

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

Via Microsoft Teams  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, July 21, 2020  
2:05 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR  
COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE  
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS  
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER  
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON  
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN  
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM  
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER  
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ  
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA  
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS

RESOLUTION 200376 - Resolution authorizing the  
Philadelphia City Council Committee on  
Legislative Oversight to hold public hearings  
examining issues that arose from the primary  
election mailin ballot process, and  
recommendations for necessary procedures to  
improve voter education and voter processes...

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good  
3 afternoon, everyone. This is the  
4 Committee on Legislative Oversight.  
5 Today is Tuesday, July 21st, 2020.

6 I understand that the state law  
7 requires that I read the following  
8 announcement at the beginning of every  
9 remote hearing for public hearings for  
10 City Council:

11 Due to the current public  
12 health crisis, the City of Philadelphia's  
13 Council committees are currently meeting  
14 remotely. We are using Microsoft Teams  
15 to make these remote hearings possible.  
16 The instructions for how the public may  
17 offer input or view the committees are  
18 included in the public notifications in  
19 the Inquirer, Daily News, the Legal  
20 Intelligencer, or can be found on  
21 Philadelphiacouncil.com.

22 I note that the time has come.  
23 Ms. Williams, will you please  
24 read the title of the resolution.

25 THE CLERK: Sure.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Wait a  
3 minute. Before we do that, can you  
4 please take roll of who is on the  
5 Committee and who is present.

6 And for those who are present,  
7 would you say a few words so that the  
8 camera can put your image on the  
9 television.

10 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
11 Squilla.

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Present.  
13 Happy to join the hearing today. Thank  
14 you.

15 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
16 Thomas.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good  
18 afternoon. I'm present. Happy to be  
19 here.

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
21 Green.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Good  
23 afternoon. Present. Looking forward to  
24 an engaging conversation.

25 THE CLERK: And Councilmember

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2 Gym.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good  
4 afternoon, everybody, and thank you.  
5 This is the most important issue we can  
6 be talking about.

7 THE CLERK: And, Councilman  
8 Jones, all members of the Legislative  
9 Oversight Committee are present.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.  
11 A quorum of this Committee is  
12 present. This hearing is now called to  
13 order.

14 Ms. Williams, would you please  
15 also recognize Councilmembers who are not  
16 on the Committee but are in attendance  
17 today.

18 THE CLERK: Joining us today we  
19 have Councilmember Parker.

20 (No response.)

21 THE CLERK: We have  
22 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

23 COUNCILWOMAN RICHARDSON: I'm  
24 present. Thank you so much.

25 THE CLERK: Councilmember

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2 Brooks.

3 (No response.)

4 THE CLERK: Councilmember

5 Sanchez.

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Good

7 afternoon. Looking forward to the

8 discussion.

9 THE CLERK: And we also have  
10 Councilmember Gauthier.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Present, and look forward to

13 participating in this important

14 discussion.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
16 Ms. Williams, and I also understand that  
17 we have some very special guests from the  
18 House of Representatives joining this  
19 hearing today. Can you make their  
20 presence known.

21 THE CLERK: Yes. Present with  
22 us today we also have our state invitees,  
23 State Representative Kevin Boyle.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Hello,  
25 everyone. Good to be here.

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2 THE CLERK: We also have with  
3 us State Representative Joseph Ciresi,  
4 State Representative Pam DeLissio, State  
5 Representative Isabella Fitzgerald, State  
6 Representative Joseph Hohenstein, State  
7 Representative Brian Sims, and State  
8 Representative Wendy Ullman.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
10 again, Ms. Williams.

11 With that, we are ready to  
12 begin the public hearing of the Committee  
13 on Legislative Oversight regarding  
14 Resolution No. 200376.

15 Ms. Williams, will you please  
16 read the title of the resolution.

17 THE CLERK: Resolution No.  
18 200376, authorizing the Philadelphia City  
19 Council Committee on Legislative  
20 Oversight to hold public hearings  
21 examining issues that arose from the  
22 primary election mailin ballot process,  
23 and recommendations for necessary  
24 procedures to improve voter education and  
25 voter processes for the upcoming general

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2 election, including potential funding and  
3 staffing needs of the Philadelphia City  
4 Commissioners Office.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
6 again, Ms. Williams.

7 Before we begin this hearing  
8 and the testimony, we want to let people  
9 know today that we are being recorded,  
10 and by you continuing to be on this call,  
11 there is no reasonable expectation of  
12 privacy, that you will be recorded and we  
13 make it clear that this will be a part of  
14 the record.

15 With that --

16 THE CLERK: Councilman, I also  
17 failed to recognize that State  
18 Representative Joseph Webster is also  
19 with us on the call.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Duly noted.

21 We also want you to realize  
22 that to be recognized to ask questions,  
23 we will be using the Chat feature. This  
24 Chat feature can only be used in that  
25 regard as to allow transparency. And so,

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2 therefore, anyone who is interested in  
3 being recognized to question a witness  
4 will use that Chat feature and Ms.  
5 Williams will recognize you.

6 And with that, so I promised I  
7 would cut down my opening remarks which  
8 were written. So every election since  
9 I've been able to vote, and I've only  
10 missed one election in my lifetime,  
11 people will tell you that this is the  
12 most important election before you. They  
13 said that all the way back to the charter  
14 change with Rizzo. They said it again  
15 and again with every state and city  
16 municipal election, but I absolutely  
17 believe that just maybe this time it may  
18 be true.

19 I remember the feeling with the  
20 presidential election for Barack Obama,  
21 but I do think we are at a crossroads in  
22 this country and in the Commonwealth of  
23 Pennsylvania, and what is most important  
24 on a non-partisan basis, no matter who  
25 wins or loses, that the citizenry of the



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2 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and in  
3 particular the City of Philadelphia,  
4 believe and are assured that it is a fair  
5 and open process.

6 There are people already  
7 developing narratives about how this  
8 election process, whether it's by voting  
9 by mail or just by being in an urban blue  
10 state, that somehow people will be  
11 disenfranchised.

12 The purpose of this  
13 resolution -- and I'm so very thankful to  
14 Representative Kevin Boyle for bringing  
15 this up -- is to be transparent, to do  
16 our best to make sure that this process  
17 is one that everyone can look at and say  
18 no matter where the chips fell, it was  
19 fair, that it was transparent, and that  
20 there were no improprieties.

21 So with that, if I could, Ms.  
22 Williams, I'd like to recognize  
23 Representative Kevin Boyle.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Thank  
25 you, Councilman Jones, and thank you to

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2 all my colleagues and friends on City  
3 Council. I used to be a staffer for  
4 Councilman Bill Greenlee, so it is very  
5 nice to be partaking again in the  
6 activities of City Council and seeing  
7 some familiar faces as well.

8 Before I start off, I do want  
9 to say something about a great guy that I  
10 used to work with when I was a City  
11 Council staffer and, that is, Mr. Curtis  
12 Cephas, who is the father of Morgan  
13 Cephas, who actually just passed away in  
14 the last few days. And what an amazing  
15 man he was, and Philadelphia, the West  
16 Philadelphia community, and everyone  
17 really, we're at a loss due to his  
18 passing. And he reared some amazing  
19 children, and he was a remarkable man,  
20 and personally I'm sorry for your loss,  
21 Councilman Jones.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: I had the  
23 honor of working with him, yes.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: So I am  
25 the Democratic Chair of the State

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2 Government Committee, and we on the House  
3 State Government Committee, we are the  
4 first committee that usually sees any  
5 election-related bills. We're also the  
6 first committee to see all the negative  
7 GOP and the shutdown and COVID-19 related  
8 bills also, but that's a whole other  
9 story.

10 Today I thought it was a useful  
11 usage of time for us to come together,  
12 not just as State Representatives and  
13 members of City Council, but leaders in  
14 not just in the City of Philadelphia but  
15 also suburban Philadelphia, because some  
16 of the members of the House Democratic  
17 State Committee are from suburban  
18 Philadelphia.

