D'ANTONIO: Rocco
9 D'Antonio, Business Development Manager
10 for Penn Jersey Paper in Philadelphia.
11 We're a supplier of plastic bags and
12 paper bags and reusable bags and also
13 compostable trashcan liners.

14 I just want to comment on some
15 of the things I heard this morning and
16 some of the comments that have come up.
17 One of them was, what if we went to
18 paper? Well, there's a lot of what-if's
19 of going to paper. One of 'em, quite
20 frankly, is, we make a lot more money.
21 Paper bags are excessively more expensive
22 than plastic. We work off margin, we
23 take more money to the bank as a company,
24 and that's going to be at the expense of
25 the supermarket industry and also the

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2 residents of Philadelphia.

3 And having said that, we're
4 still opposed to this type of
5 legislation.

6 But some of the other what-if's
7 are, we would have to increase our
8 warehouse space of plastic bags tenfold
9 to accommodate paper bags. Paper bags
10 take up ten times the amount of space, so
11 we would have a tenfold increase in our
12 warehouse space for paper bags,
13 subsequently ten times more trucking to
14 the stores, and subsequently ten times
15 more space in any given store to store
16 paper bags. And when you look at some of
17 these smaller convenience stores, trying
18 to find ten times the amount of space is
19 almost impossible.

20 So going to paper bags doesn't
21 make a whole lot of sense when you look
22 at all of the different pieces of the
23 puzzle that you need to evaluate to see
24 if it make sense to the City of
25 Philadelphia.

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2 Also, I heard time and time
3 again that people are not recycling
4 plastic bags and it stopped, or stores
5 have stopped. And I got to tell you that
6 is absolutely incorrect.

7 I'm the one that set up our
8 plastic bag recycling program with
9 independent supermarkets in Philadelphia
10 and South Jersey. We did it about two,
11 two-and-a-half years ago, and we had
12 nothing but increase in plastic bag
13 recycling per store on a month-to-month
14 basis.

15 Every month, our volume is
16 increasing. When we started this, we
17 were picking up plastic bags and also a
18 large volume of plastic stretch film from
19 the supermarkets.

20 In the beginning, we were
21 probably picking up about 75 percent
22 stretch film and 25 percent plastic bags.
23 Now, I can tell you, we're more like 65
24 to 70 percent plastic bags, the balance
25 being stretch film. Our volume has grown

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2 every single month per store -- not just
3 adding new stores, but the volume per
4 store has increased.

5 And I can put my finger on that
6 number any given store 'cause we collect
7 it, we process it, we weigh it, and we
8 ship the product off for reprocessing.

9 One of the questions was, where
10 do they plastic bags go? Well, we
11 partnered with Goodwill Industries of
12 Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey to
13 help us in the collection. We've
14 invested in bailers, vehicles. We're
15 employing disabled citizens in our
16 communities to help in the recycling
17 efforts.

18 We're collecting these bags
19 every day of the week in the City of
20 Philadelphia and bringing them back to
21 Good Will's facility, where we process
22 them, we clean out contaminates, we bail
23 'em up and we ship 'em out in
24 40,000-pound loads to go out and make
25 plastic lumber. And every month, my

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2 volume has increased.

3 So I don't know where these
4 comments of "we see this going away" come
5 from.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: South
7 Philadelphia.

8 MR. D'ANTONIO: My data proves
9 otherwise.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Well, I
11 take my plastic bags to my supermarket at
12 10th and Reed, and I can't recycle 'em
13 there, so that's one on your list you
14 need to add.

15 MR. D'ANTONIO: Well, I don't
16 know how you (indiscernible) that's one
17 of the stores I'm dealing with, but I've
18 had two locations in the past two years
19 that we've had issues with. One was --
20 it wasn't even a supermarket; it was a
21 bad place for us to put our bins, we had
22 nothing but contamination, and we have
23 stopped picking up there.

24 I had one supermarket that we
25 didn't get a whole lot of buy-in. That

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2 has since changed, they're back on our
3 program.

4 So cooperation from my
5 customers in the City of Philadelphia has
6 been strong and growing and continues to
7 grow.

8 And, again, I base that on
9 facts and figures and weights and
10 measures from picking up our plastic.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.
12 Thank you.

