

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, April 17, 2017
3:50 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILMAN DEREK GREEN
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE PARKER
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILL 170245 - An ordinance amending Chapter
19-4000 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
"Income Inequality Initiative - Earned Income
Tax Credit," by revising the City's EITC
Policy, including by expanding it to include
non-residents who work in the City...

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1
2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
3 afternoon, everyone. This is a hearing
4 that is called to order. This is the
5 public hearing of the City of
6 Philadelphia's Council Committee on
7 Commerce and Economic Development. The
8 purpose of this public hearing is to hear
9 testimony on Bill No. 170245.

10 I recognize the presence of a
11 quorum in Councilman Green, Councilman
12 Domb, Councilwoman Blackwell, and
13 Councilman Taubenberger.

14 And will Ms. Williams, the
15 Clerk, please read the title of the bill.

16 THE CLERK: Bill No. 170245, an
17 ordinance amending Chapter 19-4000 of The
18 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Income
19 Inequality Initiative - Earned Income Tax
20 Credit," by revising the City's EITC
21 Policy, including by expanding it to
22 include non-residents who work in the
23 City, all under certain terms and
24 conditions.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

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2 Ms. Williams.

3 I'd like to hear from the
4 author of this legislation, Councilman
5 Domb.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman.

8 Good afternoon. Today's Bill
9 No. 170245 proposes the expansion of the
10 notice provisions and reach of the Earned
11 Income Tax Credit in addition to
12 increasing the disclosure of various
13 reporting requirements so that we can
14 better track the City's outreach efforts
15 and effectiveness. This legislation
16 accomplishes these goals by, number one,
17 expanding the notice provision of the
18 ordinance by requiring businesses to also
19 provide the EITC notice to those
20 employees who not only live in the City
21 but work in the City as well, and it
22 provides for a reporting requirement so
23 that we can ensure effective use of all
24 funds utilized to promote the program.

25 This bill, in essence, helps to

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2 ensure that we are reaching all eligible
3 Philadelphians and making the most
4 effective and efficient use of all funds
5 directed towards these efforts.

6 As everybody knows, tomorrow is
7 the deadline, April 18th, for EITC tax
8 filing. And you can still file after
9 tomorrow, but you'll capture -- you'll
10 just lose one year. So basically by
11 filing tomorrow, you can file for last
12 year and three additional back years.

13 Just to repeat the numbers -- I
14 sound like a broken record -- we left
15 \$100 million. Forty thousand
16 Philadelphians qualify. Average refund,
17 \$2,400 to \$2,500. Single parent with two
18 children, 45,000 of income or a couple
19 with 50,000 of income with two kids can
20 get checks up to \$6,000. And when you
21 file back three additional years, it's
22 24,000.

23 So for us as elected officials,
24 Mr. Chairman, it's the most effective way
25 to help Philadelphians who need this help

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2 the most. So whatever we can do to get
3 the word out, we need to do.

4 Lastly, I want to thank the
5 bill's co-sponsors - Council President
6 Clarke, Councilman Henon, Councilwoman
7 Parker, Councilman Greenlee, Councilman
8 Green, Councilman Johnson, Councilman
9 Squilla, and also acknowledge the Revenue
10 Department that's here today and Campaign
11 for Working Families and United Way for
12 their continuing efforts to promote the
13 EITC.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Councilman. And talk about a stimulus
17 package. It always burns me when we
18 leave federal money on the table, like
19 they don't have enough money for what
20 they want, and this is a worthwhile
21 cause.

22 So, Ms. Williams, could you
23 please read the first witnesses to
24 testify on this bill.

25 THE CLERK: The witnesses will

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2 be Marisa Waxman, Darrell Davis, Mary
3 Arthur, and Elizabeth Clinton.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Will you all
5 please come up to the table.

6 (Witnesses approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
9 for your patience. We've had non-stop
10 hearings today, and if you came early,
11 you learned something. If you came just
12 on time, you were smart.

13 I also recognize the presence
14 of Councilman Henon who has joined the
15 Committee.

16 So would you state your name
17 for the record and please begin your
18 testimony.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN:
20 Great. Good afternoon, Chairman Jones
21 and members of the Committee on Commerce
22 and Economic Development. My name is
23 Marisa Waxman, First Deputy Commissioner
24 of the Department of Revenue. I am here
25 today to testify in support of Bill No.

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2 170245, which amends Chapter 19-4000 of
3 The Philadelphia Code pertaining to the
4 Income Inequality Initiative - Earned
5 Income Tax Credit.

6 Bill 170245 expands the
7 requirements for businesses to notify
8 employees and those they pay via 1099 to
9 include commuters into Philadelphia in
10 addition to Philadelphia residents. This
11 bill also provides additional guidance as
12 to what to include in the annual report
13 to City Council about the performance of
14 the program. The report released on July
15 1, 2016 for last tax season is currently
16 available on the Department of Revenue
17 website.