19 So with that in mind, I reached  
20 out to Majority Leader Cherelle Parker  
21 and also Councilman Jones, and together  
22 we came up with this idea of a joint  
23 hearing, because as Councilman Jones  
24 pointed out, all eyes are going to be on  
25 the State of Pennsylvania, specifically

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2 on the City of Philadelphia.

3 With this election coming in  
4 November, it is truly the most important  
5 election in our lifetime and I think  
6 probably the most important election  
7 probably since 1860. So we need to be  
8 on. Philadelphia needs to be up with  
9 what is going on with our voting systems,  
10 and we in the Pennsylvania State  
11 Legislature, we need to be able to  
12 advocate for the best voting system that  
13 can possibly be put in place for the  
14 election in the City of Philadelphia and  
15 also throughout the Commonwealth of  
16 Pennsylvania.

17 We do not want, after the  
18 election, after the Tuesday general  
19 election in November, we don't want to be  
20 Florida in 2000. We don't want to be the  
21 Iowa caucus this past winter. We don't  
22 want to see any sort of delay in terms of  
23 declaring a winner, because ultimately  
24 this state could put one candidate over  
25 the top, and we don't want the focus of

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2 the country and the world to be on us,  
3 and it would certainly be in a negative  
4 light. And we need to use these summer  
5 months to put together a system that will  
6 address some of the flaws that we saw in  
7 the June primary.

8 If the June primary were to be  
9 replicated with this general election, it  
10 would be a national and probably an  
11 international story, and that is  
12 certainly not to criticize the City  
13 Commissioners in any way whatsoever.  
14 They were thrown a situation that was  
15 truly unprecedented, not just due to  
16 COVID-19 or the protests related to  
17 George Floyd's murder, but also the  
18 changes to Act 77, which greatly expanded  
19 mail-in voting.

20 That expansion of mail-in  
21 voting in Act 77 actually went through  
22 our committee in Harrisburg. So the  
23 members of this committee that are on  
24 this call right now, we are very -- we're  
25 intimately aware of that even before I

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2 think most of the public were.

3 Right now, an update to my  
4 colleagues in City Council and people  
5 watching at home. Democrats in the State  
6 House, along with our colleagues in the  
7 State Senate and also perhaps, most  
8 importantly, with our Governor Wolf, that  
9 we are in negotiations with reforms to  
10 the voting system with the republican  
11 majorities in the House and Senate. We  
12 have some ideas right now on ways we can  
13 improve the voting system, but I want to  
14 hear from members of City Council on this  
15 so I can be a better advocate in  
16 Harrisburg, and maybe most importantly, I  
17 want to hear from our very able  
18 Chairwoman of the City Commissioners,  
19 Lisa Deeley, and also Omar Sabir and also  
20 Al Schmidt.

21 I think that we could learn a  
22 lot from this discussion, and thank you  
23 to Councilman Jones for working with me  
24 and my staff to put this together, and I  
25 think going forward in the future, I

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2 think it's very good for us democratic  
3 members of the State House to work with  
4 our colleagues in City Council so we can  
5 be a better voice for all of  
6 Philadelphia.

7 Thank you, Chairman Jones.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so  
9 much, Representative.

10 I noticed that our President,  
11 President Darrell Clarke has joined us.

12 Are you there, President  
13 Clarke?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: How  
15 are you, Councilman?

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: How are you?

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I  
18 miss you guys.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you  
20 like to say a few words of welcome,  
21 Mr. President?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
23 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 Hey, guys. I just wanted to  
25 sit in for a few and just kind of get a

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2 sense of what's going on. I know there  
3 are a lot of challenges and potentially  
4 even more challenges as we move ahead.

5 I want to thank our state  
6 partners for staying on top of this whole  
7 issue with respect to our ability to  
8 vote. And, Mr. Chair and members of the  
9 Committee, thank you all for getting on  
10 this early and not waiting until the  
11 problem exists, and being ahead of the  
12 curve, so to speak, so we can be sure  
13 that everybody has a real opportunity,  
14 because we all know every day how  
15 important the November election is.

16 So thank you. Thank you so  
17 much.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
19 Mr. President.

20 Ms. Williams, are any members  
21 of the Committee in the Chat room wish to  
22 be recognized?

23 THE CLERK: No one requested to  
24 be recognized at this time.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. Going



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2 once, going twice. All right. Can we  
3 now bring the first panel to testify, Ms.  
4 Williams.

5 THE CLERK: Sure. I did have  
6 State Representative Boyle as our first  
7 panelist. If he has no other comments,  
8 we can call up our City Commissioners.  
9 We have with us today Commissioner Lisa  
10 Deeley and Commissioner Omar Sabir and  
11 Commissioner Al Schmidt.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome.  
13 Welcome. Good afternoon.

14 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Good  
15 afternoon. Thank you very much.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: State your  
17 name for the record, and you've been here  
18 before, begin your testimony. How are  
19 you, Commissioners?

20 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Good  
21 afternoon, everyone. I am Commissioner  
22 Deeley, Chairwoman of the Philadelphia  
23 City Commissioners.

24 We, the City Commissioners, are  
25 charged with conducting the elections in

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2 Philadelphia. This is a difficult enough  
3 task in the best of times as money, the  
4 Election Code, state guidance,  
5 procurement, and the ability to purchase  
6 or rent space are all outside of our  
7 control. I think I speak for all of my  
8 staff and the elections personnel around  
9 the Commonwealth when I say that it is a  
10 less than thankless job.

11 We are frequently faced with  
12 decisions where there is no good option,  
13 and the best option is often just the  
14 least bad one. Often enough we are left  
15 to carry the water for decisions that are  
16 made in Washington, Harrisburg or on the  
17 second or fourth floors, often times at  
18 the last minute.

19 The June primary election was  
20 unlike any election we had before in  
21 Philadelphia and will ever have again.  
22 Everything but the kitchen sink was  
23 thrown at us for June, and although it  
24 had its bumps, we are proud to not have  
25 had the issues we saw throughout other

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2 parts of the country where things did not  
3 go as well.

4 As we look back to June, we  
5 know that poll workers were, and continue  
6 to be, the true heroes of the day. In  
7 following public health procedures to the  
8 best of our ability, COVID-19 caused the  
9 cancellation of our Election Board  
10 training classes, an unprecedented move  
11 that was done in consultation with the  
12 state and out of the safety of our  
13 Election Board workers, our training host  
14 sites, and our staff.

15 If you consider that we changed  
16 the entire way we stand up an in-person  
17 election, moved poll workers out of their  
18 usual locations, had them work on boards  
19 where they were unfamiliar with each  
20 other on a still new voting system, with  
21 no training, it is a true testament to  
22 our neighbors who are so committed to the  
23 voting process that Election Day  
24 proceeded in these historic conditions.

25 For the primary, a huge effort

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2 to highlight the mail-in ballot option  
3 was undertaken. The Department of State  
4 mailed every democrat and republican  
5 voter a postcard with a URL to the online  
6 application and conducted a TV and social  
7 media campaign. In Philadelphia, we  
8 provided information in paper  
9 applications with the City's food  
10 distribution program, and we partnered  
11 with City Council on radio advertising.  
12 We thank you all for that collaboration.

13 The aforementioned robust  
14 communication efforts have already begun  
15 for November. All the departments'  
16 social media accounts are urging  
17 Philadelphians to vote -- to apply for a  
18 mail-in ballot daily. We will continue  
19 to look at the e-mail and texting option  
20 in order to drive voters to the online  
21 forum, and we will again look to partner  
22 with the food distribution program, as we  
23 did in the primary.

24 I plan to put forth a motion  
25 that the Board of Elections pre-pay the

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2 return postage of the ballots so that  
3 voters do not have to leave their homes  
4 to buy a stamp.