13 MR. D'ANTONIO: I also want to
14 comment on the concept of degradable bags
15 and compostable bags.

16 You know, when I hear the words
17 "recyclable" and "compostable" in the
18 same sentence regarding plastic bags, it
19 doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

20 Recyclable bags, obviously,
21 cannot be composted, and compostable bags
22 can't be recycled. And the fact that we
23 would talk about having compostable bags
24 in the City of Philadelphia doesn't make
25 a lot of sense because we have nowhere to

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2 even take these compostable bags.

3 They're about ten times more
4 expensive than plastic bags. They need
5 to be made three times heavier than
6 plastic bags to have the same strength.

7 But ultimately, when the
8 consumer gets home with that compostable
9 bag, there's absolutely nowhere to bring
10 it for processing. There's no commercial
11 composting facilities nearby, and compost
12 facilities do not accept the compostable
13 grocery bags because there's too highly a
14 chance of them being mixed with regular
15 plastic bags. So all of that extra cost
16 and extra material ends up going into a
17 landfill.

18 So it makes absolutely no sense
19 to even suggest using compostable bags
20 when you have no way to even process or
21 compost or do anything.

22 And by eliminating these
23 plastic bags altogether, you're going to
24 eliminate a successful recycling program
25 that we've already implemented. You

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2 eliminate the need -- the opportunity to
3 recycle your grocery bags, your stretch
4 film, your dry-cleaning bags, your
5 newspaper bags. All that goes away when
6 you get rid of plastic bags.

7 So I don't see where trying to
8 do something for the environment by
9 eliminating recycling and going to a
10 product that can't be composted, can't be
11 recycled, is increasingly more expensive,
12 and hasn't been proven longterm anywhere
13 in the United States makes a lot of sense
14 for the City of Philadelphia.

15 I also heard comments about,
16 you know, how do we do this better? where
17 do we go from here?

18 What we found is that education
19 and training, working with all the
20 stakeholders -- City government,
21 manufacturers, food industry,
22 nonprofits -- to educate everyone on the
23 benefits of using less and recycling more
24 has been by far the most effective way.

25 I mean, we're a small company.

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2 We deal in a very small part of the world
3 in Philadelphia, but we've been able to
4 educate our customers, which are the
5 supermarkets, and help them educate their
6 customers on how to use less plastic bags
7 and also less paper bags and less
8 packaging.

9 And we have seen a trend of
10 selling less plastic bags to our
11 customers, selling more reusable bags,
12 and seeing more reusable bags reused in
13 the store. And, again, we base that on
14 hard data, not just eyeballing what I see
15 at the supermarket checkout.

16 So we see progress and we feel
17 that cooperation with all of the
18 stakeholders on a comprehensive education
19 plan is more effective than thinking that
20 in passing a law, you're going to change
21 everyone's consumer behavior.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY:

24 Councilmember Brown.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

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2 very, very much.

3 Define "educate," because that
4 means different things to different
5 people. Discuss some mechanics of what
6 you do.

7 MR. D'ANTONIO: Well, we do
8 several things.

9 One is education for a
10 supermarket owner-operator. We want to
11 really understand the bags he's using,
12 how he's using them, how they're packing
13 'em, how many items per bag. We want to
14 quantify all of that data.

15 And what that tells us are two
16 things: A, do we have the right size bag
17 in the store, can we use a smaller bag
18 and use less plastic or a smaller paper
19 bag. And, number two, it gives us a
20 benchmark to see if our training works.

21 So we start with that data, and
22 then we train the cashiers on how to
23 effectively bag.

24 But that's only a fraction of
25 what we need to do. The real training

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2 and education is with the consumer 'cause
3 what we found, no matter how much we
4 train a cashier, it's the customer that
5 ultimately trains the cashier. I want my
6 meat in a separate bag. I'm 75 years old
7 and I can only carry five pounds and
8 can't put too much in my bag.

9 So it's an educational campaign
10 also for the consumer about the benefits
11 of reusing less and recycling more. And
12 we found that to be very, very effective.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How old is
14 the program?

15 MR. D'ANTONIO: We've been
16 doing it for about two years now.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And so,
18 define "progress." You said there's been
19 progress. How have you been able to
20 measure progress?

21 MR. D'ANTONIO: Well, we're
22 fortunate enough that, A, we sell the
23 bags to the stores, so we have data
24 showing how much we're selling.

25 Two, we work with the stores to

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2 look at their scanner data to see how
3 many reusable bags were reused or sold
4 and how many bags were returned, the
5 plastic bags reused. So we have that
6 data.

7 Three, I physically pick up
8 those plastic bags every single day in
9 supermarkets throughout the region, and
10 we weigh those bags.