18 We are in the third year of the
19 City's Income Inequality Initiative to
20 increase participation in the EITC. The
21 strategy includes providing free tax
22 preparation services and conducting an
23 outreach campaign to ensure
24 Philadelphians know about these refunds,
25 which average \$2,500, and how to get

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them. Twenty-five hundred dollars has a real impact. It can mean putting down first and last months' rent and a security deposit on a new apartment. It can cover the cost of a SEPTA TransPass for more than two years, buy 100 tanks of gas or hundreds of other ways to help Philadelphians be more financially secure.

New data suggests that a growing number of Philadelphians are taking advantage of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, a sign of the success of this program. In FY 2015, we invested \$132,000 in free tax prep and education. The most recent data available from the IRS shows that 8,700 additional Philadelphians received the tax credit in the spring of 2015 compared to the year before. This decreased the percentage of eligible taxpayers missing out from 22 percent down to 18 percent. With an average refund that year of \$2,522, this meant an additional \$22 million going

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2 into the pockets of Philadelphians.

3 That's \$166 received by Philadelphians

4 for every dollar invested by the City.

5 Nearly 200,000 Philadelphians

6 are benefitting from the EITC, but

7 there's still tens of thousands of

8 Philadelphians not getting the refunds

9 they're entitled to. To combat this,

10 this year the City has allocated \$760,000

11 to fund free tax preparation for up to

12 25,600 taxpayers at 20 locations across

13 the City. With this service,

14 Philadelphians can avoid up to \$500 in

15 tax preparation fees and get access to

16 IRS-certified tax preparers in multiple

17 languages. Through April 4th, 12,980 tax

18 returns have been prepared at these free

19 tax sites, resulting in refunds totalling

20 23 million, 9.2 million of that was for

21 the Earned Income Tax Credit.

22 Whether people come to one of

23 our free sites, file their own taxes

24 online or do something else, getting the

25 EITC refund starts with knowing that it

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2 exists and how to get it. For this
3 reason, the City invested 349,000 in the
4 You Earned It Philly Campaign, designed
5 with input from dozens of community
6 organizations, City Council members and
7 staff, City agencies, including Community
8 Empowerment and Opportunity, our partners
9 at the United Way, and the taxpayers
10 themselves.

11 These efforts have included a
12 website available in nine languages,
13 which has been visited 52,000 times, a 50
14 percent increase compared to last year;
15 postcards sent to 45,000 likely eligible
16 taxpayers. This year we started with
17 partnering with the School District to
18 reach more than 30,000 parents and staff
19 through the District newsletter. We used
20 IRS data to contact 1,000 taxpayers who
21 failed to claim the EITC in 2013,
22 although they appeared eligible. We've
23 held 76 community meetings during tax
24 season. We've had 5.5 million digital
25 media impressions through Google Ads and

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2 other channels. We've had 1.6 million
3 impressions on Facebook. We've
4 advertised on SEPTA, online and in print.
5 We've done an outreach to over 50
6 community organizations. Our media
7 outreach has generated 21 stories in
8 print, TV, and radio.

9 In conclusion, the Department
10 of Revenue fully supports Bill 170245 and
11 appreciates the ongoing support of City
12 Council for its efforts to connect
13 Philadelphians with the refunds they
14 earned. We'd like to remind people that
15 tax returns are due tomorrow, and it
16 isn't too late to get help filing. Text
17 the word "file" to 99000 or visit
18 www.youearneeditphilly.com to get
19 information about when, where, and how to
20 get your taxes done for free today and
21 tomorrow.

22 Thank you, and I'm happy to
23 take any questions.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: We're going
25 to, if it's okay with the group, allow

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2 the panel to testify before we engage in
3 questions.

4 I also want to recognize that
5 Councilwoman Parker has joined us.

6 MR. DAVIS: Good afternoon,
7 Councilman Jones and members of the
8 Committee on Commerce and Economic
9 Development. I am Darrell Davis, Manager
10 of Local Government and Civic Affairs at
11 the Chamber of Commerce for Greater
12 Philadelphia. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to testify on Bill No.
14 170245.

15 The Chamber's mission is to
16 attract, retain, and grow jobs for the
17 City and region. We follow principles of
18 economic competitiveness to guide our
19 public policy. We believe that
20 government at all levels must operate in
21 an efficient way to maximize the services
22 it provides, and the Chamber will work
23 with other organizations to advance an
24 agenda leading to economic growth and
25 prosperity.

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2 The Chamber, representing over
3 600,000 employees throughout the region,
4 advocates for public policy to grow
5 Pennsylvania's economy, create jobs, and
6 put the Commonwealth on a fiscally sound
7 path for the future. The Chamber leads
8 this work through its Roadmap for Growth
9 Action Team, which engages government as
10 well as neighborhood and civic
11 organizations on a shared job creation
12 and economic growth agenda, prioritizing
13 education, neighborhood economic
14 development, and vulnerable populations.