5 As of today, with permanent and  
6 new applications, Philadelphia already  
7 has over 140,000 mail-in ballot  
8 applications, and that number will likely  
9 more than double before the October  
10 deadline.

11 For comparison purposes, the  
12 Board received 225,230 applications for  
13 the June primary; 16,101 applications for  
14 the 2012 general election; 15,887  
15 applications for the 2016 general; and  
16 5,742 for the 2016 primary.

17 For the general election, I ask  
18 that the state please continue the  
19 efforts that were made in the primary  
20 and, in addition, make the information  
21 about applying for a mail-in ballot  
22 available...

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are you  
24 there? Are you okay?

25 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: I am. My

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2 screen went blank. I apologize.

3 I ask the state to please  
4 continue the efforts that were made in  
5 the primary and, in addition, make the  
6 information about applying for mail-in  
7 ballots available with the online portal  
8 Pennsylvanians use to apply for  
9 unemployment claims as well as other  
10 sites that act as other state resources  
11 and paper applications, and information  
12 be put in bags at Wine and Spirit stores.

13 I ask that the City place the  
14 link to the app Philadelphiavotes.com on  
15 all their websites, which will direct  
16 voters to all the various ways they can  
17 apply for a ballot.

18 Counting all the mail-in  
19 ballots during a global pandemic proved  
20 to be a monumental task, where at times  
21 we were unsure if we would certify the  
22 election on time. New York City, who,  
23 like us, saw a spike in the number of  
24 mail ballots this primary, is still  
25 counting their mail ballots three weeks

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2 after their primary election. I am proud  
3 to say that despite what is stated in the  
4 resolution authorizing this hearing, we  
5 did certify on time, something that not  
6 every county in the Commonwealth did, and  
7 this could not have happened without a  
8 tremendous undertaking by our dedicated  
9 staff. We are looking into ways that can  
10 speed up the process for November without  
11 sacrificing accuracy.

12 Philadelphia voters also sent  
13 us a message on June 2nd. Despite a  
14 pandemic, polling place changes, civil  
15 unrest, curfews, and the availability of  
16 the new no excuse mail-in ballot option,  
17 they left their homes to go vote.

18 As we prepare now for November,  
19 we cannot lose sight of the fact that a  
20 significant percentage of Philadelphia  
21 voters will prefer to vote in person on  
22 the machines rather than through the  
23 mail. Whatever reason that may be, we  
24 must prepare to stand up to elections to  
25 meet the needs of our voters.

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2 To give you the sense of the  
3 scale of that task, one election will  
4 look like our gubernatorial general  
5 election and the other will resemble  
6 Denver's presidential election. As we  
7 prepare for November, there are new  
8 changes making their way to the  
9 Legislature, which means the counties  
10 will likely not get new guidance from the  
11 Department of State, who are also swamped  
12 and underfunded, until mid August or just  
13 about when poll worker trainings will be  
14 starting up. Assuming that the  
15 Legislature does not make any additional  
16 changes to the declaration envelope, we  
17 will be able to order our new supply in  
18 time to begin mailing the ballots timely.

19 It is unlikely that the  
20 Legislature will allow for polling place  
21 consolidation in November, but even if  
22 they do, it could never be on the level  
23 that we saw in the primary. The  
24 presidential general election is a  
25 totally different animal than any other



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2 election in the cycle, and we need to  
3 have as many locations available as  
4 possible. Therefore, we are working to  
5 prepare for a normal division-based  
6 election.

7 Since changes are going through  
8 the Legislature, I do have a few  
9 legislative requests. Please eliminate  
10 the secrecy envelope requirement for the  
11 mail ballots. Pennsylvania is currently  
12 only one of just 16 states that require  
13 either a secrecy envelope or sleeve to be  
14 included with the mail ballots. It is a  
15 vestige of the past, back when these  
16 ballots were counted at the polling  
17 place. Mail ballots are now counted on  
18 an industrial level, and the secrecy  
19 envelope can be replaced with using outer  
20 declaration envelopes with a security  
21 lining.

22 A significant amount of time  
23 and effort goes into physically removing  
24 the ballots from multiple envelopes.  
25 First the secrecy envelopes must be

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2 removed from the outer declaration  
3 envelope. Then all of the secrecy  
4 envelopes must re-pass through the system  
5 so that physical voted ballots can be  
6 removed from the secrecy envelopes. This  
7 second pass leads to an unnecessary delay  
8 in getting the ballots to the scanners.  
9 If the secrecy envelope requirement were  
10 to be eliminated, then county election  
11 officials would be able to more quickly  
12 process the ballots after the election.

13 In addition to the extra time  
14 that it takes to count the votes after  
15 the election, we have also found that the  
16 secrecy envelopes create extra confusion  
17 for voters, especially for the hundreds  
18 of thousands who have never voted through  
19 the mail before.

20 As the first elected official  
21 to call on the Governor and Legislature  
22 to extend the deadline to return voting  
23 ballots to the Board of Elections in the  
24 primary, I again urge the same for the  
25 November election and to make it

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2 permanent. Due to Governor Wolf's  
3 executive order, 9,143 Philadelphia  
4 voters had their votes counted in June  
5 that otherwise would have been rejected  
6 as late. Currently, voted ballots must  
7 be received by the Board of Elections by  
8 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, November 3rd.  
9 I ask that the deadline for county Boards  
10 of Elections to receive voter ballots be  
11 extended to November 10th and that all  
12 voted ballots received by that date and  
13 postmarked by November 3rd be accepted.  
14 I also ask that ballots received on  
15 November 4th with a missing or damaged  
16 postmark also be accepted.

17 This change needs to be  
18 announced early. The voters of  
19 Philadelphia deserve clarity when dealing  
20 with their right to vote, and we have a  
21 responsibility to provide clarity and  
22 common sense deadlines for voters to cast  
23 their ballot.

24 This November will be  
25 especially difficult with COVID-19

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2 returning to the region sooner than  
3 expected, unfunded mandates, a  
4 high-stakes election, a shortage of  
5 resources, and a mountain of  
6 expectations. I frequently find myself  
7 discussing our funding issues, only to be  
8 told that there is no money, but that is  
9 immediately followed with an ask for us  
10 to do more. It is frequently to send  
11 applications to every voter with return  
12 postage, which would cost over \$1  
13 million; to add more satellite offices  
14 for in-person mail-in locations, which  
15 would cost about \$140,000 per location,  
16 in addition to staff and equipment; to  
17 add more ballot drop boxes, which,  
18 including installations, costs up to  
19 \$10,000 each, plus the additional staff  
20 to collect all the ballots; or for  
21 advertising outreach to low turnout  
22 communities and those that lack internet  
23 access, which could cost tens of  
24 thousands to hundreds of thousands  
25 depending on the length of the campaign

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2 and the medium. These are all things  
3 that we are exploring, but they come with  
4 a cost.

5 At the same time, we have been  
6 flat-funded. This means that we  
7 currently do not have the money in our  
8 budget for the \$95,000 per election that  
9 we must spend on paper ballots or the  
10 \$50,000 to rent the vehicles to collect  
11 the paper ballots on election night. We  
12 only have \$150,000 budgeted for postage  
13 in Fiscal Year 21, far less than the  
14 \$600,000 that we need to add to our  
15 postage accounts for the November  
16 election. That does not include the  
17 \$200,000 in postage to mail every voter  
18 household a postcard listing their  
19 polling place, which is not budgeted.

20 The Department of Public  
21 Property still does not have the funds in  
22 their budget to move us into a long-term  
23 warehouse where the machines can be laid  
24 out optimally so that our staff can  
25 quickly inspect, repair, pack, and ship

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2 the machines. In addition, our  
3 COVID-related expenses from the primary  
4 will exceed the CARES Act funding that we  
5 received.

6 The House fiscal note for Act  
7 77 said, quote, "It is presumed the  
8 county Boards of Elections could handle  
9 any influx of voter registrations within  
10 a shorter timeframe, 30 days down to 15  
11 days, utilizing existing staff and  
12 resources," end quote.