11 So I have sound data that I can
12 measure: A, I'm selling less plastic
13 bags and less paper bags to the same
14 account that I did before. Two, they're
15 buying more reusable bags from me.

16 Three, more reusable bags are being
17 reused in the store. And, four, my
18 volume per store on plastic film and
19 plastic bags recovered has increased on
20 an ongoing basis for the past two years.

21 So I have data that supports my
22 claims that we've made progress.

23 Now, we still have a lot more
24 to do, we still want to do better
25 merchandising and marketing on our

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2 reusable bags, we still want to get more
3 information out there on what we're doing
4 with the recycling, where our plastic
5 bags go.

6 And we continue to do that and
7 we continue to be successful. And I'm
8 sure as we go forward, we're going to be
9 more successful.

10 You can't change consumer
11 behavior overnight. I mean, we've been
12 doing what we've been doing for 20, 30,
13 40 years. And passing a law isn't going
14 to change everybody's mindset. It does
15 take a little longer to educate, and it
16 is a little more frustrating, but we see
17 tangible evidence that the results of our
18 hard work have been paying off.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well,
20 where do agree is that it does take a
21 while to change behavior, as you've
22 stipulated. And you say your program is
23 two years old --

24 MR. D'ANTONIO: Correct.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- and

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2 you're beginning to see progress because
3 you've put in place some measures to make
4 it clear that we are going to change
5 behavior here.

6 MR. D'ANTONIO: Well, I didn't
7 say that we're beginning to see progress;
8 I said we've had significant progress
9 almost from the very beginning, and we
10 continue to see progress.

11 This isn't just starting to
12 happen for us now. Our volume of plastic
13 bag recycling has increased since the day
14 we started, it's been increasing since
15 the very beginning. This is not just
16 happening today.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You
18 support the value then, of having an
19 educational component.

20 MR. D'ANTONIO: I do.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
22 very much.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
24 very much.

25 Yes?

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2 MR. ST. JOHN: Mr. Kenney and
3 Mr. DiCicco, we understand how serious
4 you are about this and we understand how
5 frustrating this is for you. I know that
6 you want to see more progress than has
7 been made.

8 Please understand that we're
9 willing to come in and see you at anytime
10 to bounce any ideas off that you have for
11 strategies that are going to make things
12 better.

13 We don't want the City to be a
14 mess either. So we may disagree about
15 the right way to get to the goal. We
16 share the same goal. And, again, we're
17 willing to come in at anytime to see you
18 to discuss any ideas you want to talk
19 about.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
21 very much. Thank you.

22 Councilman Rizzo.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Does anyone
24 anywhere place a message on the bag?
25 Like if, you know, you go to the

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2 convenience store, the name of the
3 company is on the backside of the bag.

4 Could there be a message, you
5 know, like "Keep America Beautiful.
6 Recycle"? Is there anybody that does
7 that, and is that something that would
8 add significant cost to the bag, by
9 adding some print to it?

10 MR. D'ANTONIO: We actually
11 print that on most of our customers'
12 plastic bags. I think we should probably
13 just blanket statement and put it on
14 every bag.

15 But actually, you know, it's
16 quite a few, surprisingly.

17 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Bigger,
18 though.

19 MR. D'ANTONIO: We have a
20 limited space of print area, but we still
21 use as much of that bag as we can.

22 But, yes, people are doing it,
23 and we probably should be able to get
24 more people to get involved and do it
25 more.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: And bigger.

3 MR. D'ANTONIO: And bigger.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You know, as
5 big as the Wawa sign, you know, on the
6 other side.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 very much. Any other questions?

10 (No further questions.)

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

12 George Freiji, please.

13 Is Chalmers Company here?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is there
16 anybody from Chalmers Company here?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is Myrtle
19 McDaniels here? Would you please come
20 up, ma'am?

21 (Witnesses come forward.)

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
23 identify yourself for the record.

24 MR. FREIJI: Good morning. My
25 name is George Freiji. I work for Hilex

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2 Poly. I'm here this morning representing
3 the company and our Pennsylvania plant.

4 Just very quickly about Hilex,
5 and then I want to spend my time really
6 addressing some of the questions that all
7 of you brought up this morning.

8 At Hilex, we have nine
9 manufacturing facilities in the United
10 States. We support about 5,000 families,
11 about 600 family members in Pennsylvania,
12 in the Milesburg area, Central County.

13 In the last few years, we
14 invested \$20 million in a recycling
15 facility, and it's one of its kind in the
16 world; it's specifically designed for
17 plastic bags.