15 As it has a direct impact on
16 those who live in our diverse
17 neighborhoods, the Chamber applauds
18 Councilman Domb's efforts to encourage
19 more individuals who live and work in
20 Philadelphia to apply for the federal tax
21 credit program for low- to
22 moderate-income working individuals and
23 families called the Earned Income Tax
24 Credit, also known as EITC. Eligible
25 wage earners who qualify for EITC can

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2 receive a refundable credit of up to
3 \$6,269 per income tax return. The
4 average refund is around \$2,500.

5 Of the 228,000 Philadelphians
6 who could receive a refund, almost 40,000
7 have not applied. According to the IRS,
8 the EITC and child tax credits help lift
9 9.4 million people out of poverty,
10 including 5 million children. With
11 Philadelphia's poverty rate hovering
12 around 26 percent, efforts like this can
13 provide important resources for families
14 struggling to get by and help stabilize
15 neighborhoods.

16 Councilman Domb's urgency in
17 expanding the utilization of EITC matches
18 the urgency needed in addressing many of
19 the issues that plague our neighborhoods.
20 In order for Philadelphia to continue its
21 economic growth, we must use every tool
22 available to combat our high poverty
23 rate. The Roadmap for Growth Action Team
24 stands ready to support this work.

25 The Chamber urges thoughtful

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2 and deliberate analysis when considering
3 the expansion of the EITC tax credit. We
4 are happy to serve as partners in guiding
5 the legislation so as best to effectuate
6 the policy's intent.

7 Thank you for the opportunity
8 to testify on Bill No. 170245.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
10 for your testimony.

11 Pull the mic a little closer.
12 State your name.

13 MS. ARTHUR: My name is Mary
14 Arthur. I'm the President and CEO of the
15 Campaign for Working Families. So thank
16 you for this opportunity to testify on
17 behalf of this bill.

18 The mission of the Campaign for
19 Working Families is to assist individuals
20 and families achieve economic empowerment
21 through the provisions of the free tax
22 preparation that builds financial
23 stability and assets.

24 We organized in 2003, and we
25 identified tactical ways to improve the

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2 economic status of working individuals
3 and families, implemented the Volunteer
4 Income Tax Assistance program providing
5 free tax preparation. The VITA program
6 provided individuals and families the
7 opportunity to assess critical tax
8 credits, benefits, and financial products
9 which serve to support financial
10 stability and avoid costly tax
11 preparation services and banking
12 products.

13 Since 2003, CWF has returned
14 over \$300 million in refunds, and over
15 220,000 individual and families benefited
16 from the program. The millions in
17 refunds has helped these individuals and
18 families achieve financial stability and
19 build their assets. The tax credits,
20 particularly the Earned Income Tax Credit
21 and Child Tax Credit, served as the most
22 effective anti-poverty fighting program
23 in the country, helping lift millions out
24 of poverty every year by directly
25 impacting the family's finances.

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2 With significant contributions
3 from City Councilman Allan Domb, the City
4 of Philadelphia's Revenue Department,
5 United Way of Greater Philadelphia and
6 Southern New Jersey, and the Internal
7 Revenue Service, there continue to remain
8 at least 40,000 eligible individuals and
9 families that do not benefit and do not
10 claim from the EITC, leaving well over
11 100 million in unclaimed dollars with the
12 federal government, which should be
13 benefiting those citizens in the City of
14 Philadelphia. This is 100 million that
15 could positively support the economic
16 growth of the City and the residents and
17 their communities.

18 Last year, which is 2015, we
19 filed over 29,000 returns, where 50
20 percent of those returns filed had --
21 those families had an adjusted gross
22 income of under \$14,000, with 22 percent
23 of those returns between 15,000 and
24 24,000. Last year on average the Earned
25 Income Tax Credit increased the families'

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2 AGI by 17 percent. Furthermore, a family
3 of four earning 15,000 annually
4 experienced a refund of roughly 8,500,
5 and the families' AGI increased to 57
6 percent, which empowers families'
7 economic growth and health.

8 In presenting here, I solicit
9 your participation in joining me in
10 supporting Bill 170245. Bill 170245
11 proposes to expand the notice provisions
12 and reach the Earned Income Tax Credit
13 while increasing the disclosures of
14 various reporting requirements to better
15 track the outreach efforts and the
16 effectiveness of the program. The
17 legislators will accomplish these goals
18 by expanding the notice provision to
19 ensure businesses provide notice of the
20 Earned Income Tax Credit to employees
21 that live and work in the City and
22 provide for the reporting requirement so
23 that they can ensure effective use of the
24 funds -- of all funds used to promote
25 this program.