13 Clearly, the staff in the House  
14 Appropriations Committee who prepared  
15 that document never spoke to a single  
16 election official around the  
17 Commonwealth. We estimate that the cost  
18 of additional staff just on the  
19 registration piece alone will be nearly  
20 \$2 million a year or we risk not being  
21 able to process typical  
22 presidential-level application volumes.

23 After the influx of mail-in  
24 ballots from COVID, we now have to look  
25 at possibly trying to hire even more

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2 people to process all of those  
3 applications, though this is difficult  
4 with our space limitations and the need  
5 for social distancing.

6 Before COVID-19, the  
7 Administration stepped up and increased  
8 our budget, but this was later rescinded.  
9 As I said in my budget testimony, we  
10 would like to ask Council that you please  
11 consider revisiting our budget in the  
12 first or second quarter of the fiscal  
13 year when more information about the  
14 City's fiscal health is known.

15 As I said earlier, we are  
16 preparing to stand up to elections in  
17 November, an in-person election and a  
18 mail-in election. We are expecting about  
19 a 50/50 split in voters between the two  
20 methods of voting. This means we need to  
21 be prepared to process over 350,000 mail  
22 ballots, twice as many as we saw in the  
23 primary election. To do this in a timely  
24 manner, we have been in contact with  
25 other large voting jurisdictions around

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2 the country who process hundreds of  
3 thousands of mail ballots for best  
4 practices. Based on those conversations,  
5 we are exploring purchasing various  
6 election specialized equipment that will  
7 speed up the ballot sending and counting  
8 process. Basically we need to start  
9 thinking like the Revenue Department  
10 rather than the Elections Department in  
11 terms of how much mail is moving through  
12 our office.

13 For in-person voting, while we  
14 know that we will have to get out of some  
15 high-risk polling places, we are working  
16 to return voters to as many of their  
17 normal polling places as possible. Our  
18 Polling Place Unit is currently reaching  
19 out and contacting the owners of polling  
20 places, preparing the list of polling  
21 places who are committed to hosting us in  
22 November and finding replacements for  
23 those who are not. While the process is  
24 still ongoing, we are over halfway  
25 confirmed for the number of locations



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2 that were used in the 2019 general. I am  
3 pleased with this progress given it is in  
4 the middle of summer and many of these  
5 locations have been closed for months.

6 The other key aspect of  
7 standing up a normal election in November  
8 is the poll workers. Unlike other  
9 jurisdictions around the country,  
10 Pennsylvania County Boards of Elections  
11 have much less control over the poll  
12 workers, who they are, and where they are  
13 working. We do not possess that kind of  
14 control, as many of the poll workers are  
15 constitutionally elected or court  
16 appointed. Much of what we do is to fill  
17 vacancies. A large effort goes into  
18 confirming that people plan on showing up  
19 to work and tracking those vacancies.  
20 When we know of a vacancy, we work to  
21 fill it. This will be no easy task, but  
22 our Election Board Unit is starting the  
23 process now, earlier than usual.

24 In the primary, we paid the  
25 poll workers an additional \$100 as

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2 incentive pay, which we were able to do  
3 budgetarily because of the consolidated  
4 polling place. If we need to provide  
5 incentive pay again in November, it will  
6 cost \$851,500.

7 The Election Board Unit is also  
8 working to secure locations for training  
9 and will begin trainings earlier than  
10 normal and hold more classes to reduce  
11 class size to allow for social  
12 distancing. We are also exploring an  
13 online training component similar to what  
14 other large jurisdictions have  
15 successfully implemented.

16 One change from Act 77 that I'm  
17 afraid everyone has forgotten about but  
18 could cause confusion at the polls in  
19 November, especially at the in-person  
20 locations, is the elimination of the  
21 straight party option from the ballot.  
22 Philadelphians are used to voting  
23 straight party. Indeed, about 52 percent  
24 of Philadelphia voters used the straight  
25 party option in the 2019 general

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2 election. Originally I was hoping that  
3 we can conduct a public education effort  
4 to inform voters of this change, but with  
5 COVID reappearing, it seems that mail-in  
6 ballots will be the dominant messaging  
7 this fall. So I ask that when you are  
8 meeting with folks, please remind them  
9 about this.

10 In closing, I want to thank the  
11 staff of the Philadelphia City  
12 Commissioners Office, who have been  
13 working throughout this pandemic and are  
14 nothing but dedicated and committed to  
15 the cause. I would also like to thank  
16 election staff workers throughout this  
17 Commonwealth who have been dealing with  
18 the crisis while performing their duties  
19 often in an ever-changing environment.  
20 We are all working together to ensure  
21 Pennsylvanians have their right to a  
22 free, fair election and can have their  
23 voices heard on November the 3rd.

24 Thank you for this opportunity  
25 to provide testimony.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
3 Commissioner.

4 Is it the will of the group  
5 that we allow other persons to testify  
6 before Q and A? Is that all right?

7 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.  
9 Who else? Commissioner Schmidt,  
10 Commissioner Sabir? Either/or.

11 You've got to unmute yourself.

12 COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT: For the  
13 sake of moving things along to questions,  
14 there's just two issues that I want to  
15 raise very quickly, both regard  
16 legislation in Harrisburg. One has to do  
17 with how soon we can begin opening and  
18 processing those ballots. Waiting until  
19 Election Day is, in my opinion, much too  
20 late to begin physically processing them.  
21 The more work we can do before Election  
22 Day, the quicker we can begin counting on  
23 Election Day.

24 The other is -- and I realize  
25 this is well intentioned -- putting the

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2 date to apply for a mail-in ballot a week  
3 before the date that it is due back to us  
4 unintentionally disenfranchises voters,  
5 and it was hopeful it was something that  
6 was going to be addressed in the first  
7 round in election reforms in Act 77.

8 If a voter does what they  
9 should do and they apply by Election Day,  
10 it's very possible that between the  
11 time -- even if we turn these ballots  
12 around in realtime, the application in  
13 realtime and mail it out the next day,  
14 there's not enough time to make it to the  
15 voter and then back to the Board of  
16 Elections for their vote to be counted  
17 unless a couple different things are  
18 changed.

19 Again, for the sake of brevity,  
20 I just wanted to raise those quick two  
21 issues.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
23 Commissioner.

24 Commissioner Sabir.

25 COMMISSIONER SABIR: Hello.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Hello.

3 COMMISSIONER SABIR: Hey, how  
4 is everybody doing?

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: We're good.

6 COMMISSIONER SABIR: Can you  
7 hear me?

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, we can.

9 COMMISSIONER SABIR: Okay.  
10 Good. I just wanted to thank you,  
11 Council. Definitely looking for your  
12 support. We're definitely trying to get  
13 the word out there, you know, strategic  
14 outreach with strategic community  
15 partnerships. That's definitely going to  
16 cost us resources. We want TV  
17 commercials. We want social media guys.  
18 We're developing a mobile app.

19 But we have to inform and  
20 educate our voters. We have to inform  
21 and educate our poll workers, which will  
22 definitely increase and enhance the  
23 voting experience for an average voter.

24 And, again, we mentioned  
25 earlier, our voter turnout definitely was

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2 higher. It was 32 percent. For the last  
3 couple presidential elections, we  
4 averaged about 20 percent for uncontested  
5 presidential election. We were at 32  
6 percent, which is very high, and I  
7 believe that we actually can do better  
8 with the more resources that's spent for  
9 TV commercials, you know, ads on buses.  
10 We want billboards. We want to  
11 advertise. We want to explain to people  
12 how important it is to vote, their civic  
13 duty, and letting them know how to do it.  
14 It's very important, so people don't feel  
15 disenfranchised. You want to vote with  
16 the rules.