18 We teach, we preach, and we
19 practice the principles of reduce, reuse
20 and recycle. And I will address those
21 with you here in a few minutes, how we do
22 this.

23 We understand, again, the
24 intent of this bill, but we think it will
25 have negative consequences. And that was

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2 one of your questions, Mr. Rizzo, what
3 are the negative consequences? And I
4 will talk to that in a few minutes.

5 Let's start with that, some of
6 the negative consequences. What happens
7 if you ban plastic bags? What do you go
8 to? What's the alternative?

9 Compostable bags are flat-out
10 bad, just bad. The reason for that is,
11 you use twice the amount of plastic at
12 least, minimal, in a compostable bag than
13 you use in a regular bag to maintain the
14 strength.

15 And the most important thing
16 is, they are not recyclable. Not only
17 are they not recyclable, but you can't
18 put them with the recycling stream that
19 exists currently, 'cause then you can't
20 recycle anything.

21 So if I get a compostable bag
22 at home, then what do I do with it? You
23 cannot use it in your composting in your
24 back yard. What do I do with it? What
25 happens to it?

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2 Exactly. So it has to go to
3 specific sites, approved sites, in the
4 United States for it to be degraded.

5 Number two. Why waste the
6 resources that you have? You use this
7 plastic -- we said you going to use twice
8 as much as plastic to make it disappear.
9 While in regular plastic bags, we can
10 recapture those resources and reuse 'em
11 again through recycling.

12 Reusable bags, again, are made
13 out of plastic, most of them. Most of
14 them are made outside the United States,
15 and most of them are made in countries
16 who care less in most cases or have a lot
17 less stringent environmental laws than we
18 do. In essence, we would be shipping
19 jobs overseas if we go to reusable bags.

20 And there are some studies that
21 were published actually early this month
22 that discuss some of the health issues
23 with the reusable bags.

24 I think, Ms. Jones [sic], you
25 asked what happens with the bags when

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2 they end up in the recycling bins. We
3 collect those bags --

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: It's
5 Miss Miller.

6 MR. FREIJI: Oh, I'm sorry.

7 We collect those bags and then
8 we take them to our recycling facility,
9 and we recycle 'em and we put 'em back in
10 plastic bags.

11 Mr. Kenney, you asked if we
12 have reduced the amount of plastic bags.
13 I can talk about our company. We have
14 active programs that teach reduce, reuse,
15 and recycle. And how do we do it? We
16 train people in stores -- packers,
17 cashiers, change in general -- to use
18 more items per bag.

19 Let me give you an example. An
20 average of four items per bag typically
21 you see across the country. We teach 'em
22 to put six items per bag. If you put
23 (indiscernible) more item per bag, you
24 just reduced 25 percent of plastic bag
25 use. We do this all the time.

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2 If an item has a handle, don't
3 pack it. If you just buy a piece of gum
4 don't pack it. You know, those kind of
5 things.

6 Back to our recycling facility.
7 It's maxed out now. You hear people --
8 misinformation about bags are not
9 recyclable. We've maxed out our
10 recycling facilities and we are adding
11 more to be able to consume these -- the
12 bags that we get back.

13 A timetable. Mr. Brown [sic],
14 you asked about a timetable and about
15 taxing maybe perhaps 2 cents a bag. Any
16 tax on a bag, when it costs less than a
17 penny, when you tax it 2 cents, you're
18 taxing, you know, 200 percent more. You
19 pretty much banning it, you're pretty
20 much banning it. Anything you tax at 2,
21 3, 400 percent -- you know, initially it
22 was 25 cents -- well, you're basically
23 saying you just don't want it.

24 We invite you, I invite you, to
25 come to our Milesburg facility. It's 200

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2 miles from here. Look at the folks,
3 shake their hands, look 'em in the eye;
4 those are the people who will lose their
5 jobs eventually, will end up in China or
6 India or Vietnam.

7 And look at our facilities.
8 Look at the cleanliness of the
9 facilities. Look at our environment
10 around us in Center County. We're the
11 second-largest employer in Center County.

12 I don't understand, when our
13 recycling programs are working very well,
14 we're just launching into more and more
15 progress in that area. We come in and
16 just kill it.

17 I worked with the Secretary of
18 Labor, Sandy (indiscernible) for one year
19 on a plastic committee, trying to
20 increase, promote the plastic industry in
21 Pennsylvania. A bill like this will kill
22 everything we worked on. Pennsylvania,
23 Ohio, Indiana is one of the largest
24 manufacturers of plastic in the United
25 States.