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2 Your support of Bill 170245
3 will help us ensure we are reaching all
4 those who are potentially eligible and
5 expanding our outreach to those
6 individuals and families who live and
7 work in the City of Philadelphia.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
9 much for your testimony.

10 Ms. Williams?

11 Sam, are you there?

12 THE CLERK: I'm here.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Who else do
14 we have as witnesses?

15 THE CLERK: Just Ms. Clinton.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: So why don't
17 we allow her to testify and then we can
18 go into questions.

19 Thank you for your patience.

20 MS. CLINTON: Good afternoon,
21 Councilmembers. My name is Elizabeth
22 Clinton and I'm here representing UESF
23 and the families that we serve.

24 Philadelphia families come to
25 UESF when facing housing challenges,

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sometimes facing immediate crises, like eviction and shut-off notices. UESF addresses their urgent needs and then, using our housing stabilization case management model, we help create a holistic plan for housing stability in the long term. So part of this case management model includes screening the clients for eligible benefits to increase their income, including the EITC.

The average annual income for our clients is just over \$12,000. With the average EITC return hovering around \$2,500, the EITC represents a 21 percent increase in our clients' income for that year. To increase your annual income by 21 percent through one benefit is significant in helping our clients stay on track with their rent, their utilities, and their general housing needs. And it goes beyond just staying on track. Our clients have been able to use the EITC to lift themselves out of their cycle to just pay the bills and go

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2 beyond that by getting further ahead and
3 investing in their future needs.

4 The Center on Budget and Policy
5 Priorities list dozens of positive
6 effects of the EITC on vulnerable
7 families - boosts in work effort, lower
8 stress and depression levels, overall
9 health of children and families, and even
10 better school performances for children
11 in houses that receive the EITC. And
12 UESF has seen this across all of our
13 programs. The income increase provided
14 by the EITC gives families peace of mind
15 to solve their immediate housing issues
16 and focus on future issues, like
17 employment needs and job training and
18 child care, among others.

19 UESF has personally seen the
20 effect the EITC can have on a family.
21 The EITC has the potential to help
22 228,000 families across the City, which
23 not only affects these individual
24 families, but brings prosperity to the
25 City as a whole. The source of the EITC

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2 funds is the federal government and if
3 Philadelphians don't apply and receive
4 the EITC, the City loses these funds.

5 The effect of the EITC is
6 far-reaching. The City has recently
7 begun to try to understand and address
8 the high rate of tenant evictions.

9 According to the Pew Charitable Trust
10 Philadelphia report that was just issued,
11 more than half of Philadelphia renters
12 pay 30 percent or more of their incomes
13 on rent alone. This metric is a key
14 indicator of housing affordability. And
15 the Pew report further states that this
16 is a reflection of low incomes rather
17 than high rents. The EITC can help
18 address low incomes that contribute to
19 the high eviction rate as well.

20 With that, I'd like to talk
21 about a specific client that has
22 benefited from the EITC. Her name is
23 Sharesse. Sharesse lives in Philadelphia
24 with four children, two of whom have
25 special needs. Sharesse and her family

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2 have received the EITC in the past few
3 years, and if Council would allow our
4 benefit access counselor from UESF to
5 just speak a little bit about Sharesse,
6 she actually handles her case and how she
7 benefited from receiving the EITC.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Proceed,
9 please. State your name for the record.

10 MS. LOCKETT: Good afternoon.

11 My name is Rasheedah Lockett. I'm a
12 counselor at UESF Benefit Access Center.
13 I screen clients for benefits to help
14 increase their income, thereby increasing
15 housing stability. One of the most
16 significant income-increasing benefits
17 that my clients receive is the EITC. One
18 such client, Sharesse, first came to UESF
19 with a utility shut-off notice. After
20 solving her immediate utility crisis, our
21 benefits screening revealed that she was
22 eligible to apply for the EITC.

23 Sharesse has four children, two
24 of whom have autism. At the time she
25 applied, Sharesse was on medical leave

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2 without pay, leaving her behind on her
3 bills and nervous about her family's
4 future stability. Through the EITC,
5 Sharesse received \$3,296 this year and
6 almost 4,000 last year. This year's
7 return represents a 20 percent increase
8 in Sharesse's annual income. This
9 significant increase in income allows
10 Sharesse to catch up on her bills and
11 begin saving for resources to support her
12 two children with special needs. Not
13 only that, but it gave Sharesse a peace
14 of mind while on medical leave so she
15 could recover.

16 This year the EITC helped
17 Sharesse to purchase a car, allowing her
18 to more easily transport her children to
19 their special needs school and physical
20 therapy.

21 Though Sharesse could not be
22 here today, she wanted me to share how
23 the EITC has dramatically affected her
24 family and to emphasize the importance of
25 the EITC to Philadelphia families.