17 Across the country what we have  
18 seen, we seen a lot of mistakes in  
19 vote-by-mail ballots, which caused a lot  
20 of rejections. We saw in California over  
21 100,000 vote-by-mail ballots were  
22 rejected from states from people not  
23 signing them, not printing the  
24 appropriate date on them. So that all  
25 goes to the education and outreach

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2 program, and if we do that officially and  
3 we do it well, again, it will not  
4 disenfranchise our voters.

5 So please, we definitely need  
6 some more resources for outreach.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. So  
8 I'm going to give members of the  
9 Committee an opportunity to be  
10 recognized, but I'm going to ask three  
11 quick questions while people use that  
12 Chat feature and I'm going to call on  
13 Samantha to recognize them.

14 The most pressing question I  
15 would have, based on the increased use of  
16 mail-in ballots, was there any increase  
17 in voter fraud?

18 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: No,  
19 Councilman Jones. Contrary to what we  
20 often hear about mail-in voting, the  
21 mail-in voting is pretty much fraud-free.  
22 We didn't see any increase or anything  
23 alarming about our mail-in ballot  
24 participation.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Second



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2 thing, I hear a lot about what internally  
3 the Commissioners Office is going  
4 through. Is there any reason to plug in  
5 with the U.S. Post Office? Has that part  
6 of the process gone seamless?

7 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Actually,  
8 we are working with our colleagues in the  
9 United States Congress, our local  
10 Congress people, to arrange a dialogue  
11 between us and the Postal Service,  
12 because it is indeed an issue when, as  
13 Commissioner Schmidt pointed out, voters  
14 are doing exactly what we are instructing  
15 them that they can do by waiting until  
16 the end to apply for a ballot, but it is  
17 unrealistic. The post office is also  
18 operating under very extraordinary  
19 circumstances. So we hope to be able to  
20 engage with the local post office in the  
21 coming weeks.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: And I guess,  
23 finally, I'm very pleased to hear that  
24 you are reevaluating polling locations  
25 and trying to increase the number of

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2 them. To the credit of the voting  
3 public, people patiently stood in line  
4 for hours to vote in some circumstances,  
5 and I understand that in a general  
6 election, we can anticipate greater  
7 volume and hopefully less delays. So I  
8 am encouraged by the notion that you're  
9 looking at that. And, you know, the  
10 sooner we can help you publicize where  
11 polling locations are, the better.

12 And with that, Samantha  
13 Williams, are there people looking to ask  
14 the Commissioners questions?

15 THE CLERK: Yes. So the first  
16 Councilmember up for questions is  
17 Councilmember Thomas.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES:  
19 Councilmember Thomas.

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

22 Good afternoon, colleagues.  
23 Good afternoon, Commissioners. I want to  
24 start just by throwing what probably so  
25 many of my colleagues will do, is just

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2 commending you for your work and your  
3 effort during this time. I can only  
4 imagine how difficult it was to deal with  
5 a process and a system that was so new to  
6 all of us and then to have to deal with  
7 it during a pandemic. I can only  
8 imagine. So I commend you for the job  
9 you've done.

10 And thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
11 for convening this important  
12 conversation.

13 I just wanted to start by  
14 asking about early voting centers. You  
15 know I'm a big advocate of it. I know  
16 you need resources to just execute the  
17 expected number of ballots that you're  
18 going to receive, but I think that it's  
19 important to at least have a  
20 conversation. So I was hoping to hear  
21 from you as to where you are with early  
22 voting centers and what you think -- what  
23 do you anticipate us being able to do.

24 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well,  
25 thank you so much, Councilman, and thank

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2 you for your help. You helped us out  
3 with some staff, and I appreciate that,  
4 during a very, very busy time as we were  
5 trying to get those ballots out. So  
6 thank you so very much.

7 As I stated in my testimony,  
8 the cost of satellite early voting  
9 centers are roughly about \$140,000 each,  
10 and that doesn't include the staff to  
11 staff them. But we do recognize as part  
12 of Act 77, that is an access to voting  
13 that we absolutely would love to be able  
14 to provide to Philadelphia voters. So,  
15 ideally, we would like to see early  
16 voting centers in each Council district,  
17 but we, like everything else that we are  
18 working on and preparing a plan for, it  
19 all depends on how much dollars we have  
20 in order to put these plans forward.

21 COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT: And  
22 we've been in regular conversations with  
23 the Pennsylvania Department of State  
24 about this. I mean, the money is  
25 really -- resource is a very important

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2 part of it, but also just the physical  
3 infrastructure to run dedicated lines to  
4 those locations. If anything can be  
5 accessed over the internet, it can be  
6 hacked into. So in order to have those  
7 early voting centers or really in-person  
8 mail-in voting centers requires a  
9 dedicated line, and we require the  
10 assistance of the Pennsylvania Department  
11 of State to get that done.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So thank  
13 you. I appreciate your response.

14 So just listening to that and  
15 anticipating us possibly moving forward  
16 and actually doing that, how much work do  
17 you think it will save you if you were --  
18 so how much work do you think it would  
19 save you and your offices if you were to  
20 have the early voting centers as an  
21 option for people who are in between,  
22 right? Like maybe they are a little  
23 uncomfortable voting by mail, but at the  
24 same time, they might be still a little  
25 concerned about the pandemic that we're

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2 facing. I just see the early voting  
3 centers as a happy medium.

4 What would it take for us to  
5 get to the point? Because we have our  
6 state partners on the call and they're  
7 listening. So what would it take to get  
8 to the point to try to get us in a  
9 position where we can actually pull this  
10 off?

11 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well,  
12 understand, it wouldn't save us any work.  
13 It would just increase our amount of work  
14 that we have to do, because it would  
15 require, as we've seen -- actually, we  
16 were just recently in Colorado and they  
17 have a whole ballot collection team and a  
18 whole remote voting system, where we  
19 looked at it and it looks like it's great  
20 and it's wonderful to be able to offer  
21 Pennsylvanians and particularly  
22 Philadelphians another way to vote, where  
23 they might even feel safer or more at  
24 ease if they can go early and see a  
25 person and interact with somebody rather

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2 than get that mail ballot. We know that  
3 for some people, they're just not there  
4 yet to feel confident or comfortable  
5 filling that ballot out at home and  
6 putting it in the mail, but they may feel  
7 comfortable and confident if they were to  
8 go see somebody and see an actual person  
9 and have an exchange with an individual  
10 from the Board of Elections.

11 So it will not give us any less  
12 work. It will give us more work, and it  
13 will require us to identify staff to then  
14 go and staff these in-person mail-in  
15 voting centers, and that will also  
16 require us to be able to have staff that  
17 will be there nights and weekends, and  
18 then we have to work on the IT component,  
19 as Commissioner Schmidt mentioned. We  
20 also have to work on the ballot security  
21 issue, because we can't -- you have to  
22 recognize that those ballots then are  
23 live voter ballots. So there's a whole  
24 chain of custody that will have to be  
25 worked out and a whole team of people

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2 that are going to have to be dedicated  
3 just to the customer service, the  
4 customer interface, the voter interface  
5 with that, as well as supervising those  
6 employees and supplying those locations  
7 with the necessary equipment and then  
8 getting those ballots back, recognizing  
9 the need to maintain the integrity of the  
10 chain of custody.

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,  
12 Commissioner. I appreciate that. And,  
13 again, thank you for your work. If there  
14 is anything that I can do, if there is  
15 anything that we can do as a Council body  
16 to help support you in this process,  
17 please let us know. I hear you when you  
18 talk about how big of an undertaking it  
19 will be, and I think that that can be  
20 part of the solution to help some of the  
21 anxiety that a lot of the voters have so  
22 we can put us in a position where we are  
23 assuring that every vote counts and we're  
24 doing it in a timely fashion.

25 Again, thank you so much. I



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2 appreciate all your work, and of course  
3 anything we can do to help you with this  
4 effort as far as voting -- and I did hear  
5 Commissioner Sabir as well as far as the  
6 importance of marketing and advertising,  
7 and I would love to brainstorm some  
8 possible areas where we can make that  
9 happen as well. Thank you.