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2 So our concern is, absolutely,
3 we invite you. We would love to sit with
4 you and discuss options rather -- I mean,
5 this is not a format really where you can
6 sit down and do problem-solving if you
7 want to discuss ideas and things of that
8 nature.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
10 very much for your testimony.

11 Please identify yourself for
12 the record.

13 MS. McDANIELS: My name is
14 Myrtle McDaniels, and I'm representing --
15 I'm a senior, a senior citizen.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Yes, ma'am.

17 MS. McDANIELS: And to
18 Mr. Kenney and the Council committee,
19 good morning.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Good
21 morning.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
23 morning.

24 MS. McDANIELS: Perhaps at an
25 alternation [sic] to the tax idea, the

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2 second bill consisted of we ban plastic
3 bags altogether. Instead of allowing
4 stores to provide stores a cheaper and
5 more convenient plastic bags, this bill
6 will require that stores use only paper
7 bags, bags that can be composed [sic] or
8 reused bags.

9 I am opposed to this bill, to
10 paper bags. And the other bags
11 mentioned -- composed and reusable
12 bags -- are almost as expensive as
13 plastic bags. This will increase our
14 cost to pass to the consumer by the store
15 owners, another cost to the consumer.

16 Paper bags are more neatly in
17 convention [sic] for the carrying of a
18 person. They don't always have handles
19 that we can carry from -- another cost
20 increase to the consumer. Paper bags are
21 not nearly as convenient for me to carry
22 by my purchasing. They don't always
23 leave -- have handles as many of the
24 plastic bags do. They are
25 (indiscernible) and bulky.

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2 I'm not sure why these bills
3 have been introduced, but maybe as to
4 contain littering. I do think that
5 littering is a problem, but I think the
6 that it's different ways to tackle this
7 problem.

8 Also, on my way here, I took a
9 look at the litter on the streets, and I
10 saw more paper and cigarettes on the
11 streets and sidewalks than I saw plastic
12 bags.

13 I think that litter is an issue
14 but to be tackled through education.
15 Perhaps have education about recycling
16 other kinds of trash, and they can be
17 educated about recycling and picking up
18 trash bags.

19 I reuse my trash bags. I
20 either take them back to the store or I
21 use them at home.

22 And I urge you to work with
23 your (indiscernible) that over plastic
24 bags when they are more important issues
25 in the City of Philadelphia that we can

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2 be tackling with.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
4 very much for your testimony.

5 Any questions for these
6 witnesses?

7 (No questions or comments.)

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 much.

10 Anyone else to testify on this
11 bill.

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Seeing
14 none, that will conclude our public
15 hearing on this bill, and we will now
16 conduct our public hearing.

17 The Chair recognizes
18 Councilmember DiCicco to offer an
19 amendment.

20 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 I move for the approval of the
23 amendment to Bill No. 090074. It's been
24 distributed to members of the committee.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Does anyone

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2 have any questions on the amendment?

3 (No questions.)

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
5 very much. It's been moved. Is there a
6 second?

7 (Motion duly seconded.)

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's been
9 moved and seconded.

10 All in favor, aye?

11 Any opposed?

12 Bill No. 090074 will be amended
13 accordingly.

14 The Chair recognizes
15 Councilmember Brown for a motion on the
16 amended Bill 090074.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:

18 Mr. Chairman, I move that Bill No. 090074
19 be moved out of committee, as amended,
20 with a favorable recommendation, and I
21 further move that the rules of Council be
22 suspended so as to permit first reading
23 at our next session.

24 (Motion duly seconded.)

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: All in

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2 favor?

3 Are there any opposed?

4 (None opposed.)

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Bill No.

6 090074, as amended, will be reported out

7 of this committee favorably, and a

8 request will be made for a rules

9 suspension to allow for first reading at

10 our next Council session.

11 Thank you for your patience.

12 The Finance Committee should be
13 getting started shortly.

14 Thank you.

15 (Proceedings end at 10:34 a.m.)

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1
2 C E R T I F I C A T E
3

4 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
5 proceedings of the City of Philadelphia
6 Council Committee on the Environment are
7 contained fully and accurately in the
8 stenographic notes taken by me on Wednesday,
9 June 10, 2009, and that this is a true and
10 correct statement of same.

11
12
13
14
15 _____
16 JOSEPHINE CARDILLO
17 Registered Professional Reporter
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