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2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

4 Ms. Williams, does that
5 complete the witness list?

6 THE CLERK: Yes, it does.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.

8 Also I have Councilman Johnson who has
9 joined us. Cherelle Parker is the Vice
10 Chair, who has an important role to play
11 in this passing.

12 Councilman, would you like to
13 begin questions.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Yes. Thank
15 you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Could I ask Darrell Davis to
17 come back to the stand for a minute.

18 You're representing the Chamber
19 of Commerce?

20 MR. DAVIS: Yes.

21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How many
22 members are there in the Chamber of
23 Commerce?

24 MR. DAVIS: Over 6,000.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: 6,000?

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2 MR. DAVIS: Yes.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: How many
4 employees do you think are within those
5 6,000 members?

6 MR. DAVIS: We represent over
7 600,000 employees, and that includes
8 smaller not-for-profits, small
9 businesses, and also some of the larger
10 companies here in the region.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So is there a
12 way -- and I don't know. Maybe you're
13 already doing this. I'm just going to
14 ask you the question directly. I know
15 the Revenue Department does a great job,
16 Campaign for Working Families, United
17 Way, our Council has been very vocal, the
18 Administration has. Could the Chamber of
19 Commerce join us in notifying those
20 600,000 people about EITC?

21 MR. DAVIS: Yes. I spoke with
22 our CEO, Rob Wonderling, on Friday and we
23 discussed different ways that we would
24 want the business community to be
25 involved in this effort voluntarily, so

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2 that way, we can help support many of the
3 people that are eligible for the EITC
4 benefit.

5 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Because this
6 really -- anyone who has children earning
7 7 and a quarter to even \$22 an hour could
8 benefit them if they have two or three
9 children. I mean, it's a great program
10 to help people. And you have 600,000
11 people that you could potentially
12 address.

13 MR. DAVIS: Yes.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: That would be
15 huge to make sure they get information on
16 it, make sure the word gets out. I'm
17 sure you represent hotels and people in
18 the hospitality business and parking
19 garage people. Everyone, all walks of
20 life, it affects everybody. So whatever
21 you could do to get that word out, that
22 would be a great partnership for us to
23 form with you.

24 MR. DAVIS: Definitely.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you.

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2 Thank you very much.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
5 Councilman.

6 So Chamber of Commerce is on
7 board. And I was sitting here when you
8 testified trying to figure out, well, why
9 would they -- but when you think about
10 it, if I could give my staff here today
11 somewhere between a 12 percent and 20
12 percent stimulus in their salary and say
13 it was because I notified them, I think,
14 you know, it would be a good look. So,
15 you know, I can see, Councilman, why that
16 kind of synergy could happen.

17 Does anybody have any stats on
18 when people receive that \$2,000, \$2,400
19 where that money goes, how they spend it?
20 I heard rent, but they probably get into
21 some consumer purchases locally. I know
22 I would if I ever saw that kind of refund
23 ever again. But has anybody tracked what
24 your clientele tend to do with these
25 kinds of refunds?

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2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN:

3 I'll let Mary speak too, because I'm
4 pretty sure she surveys and asks that,
5 but I can let you know that while the
6 City doesn't track that, when we asked
7 folks what messaging would be important
8 to them and what made sense to motivate
9 them to take advantage of this, it wasn't
10 saving for a rainy day. It was about
11 immediate needs, and for us, that really
12 meant, you know, that it affected their
13 financial stability today. But also part
14 of the reason this is such a great thing
15 for the City to get involved with even
16 though it's a federal program is then
17 that's money that's spent again
18 throughout the community. We're the
19 Department of Revenue. We don't mind if
20 they use it to pay their real estate
21 taxes or their water bills, but also just
22 anywhere in the community. That's where
23 we figure this money is going and fairly
24 quickly.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Ms. Arthur.

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2 MS. ARTHUR: So we do ask
3 various questions of what do you do with
4 your money, what would you like to do,
5 and, you know, we get a lot -- education
6 is one. Of course dealing with their
7 daily finances, you know, playing catchup
8 is very important to them, but trying to
9 move forward, saving money if they're
10 involved in a match program so they could
11 save money, and some people are on track
12 to buy homes. Some people are on track
13 to get higher education.

14 So, you know, the immediate
15 need is there, but a lot of our clients
16 are in the planning stages. They know
17 the value of this check when it comes in
18 and what they can do. So we tie that
19 with asset development. We tie it with
20 resource development, and that gives them
21 an opportunity over the year to get their
22 credit scores straight and build that up.

23 So we do a lot of tracking of
24 what can a family benefit from and how we
25 can help them get to where they need to

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2 go. And we always tell them, please
3 enjoy some of it. You worked for it. So
4 there's nothing wrong --

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: You tell
6 them to enjoy it?