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I  
11 appreciate you, sir.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
13 Member Thomas.

14 Ms. Williams, who is next?

15 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
16 Gauthier.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member  
18 Gauthier.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank  
20 you, Mr. Chair.

21 Good afternoon, Commissioners.  
22 I just have a few questions.

23 During the June primary, the  
24 poll books were printed prior to the  
25 deadline for requesting a mail-in ballot.

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2 And so while counting votes, employees  
3 had to undertake the time-consuming  
4 process of manually confirming that  
5 people did not vote twice. How are we  
6 addressing this issue for the election  
7 this fall?

8 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well,  
9 yes. So poll books had to be cut in  
10 order for them to get -- in order -- the  
11 tapes have to be cut in order for them to  
12 be able to get to the printer to be  
13 printed, and then they have to be  
14 distributed to 1,703 divisions. So  
15 obviously those deadlines create an  
16 issue, and that's why changing that voter  
17 registration deadline from 30 days to 15  
18 days, that compounds that poll book  
19 issue.

20 But the Department -- we have  
21 been in conversation with the Department  
22 of State and they are working on making  
23 changes to the poll book that will more  
24 readily identify people that have already  
25 applied for a mail-in ballot. This is a

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2 supplemental list that goes to the  
3 polling location, will be more -- easily  
4 identified by the poll worker. And also,  
5 Councilwoman, as I mentioned in my  
6 testimony, with the inability to train  
7 our poll workers, it really -- it's just  
8 a true testament of their absolute  
9 dedication, but that is also part of the  
10 education piece on our poll workers, so  
11 that we know and the poll workers can  
12 recognize the difference between an  
13 eligible voter that appears in the poll  
14 book and a voter that appears in the  
15 supplemental sheet that is not -- should  
16 not be voting in person. But still the  
17 need to reconcile the poll books is a  
18 huge challenge.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: So just  
20 to clarify, we'll have to do that manual  
21 check again?

22 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: As of  
23 right now, yes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.  
25 Are we thinking of any ways to avoid

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2 that, and is it possible in any way?

3 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: We are  
4 working on ways to expedite it and we are  
5 working on ways to make it less of a  
6 tedious process. It was made more  
7 difficult in the primary because the  
8 books were so voluminous, but with our  
9 abilities to hopefully start sooner, that  
10 should really cut down the time that that  
11 will take.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.  
13 Commissioner Deeley, in your testimony  
14 you talk about using technology to help  
15 package, sort, and tabulate ballots. Can  
16 you talk more about the technology you're  
17 looking at procuring, the cost of the  
18 technology, and the efficiency this  
19 technology will bring to your operations?

20 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Sure. So  
21 as I stated earlier, we have been looking  
22 around the country at best practices, and  
23 what we found is that the jurisdictions  
24 where they have really amped up their  
25 mail-in voting, they've been able to do

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2 so by pretty much automating the entire  
3 process. So when we talk about  
4 equipment, we are talking about a sorter  
5 that is election specific so that the  
6 ballots can be sorted and mailed out and  
7 they can be electronically adjudicated.

8 I mean, it just -- there's so  
9 much automation that goes into that. So  
10 instead of -- for example, we need a  
11 high-speed printer that will print  
12 ballots much faster than what we saw in  
13 the primary. We need to be able to stuff  
14 the envelopes through automation. So  
15 that -- the machine that we're looking to  
16 buy would stuff the ballot into the  
17 envelope, put the insert in, put the  
18 instructions in, it will go through the  
19 system, and it would all be done  
20 mechanically. And in addition, when we  
21 get the ballots back, it would also save  
22 us the need for bodies to sit and open  
23 envelopes and unpack them.

24 So when we're talking about  
25 what we need, we need a high-speed

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2 commercial/industrial printer,  
3 specialized vote-by-mail inserter. That  
4 inserter is probably the most expensive  
5 piece. It could be over a million  
6 dollars. We need a sorter capable of  
7 sorting up to 70 trays so that we can  
8 sort by ward. And we need extractors,  
9 which will help us take the secrecy  
10 envelope and the ballot out of the  
11 envelopes. And then we need some  
12 additional scanners that will help us to  
13 count the ballots on a more high speed  
14 way.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Is  
16 there a deadline by which we would have  
17 to procure that equipment in order to be  
18 ready for the November election?

19 COMMISSIONER DEELEY:  
20 Councilwoman, we are working daily to  
21 make sure that we -- and with Procurement  
22 to make sure that we have that as soon as  
23 possible. But, yes, we do recognize we  
24 are under a very, very real time crunch.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: By when

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2 do you think we would need to have that  
3 equipment in order to use it for the  
4 November election?

5 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: We hope  
6 to have that equipment by September so  
7 that -- if it comes later, we are  
8 confident that we'll be able to get some  
9 help from the Revenue Department, because  
10 they have a mailroom down there down at  
11 the concourse that they might be able to  
12 help us get the initial run done of  
13 ballots to go out. And then as we're  
14 waiting for that deadline to pass,  
15 hopefully that we'll be able to stand up  
16 our own equipment so that when it comes  
17 back, it will be there for us to help us  
18 count faster.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.  
20 Can you talk about the level of  
21 coordination that happens between the  
22 City Commissioners and the Administration  
23 with regard to administering the  
24 election? Specifically with regards to  
25 the election in November, is there some

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2 sort of steering committee that will meet  
3 regularly?

4 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: We do  
5 meet regularly. We started the steering  
6 committee that began when the City moved  
7 to purchase a new voting system, and that  
8 steering committee has continued  
9 formation throughout. So we will just  
10 continue to do that. We're now, as we  
11 get closer to the election, we meet on a  
12 more regular basis, you know, weekly.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank  
14 you.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.  
17 What I'd like to do now is  
18 recognize Representative Boyle, and for  
19 our state partners, the next three  
20 questioners will be from the state, if we  
21 can do that.

22 Representative.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Thank  
24 you, Councilman Jones. Again, this is a  
25 very good discussion we're having about



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2 critical reforms, and thank you so much,  
3 Chairwoman Deeley, for your testimony  
4 today, but also, more importantly, for  
5 stepping up to the plate in early June  
6 for a truly, truly unique and an  
7 unprecedented crisis, and I really tip my  
8 hat to you and also thank you.

9 Thinking of the November  
10 election, obviously all eyes are going to  
11 be on the State of Pennsylvania, and we  
12 have implemented a new way of voting  
13 through a mail-in process or no excuse  
14 absentee voting, and I think we received  
15 an unprecedented and truly surprising  
16 amount of mail-in votes for the June  
17 primary, and there's a very good chance  
18 that that will be replicated for the  
19 November presidential election.

20 What concerns many -- and I  
21 think probably concerns many in the State  
22 of Pennsylvania -- is a delay in terms of  
23 getting results on election night, which  
24 could actually hamper the ability of the  
25 major networks and the state to declare a

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2 winner for President. Obviously we care  
3 about all the offices that are going to  
4 be voted on in November, but national  
5 eyes and international eyes are going to  
6 be on the numbers for President. And  
7 what is probably the worst scenario for  
8 us in the State of Pennsylvania just  
9 dealing with the political demographics  
10 that are reality in the state where we  
11 see Central Pennsylvania, Northeastern  
12 Pennsylvania, Northwestern Pennsylvania,  
13 those rural areas, the state being  
14 republican strongholds, and then  
15 Allegheny County being highly democratic  
16 and then up in the Southeast and most  
17 particularly the City of Philadelphia  
18 being democratic strongholds, what  
19 concerns me and others is that we could  
20 possibly have a dynamic on election night  
21 where Trump is ahead and we haven't yet  
22 counted our votes or the overwhelming  
23 majority of our votes in the City of  
24 Philadelphia and also some of the  
25 suburban counties. Ultimately when we do

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2 count our votes in Philly and also some  
3 of the suburban counties, we could have a  
4 different result in Pennsylvania than  
5 what the numbers look like on election  
6 night.