7 MS. ARTHUR: Yeah. There's
8 nothing wrong with taking a small
9 vacation for a family that hasn't been on
10 vacation in five years. There's nothing
11 wrong with that. But let's not take the
12 whole 8,000 and spend it on a vacation.
13 Let's see how else this can impact your
14 home.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: So to my
16 colleague, does this bill provide for
17 those who live outside of the City as
18 well but are employed within the City's
19 boundaries?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN:
21 So, yes, that's the change in this.
22 Right now all employers are required to
23 notify their Philadelphia resident
24 employees, and so the Department of
25 Revenue currently notifies over 67,000

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2 wage taxpayers, employers. But what this
3 does, it says on top of that, please
4 notify anyone who is working in the City
5 even if they don't live here. For some
6 folks, they're already doing that, so
7 this just codifies it. For others,
8 that's going to add folks who even if
9 they don't live here, they're in the
10 City, so they're spending money here. We
11 care about them too. And so this just
12 broadens the number of folks who are
13 going to be aware of the Earned Income
14 Tax Credit.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm going to
16 have to call my colleagues in Delco,
17 Montgomery County and tell them we're
18 giving them a stimulus package from
19 Philadelphia.

20 The Chair recognizes Councilman
21 Johnson.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman.

24 I just want to take a moment
25 and thank Mary Arthur for her hard work

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2 and dedication with the Campaign for
3 Working Families. It was a couple years
4 ago where you kicked off the campaign in
5 Southwest CDC, and I had an opportunity
6 to participate in the press conference.

7 And I want to also acknowledge
8 our colleague who came to City Council
9 hitting the ground running on this issue,
10 Councilman Allan Domb, because at the end
11 of the day, it's about improving the
12 quality of life, the quality of people's
13 lives here in the City of Philadelphia.
14 We're the number one big city facing
15 poverty, and so it's making sure -- it's
16 awareness campaigns like this that would
17 allow people to take advantage of it.

18 I come from a low-income
19 family, and so I know the benefits during
20 tax season that the EITC tax credit will
21 allow the family to take advantage of
22 during this particular season. So I get
23 it. It's a no-brainer, but when we're
24 leaving money on the table, that's
25 certainly a problem, because -- a book

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2 that I read said my people perish for a
3 lack of knowledge, and perish could mean
4 go hungry, lights cut off, no day care
5 money and things of that sort.

6 And so I just want to thank
7 you, Councilman Domb, for stepping up to
8 the plate and really taking this to the
9 next level, because we got cranes going
10 all around this City of Philadelphia, but
11 at the end of the day, we have a tale of
12 two cities. We got poor people. We got
13 rich people. That's just real simple.
14 And I'm glad that this Council is
15 stepping up to the plate.

16 And I thank Darrell for being
17 from the Chamber, because sometimes we
18 get a bad rap like, well, we're not
19 business friendly. We're always doing
20 these things that impact, but I think
21 there's about 10 or 20 different
22 tax-related tax break initiatives that
23 we've done at least since I've been
24 around to be supportive of the business
25 community, but we also have to all make

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2 the tough decisions really to fight for
3 those people who don't have a voice.
4 They don't have a lobbyist. We're their
5 lobbyist at the end of the day.

6 So we thank you, Councilman
7 Domb, for leading the charge in this
8 area. I just wanted to -- he was with
9 SneakaVilla the other day with Chudeezy,
10 the radio music. The radio music,
11 Cherelle, they're doing the whole thing
12 in the hood, you know, spreading the word
13 and making sure people take advantage of
14 this.

15 So I just wanted to
16 acknowledge, Allan, that your work
17 definitely does not go unnoticed. That's
18 all.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
21 Ms. Arthur there and I go back further
22 than you.

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You
24 should. You're older.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yeah, I am.

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2 I'm always going to remind you. I'm
3 always going to remind you.

4 But her commitment to helping
5 people goes back -- I won't go to the
6 year, but I will say it started in a
7 trailer. We had to put up a trailer
8 outside of a disaster area, which I will
9 not name because it will date it, where
10 we were relocating people, getting them
11 food stamps and temporary shelter and all
12 of that good stuff, and I learned public
13 service, the true meaning of it, because
14 if I recall, you did it voluntarily.

15 MS. ARTHUR: Yes.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: You just did
17 it just to be doing it, and I'll never
18 forget that. And now you're a CEO, so
19 you're "all grewed up" and I'm proud of
20 you.

21 Councilman Domb.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman.

24 Thank you, Councilman Johnson,
25 for those kind words, but I want to just

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2 push this a little further.

3 And so I know, Marisa, in your
4 testimony you said 30,000 parents through
5 the schools. When I think of the
6 schools, if I'm correct, in the public
7 schools alone, I think we have 140,000
8 students and I'm told 81 percent are in
9 poverty. So being one of the
10 requirements of the Earned Income Tax
11 Credit is to have children --

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN:
13 No, it's not.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Well, it's
15 one of the requirements.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN:
17 No, you don't need to have children, and
18 that's -- and the only reason I interrupt
19 is that's one of those big myths that
20 turns people away.