7 I think everyone would be on  
8 the same page that we want to prevent  
9 that from happening. And I know I went  
10 and visited you right after the June  
11 primary in person, and you and I talked  
12 about our mutual concerns in this regard  
13 and you had specifically mentioned the  
14 example of Wayne County, which the City  
15 of Detroit is located in in Michigan, as  
16 being an example that we can replicate in  
17 Philadelphia to avoid the scenario that I  
18 just laid out.

19 I was curious from you, what do  
20 you need from the city and state to  
21 replicate what you saw during your site  
22 visit to Wayne County in Detroit back in,  
23 I think you were there, in February or  
24 March? What do you need from us to do  
25 that?

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2 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well, as  
3 I told you when I was talking about  
4 Detroit, they have -- just so everybody  
5 knows, they count their ballots on  
6 Election Day night, but they have over  
7 500 temporary employees that are hired  
8 overnight. They work overnight,  
9 sequestered, with no cell phone, no  
10 access to the outside world, and they're  
11 at a convention center where they're all  
12 set up by division and there's equipment  
13 in every division, a scanner and all  
14 that. But we looked at that and we think  
15 that the way they did that was pretty  
16 good, but we're prepared -- after going  
17 to Colorado, we know that there are other  
18 ways to do it.

19 All the ways require this  
20 automated equipment that we do not have.  
21 They require space, and the space  
22 requirement is even more critical when we  
23 look at the social distancing needs. I  
24 can't -- I really -- I know I talk about  
25 it all the time, you know. I'm like a

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2 broken record about the space, but I  
3 cannot stress enough how desperately we  
4 need space, and we will need even more  
5 space should we be successful in  
6 acquiring this much-needed equipment.

7 So we need equipment and we  
8 need space to put the equipment, and  
9 we're going to need staff to help use the  
10 equipment, because basically the staff  
11 that we have is enough staff to stand up  
12 an election and to count ballots the way  
13 we have simply had to do it, but the  
14 whole -- our whole world has been turned  
15 upside down, and now we are doing two  
16 elections, two different elections, one  
17 in person and one by mail, and they both  
18 require completely different equipment,  
19 completely different set of skill sets  
20 when we talk about the staffing needs,  
21 and money and space, and really that's  
22 what it all comes down to.

23 And really I would also say  
24 that it's not all -- a lot of this is  
25 communication. What people don't realize

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2 is when we did the June primary, it was  
3 kind of like everybody was rushed into  
4 the mail ballot, right? People were  
5 waiting. They didn't know whether or not  
6 they should do it. They waited to see if  
7 maybe it was going to get better. We had  
8 never been through a pandemic before.  
9 Maybe it will get better. Maybe I can go  
10 to the polls. People were scared. They  
11 didn't know what to do. They waited long  
12 to apply for the mail-in ballot.

13 Time is our friend right now.  
14 So the earlier people apply for the  
15 mail-in ballot, the earlier we can get  
16 that ballot out to them, and then that  
17 helps us too. The earlier we get them  
18 out, the earlier we get them back, and  
19 any change that happens in the  
20 Legislature to allow us to begin  
21 canvassing earlier is -- that's all  
22 things that we need. I mean, that's  
23 something that really doesn't cost  
24 anything that would make a huge  
25 difference, just the ability to start

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2 earlier. I mean, right now, although  
3 we're able to start our Election Day, our  
4 Election Day -- our staff is completely  
5 occupied with Election Day, but if we  
6 could start doing stuff earlier and be  
7 more prepared for that and people got  
8 their ballots back to us fast, their  
9 applications back to us sooner, we would  
10 get the ballots back faster.

11 Time is our friend right now,  
12 and we should all as elected officials  
13 and people that are talking to voters  
14 constantly in this conversation, we  
15 cannot stress enough how important it is  
16 to apply early and get your ballot back  
17 to us. It really would help everything.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Thank  
19 you, Chairwoman Deeley. And as the  
20 Democratic Chair of the House State  
21 Government Committee, I think it would be  
22 productive just for me to let everyone on  
23 this call know a little bit of the  
24 background in relation to when you can  
25 actually begin counting the mail-in

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2 votes.

3 Right now under Pennsylvania  
4 law, it is 7:00 a.m. on Election Day.  
5 We, the democrats in the House State  
6 Government Committee, had actually  
7 lobbied for it to be Friday before the  
8 Tuesday general election. That was  
9 opposed by the republican majority in the  
10 State House. So that's why there was a  
11 compromise that it would be on Election  
12 Day at 7:00 a.m.

13 And then also just to update  
14 you on legislation that has gone through  
15 out committee. There is a bill that has  
16 gone through the House State Government  
17 Committee which would allow for opening  
18 all of the envelopes that are basically  
19 the non-ballot envelope before 7:00 a.m.  
20 on Election Day.

21 I really appreciate you really  
22 setting forth what you need, and I wrote  
23 it down, which was the space, you need  
24 space, you need automated equipment, and  
25 you need staff and you need legislation



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2 too.

3 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: I would  
4 also add another reason why people waited  
5 longer to decide on how to vote was, some  
6 of the conditions on Election Day and  
7 leading up to Election Day made a lot of  
8 people change their mind about whether  
9 they're going to go vote in person or by  
10 mail.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: One last  
12 question. I don't want to put you on the  
13 spot, but what would be the price tag  
14 that you believe that that would cost,  
15 the space requirement, the automated  
16 equipment, and also the 500 temporary  
17 staff?

18 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well, the  
19 space --

20 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: It could  
21 be a ball park number.

22 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: The space  
23 I'm really not clear on, but I would say  
24 the equipment is probably about \$4  
25 million.

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2 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Okay.

3 And then the 500 temporary staff?

4 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well, we  
5 would need full-time staff to operate  
6 that equipment right now based on -- it's  
7 election work, so it needs to be done by  
8 our unionized workforce.

9 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Well,  
10 thank you very much, Chairwoman Deeley.  
11 You really gave us what we need to do.  
12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES:  
14 Representative Boyle, would you like to  
15 identify members of your caucus that  
16 would like to ask questions at this  
17 point?

18 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Sure.  
19 Let me communicate with -- let me look at  
20 the Chat, see who has -- let me see who  
21 is on --

22 REPRESENTATIVE DeLISSIO: We're  
23 not allowed to use the Chat, Kevin.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE:  
25 Representative DeLissio, why don't you

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2 start off from the House State Government  
3 Committee.

4 REPRESENTATIVE DeLISSIO: Thank  
5 you. Appreciate that, Chairman.

6 Thank you for this opportunity.  
7 Appreciate everybody's hustle obviously  
8 leading up to June 2nd and trying to  
9 figure out how we can do it better,  
10 smoother for November 3rd.

11 I've been in conversations with  
12 the Department of State, Chairwoman  
13 Deeley, and I think they described  
14 satellite offices -- and this may be  
15 oversimplifying it or it may be a  
16 communication issue -- as a VPN line, a  
17 virtual private network, so that if a  
18 county chose, whether it's Philadelphia,  
19 Montgomery County -- I represent both.  
20 If a county chose to do a, quote/unquote,  
21 satellite office for the purposes of even  
22 getting mail-in ballot applications, they  
23 could put a tent up across from a church  
24 on a given Sunday with a virtual private  
25 network line. And from a former life of

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2 mine, a VPN line is not a super, super  
3 big deal. This would connect through the  
4 sewer system and you've got a satellite.

5 So I can appreciate what you  
6 were saying and what I was also -- I  
7 specifically met with and asked the  
8 Department of State that question. So I  
9 am concerned that there might be a little  
10 bit of a communication issue, and if  
11 there's any way that Chairman Boyle or  
12 any of us can help facilitate that  
13 communication so we're clear. I mean, I  
14 can appreciate the price tag that you  
15 were putting on what you're describing  
16 for a satellite office, but I was  
17 surprised that that would be acceptable  
18 to the Department and, again, very happy  
19 to facilitate a further conversation so  
20 nobody is over-thinking it and the City  
21 is -- even within the Fourth Councilmanic  
22 District, we cover a lot of territory,  
23 you know, everything from East Falls and  
24 a little bit of North Philly to Manayunk  
25 to Andorra all the way over to the

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2 Delaware County line. So even one per  
3 councilmanic district will certainly tax  
4 the geography of the Fourth Councilmanic  
5 District.