21 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Well, you can
22 get \$506 if you have no children. The
23 money is really when you have children.
24 The max is 506 with no children, but the
25 big dollars are when you have children.

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2 So how do we penetrate, my
3 question is, how do we get almost every
4 parent in the School District to receive
5 information on the Earned Income Tax
6 Credit? We have a tremendous potential
7 there. How do we make sure that we get
8 the School District to notify every
9 parent?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN: I
11 mean, I want to thank the School
12 District, because this year they really
13 stepped up. This was the first year that
14 we were able to really partner with them,
15 and they have done a tremendous job of
16 not only getting this information out to
17 the parents, but also their staff. And
18 that's what's been really important, is
19 that their dedication through different
20 means of getting information, whether
21 it's any newsletters or on their website.

22 So we're going to keep working
23 with them. This is year one. In each
24 year that we've done this, we've been
25 able to deepen our relationships and

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2 increase our reach as we get more and
3 more folks into the fold. So I really
4 expect by next year we'll be able to be
5 doing more and more with the School
6 District, but we really want to thank
7 them for their partnership this year.
8 It's been tremendous.

9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So is there
10 anything -- I'm going to throw this
11 challenge down to all my colleagues for a
12 minute. Should our Councilpeople, our
13 District Councilpeople especially, be
14 going to their schools, talking about
15 EITC, get the word out? This is free
16 money. Free money. And so my opinion is
17 federal money comes first, state money
18 comes second, and the last resource is
19 our pockets in Philadelphia.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAXMAN:
21 Absolutely.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So whatever
23 we can do.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Did you hear
25 that bus just run over all of us?

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2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I'll go with
3 you to every one of the schools. Thank
4 you.

5 Thanks.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: A couple of
7 points. And I will take you up on that,
8 because there are some schools in my area
9 that absolutely need this information and
10 resource. But I would also go a step
11 further, that we leave a lot of federal
12 money on the table in healthcare when a
13 kid could get -- is eligible for
14 eyeglasses and doesn't go get a health
15 visit and dental and so on. And in light
16 of, no disrespect to my R friends, the
17 change in administration up there,
18 they're going to be less philanthropic
19 than more. So it is incumbent upon us
20 not to leave those dollars on the table.

21 Are there any other questions
22 of this panel?

23 Councilwoman Parker.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: No
25 questions. I just wanted to follow up on

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2 a comment that you made earlier, Chairman
3 Jones, because I don't know that folks
4 caught it.

5 But when you heard the Chairman
6 mention that he would contact his
7 colleagues in Delaware and Bucks County,
8 for any of our legislators who are
9 watching in Harrisburg, I would hope,
10 Councilman Domb, that a letter to our
11 leadership, the legislative leadership in
12 Harrisburg, D's and R's, will be sent
13 noting our advocacy and this amendment to
14 the tri-state area, because it signifies
15 Philadelphia's understanding about our
16 regional economy and it's not just about
17 Philadelphia but the value of our region.

18 And so I loved your directive
19 about the schools, and obviously we'll
20 follow up on that, but we should also
21 make sure that our action is understood
22 and acknowledged by our state legislators
23 in Harrisburg. So thank you for your
24 leadership.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Excellent

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2 comment, Councilwoman.

3 Councilman Johnson.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just one
5 last question. From your perspective,
6 Mary, what has been the challenge as it
7 relates to people not taking advantage of
8 the EITC program?

9 MS. ARTHUR: Well, I think,
10 one, they don't get enough information
11 early enough. So one of the goals is to
12 start making these announcements, getting
13 the brochures, getting the flyers out,
14 getting the information out a lot sooner.
15 Normally tax time people don't think of
16 it until January, but we have to be
17 proactive and start doing more mailings
18 and let people know that even through the
19 mailers, if we could send it out, this is
20 available to you, start getting your
21 documents ready, you know. We'll be
22 there to help you get this done. And
23 keep in mind when we do it, we do it for
24 free. So someone who your neighbor is
25 paying someone -- I'm not putting anybody

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2 out of business, but people are paying
3 upwards of \$600 to get a basic return
4 done. That's to me kind of borderline
5 criminal. But that's a different
6 hearing. So \$600 that you save from the
7 door is enough to pay a rent, is enough
8 to go out and buy a lot of groceries.
9 It's enough to pay your utility bill.

10 So we need to start, first,
11 getting the information out a lot sooner
12 than January and working with other
13 community-based organizations, the School
14 District, having them push it out to
15 their parents a lot sooner, you know, and
16 the services and what comes with the tax
17 return. EITC is the driving force, but
18 you have the Child Tax Credit. You have
19 the additional Child Tax Credit. You
20 have the education credit. There's so
21 many credits that go along with it that
22 people are missing, but, of course, EITC
23 drives that tax return.

24 So we need to really push that
25 message sooner, and I think we would all

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2 benefit greatly, the community, the
3 families, and the individuals. I know --
4 unfortunately I don't know where it's
5 going, but there was a movement in
6 Washington to increase the EITC for the
7 single filer, because they do pay the
8 bulk. They pay a lot more taxes than any
9 person that has children. So there was a
10 movement, and if we hadn't switched
11 presidents, I believe that would have
12 passed by now, and it was going to be a
13 new tax law that was going to help EITC
14 for single filers. They should benefit
15 from it as well.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
18 Councilman.

19 Are there any other questions
20 from this Committee?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing
23 none --

24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Real
25 quick.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing one.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: This
4 is basically just a comment, no question,
5 and really thanking Councilman Domb, the
6 Committee as a whole, and your advocacy
7 on this. I think the more we speak about
8 it, more people can be involved. And it
9 is a matter of education, and I, for one,
10 will certainly do my part whenever called
11 upon. And just keep talking about this,
12 because the more people that do it, the
13 more money is available to many of our
14 citizens that, one, have earned it but,
15 two, are not always in the best financial
16 position overall. So this is very
17 valuable dollars to them, and we as a
18 government must foster its use and the
19 fact that they can get it and know how to
20 get it.

21 Thank you very much.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
23 Councilman.

24 Any other questions?

25 (No response.)

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing none,
3 this concludes the public hearing. We
4 will now go into our public meeting to
5 consider an action to be taken on Bill
6 No. 170254 [sic].

7 Public meeting and motions for
8 Bill No. 170245. I'm sorry; correction.

9 The Chair now recognizes
10 Councilwoman Parker for a motion on the
11 amendment to Bill No. 170245.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
13 you, Mr. Chairman. I offer an amendment
14 to Bill No. 170245. A copy of the
15 amendment has been circulated to all
16 members of the Committee. I move that
17 the amendment to Bill No. 170245 be
18 approved.

19 (Duly seconded.)

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: It has been
21 moved and properly seconded that an
22 amendment to Bill No. 170245 be approved.

23 All those in favor will signify
24 by saying aye.

25 (Aye.)

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Those
3 opposed?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: The ayes
6 have it and the motion carries, and the
7 amendment to Bill No. 170245 has been
8 approved.

9 The Chair again recognizes
10 Councilwoman Parker for a motion on Bill
11 No. 170245, as amended.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
13 you, Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill No.
14 170245, as amended, be reported from this
15 Committee with a favorable recommendation
16 and further move that the rules of
17 Council be suspended to permit first
18 reading of this bill at the next session
19 of Council.

20 (Duly seconded.)

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: It has been
22 moved and properly seconded that Bill No.
23 170245, as amended, be reported from this
24 Committee with a favorable recommendation
25 and further moved that the rules of

1 4/17/17 - COMMERCE - BILL 170245

2 Council be suspended to permit first
3 reading of this bill at our next session
4 of Council.

5 All those in favor will signify
6 by saying aye.

7 (Aye.)

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: All those
9 opposed?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: The ayes
12 have it and the motion carries. Bill No.
13 170245, as amended, will be reported from
14 this Committee with a favorable
15 recommendation and further the rules of
16 Council be suspended to permit first
17 reading at our next session of Council.

18 This concludes our business of
19 this Committee on Commerce and Economic
20 Development for today.

21 Thank you all very much for
22 your attendance.

23 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Mr.
24 Chairman, I just want to say for the
25 record I've been here over a year, and I

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2 want to say to the veterans, Councilwoman
3 Blackwell, Chairman Jones, Councilman
4 Johnson, and Councilman Henon, you know,
5 I know it took me a while when I was in
6 Harrisburg. I left there, I had ten
7 little young years under my belt. But
8 I've been here for a year and three
9 months, and if Samantha did not give me
10 this script just now, I would have been
11 lost. So Samantha -- Mr. Chairman, I
12 don't know about you, Councilman Domb and
13 Councilman Taubenberger, but I haven't
14 committed to memory the procedural
15 protocol. Harrisburg, you could say it
16 right now and I can give it to you by
17 script, Councilman. I can close my eyes
18 and give it to you, but I still haven't
19 gotten down the Council script yet.

20 So, Samantha, thank you for
21 keeping us prepared.

22 THE CLERK: No problem.

23 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Keeping
24 me prepared.

25 Okay. Good job.

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I

3 second that.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Behind every

5 good Councilman is an even better LA.

6 That's a fact.

7 Thank you all. This concludes

8 our meeting. Thank you for your patience

9 and indulgence.

10 (Committee on Commerce and

11 Economic Development concluded at 4:30

12 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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