6 But I don't know if you have  
7 any reaction to that, but, again, I'm  
8 just putting it out there so that if  
9 you'd like to continue the conversation,  
10 happy to help.

11 And then one quick question  
12 about the poll books. When I dropped in  
13 to polling places on Election Day,  
14 because we consolidated polling books,  
15 the A to L's had tremendous, tremendous  
16 lines, and folks would tell me that was  
17 an all-day event. The M to Z line was  
18 practically non-existent. So I don't  
19 know if there's a way to set it up so  
20 that if we do consolidate -- and I know  
21 we're hoping there isn't consolidation,  
22 but if there is even any consolidation,  
23 if we could take a look at those polling  
24 books to be organized differently, it  
25 might facilitate some of these lines

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2 moving a little quicker. But that was my  
3 observation, one of my observations, on  
4 Election Day.

5 Thank you, everyone.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: So could you  
7 identify -- are you going to respond to  
8 that, Commissioner?

9 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: I was  
10 just going to say thank you and we will  
11 definitely be in touch with the  
12 Representative with regard to the VPN.  
13 Our conversations with the state are,  
14 everyone is still trying to figure out  
15 the VPN. So we will absolutely talk  
16 to --

17 REPRESENTATIVE DeLISSIO: Happy  
18 to help, Commissioner, honestly,  
19 Chairwoman. Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES:  
21 Representative Boyle, can you identify  
22 one more, and then we'll go back  
23 alternating city, state, city, state.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Sure.  
25 We are good right now from the House

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2 State Government Committee.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Samantha  
4 Williams, who from the City side is teed  
5 up?

6 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
7 Green.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member  
9 Green.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,  
11 Mr. Chair, for convening such an  
12 important hearing this afternoon. Also I  
13 want to thank Madam Chair as well as your  
14 fellow Commissioners for being here this  
15 afternoon, all of the work that you've  
16 been doing regarding this issue,  
17 especially during COVID-19 when we have  
18 such a disruption of our normal lives,  
19 especially the election process.

20 I think one of the issues that  
21 I've been hearing and we've chatted and I  
22 think so many people are concerned,  
23 because voting is such an important  
24 fabric of our lives as citizens in not  
25 only the City, the state, but this

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2 nation, and this fall's election takes on  
3 a very significant importance. And for  
4 so many, not being able to physically  
5 vote was very jarring because of  
6 COVID-19. Some of my colleagues in this  
7 body are familiar with the stories I've  
8 given about my grandfather, who only wore  
9 a suit to go to church and to vote.

10 And so I guess part of some of  
11 the perspective -- and I can't speak for  
12 some of the people that have raised  
13 concerns -- is, everyone is trying to  
14 make sure that we are allowing everyone  
15 to have their franchise in voting  
16 protected for this fall. So one of the  
17 questions I've been hearing, and I  
18 understand that the Commissioners have  
19 been getting more information out, but  
20 regarding some of the procedural  
21 guidelines that may be needed, what steps  
22 do you think will occur to kind of get  
23 that information out to the public  
24 regarding the aspects of the voting  
25 process going into the fall?



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2 I know you've been visiting  
3 various locations. We talked about Wayne  
4 County in Detroit and other locations,  
5 and you learned a lot from this past  
6 election, but what would you say in  
7 reference to trying to get more  
8 information out from a procedural  
9 perspective of how the election process  
10 will occur this fall.

11 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Well,  
12 Councilman, thank you, and thank you also  
13 because you and I have chatted quite  
14 frequently about our situation here with  
15 the November election.

16 Of course, we always want to do  
17 everything we can to get the information  
18 out to the voters, but we are challenged  
19 by the lack of clarity. So we don't --  
20 it's hard to push out procedures when  
21 there are still unanswered questions  
22 going through the Legislature. There are  
23 changes that have not yet been hammered  
24 out. There is guidance from the state  
25 that we're still waiting on.

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2 So we get into a difficult  
3 position where to the public, it seems as  
4 though we're withholding information or  
5 we're not telling people everything they  
6 need to know, but from our standpoint, we  
7 don't really have the final answer. We  
8 don't have the definitive process. We  
9 don't know what's going to happen. We  
10 don't know if we're going to be able to  
11 start to count the ballots early. We  
12 don't know if there's going to be any  
13 changes to Election Day. So we're kind  
14 of limited.

15 The one thing -- what we do  
16 know is that the deadlines are set and  
17 people should start applying now and they  
18 should work to get their ballot back to  
19 us as soon as possible. That, we know.  
20 We also know that we will be standing up  
21 an in-person election.

22 It is our great hope and we are  
23 doing everything based on that and the  
24 fact that we need to have as many polling  
25 places open as possible for the

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2 presidential general election. We know  
3 people should make that decision whether  
4 they're going to vote by mail or vote in  
5 person, and they should right now check  
6 their voter registration and they should  
7 make sure that they're registered to vote  
8 and they're able to participate in the  
9 process. And we have done and we will  
10 continue to push out the information that  
11 we can at this point, but it's hard for  
12 us to really -- even when it comes to  
13 like where's my polling place going to  
14 be, we have to wait until we know for  
15 certain, because we risk adding more  
16 confusion if we tell people one thing and  
17 now it's the end of August and it's  
18 changed again.

19 So we are always walking a fine  
20 line between not being -- like people  
21 thinking that we're not giving out  
22 information or giving out too much  
23 information that could then confuse  
24 voters and unintentionally disenfranchise  
25 them.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you  
3 for that response. That provides a lot  
4 more context of all of the challenges  
5 you're dealing with with a lot of changes  
6 at the state level that you're trying to  
7 deal with, as well as getting information  
8 out to the public in the best form  
9 possible.

10 I'm glad that our colleagues  
11 from the House are on this call so they  
12 can hear some of this information and  
13 participate. They bring a different  
14 perspective, them being in Harrisburg  
15 regarding some of the issues and concerns  
16 they see at a Commonwealth-wide level.

17 But I wanted to follow up on  
18 the question that was asked by Democratic  
19 Chair Representative Boyle in reference  
20 to the cost factor. I know that some of  
21 the things you talked about, we talked  
22 about \$4 million for equipment, we talked  
23 about 500 staff, the space issues, and I  
24 know it's somewhat challenging maybe in  
25 this forum to provide the full detailed

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2 budget, but is there any way that you can  
3 communicate that information to City  
4 Council as well as the Administration?

5 I know you had made requests  
6 during the budget process. I'm not sure  
7 how our finances may change in the coming  
8 weeks, that we're still lobbying at the  
9 federal level for additional federal  
10 dollars, for state and local revenue  
11 reimbursement, but is there an ability to  
12 provide information to both the  
13 legislative and executive branch  
14 regarding some of those concerns?

15 And then I also am not sure if  
16 there are any opportunities at the state  
17 level throughout the Commonwealth,  
18 because just like we're having these  
19 challenges here in Philadelphia, I'm sure  
20 these issues are also happening in  
21 Allegheny County and Erie County and  
22 Montgomery County, Chester, Bucks,  
23 Delaware, Potter County, Centre County,  
24 Elk. We can go through the list of the  
25 67 counties in the Commonwealth of

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2 Pennsylvania.

3 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Yes. We  
4 will put something together with cost  
5 estimates that we've been able to  
6 determine through our work and our  
7 research.

8 I would also add that the 500  
9 temps that Detroit needs, that number  
10 would be greatly reduced. We wouldn't  
11 need that much in Philadelphia, because  
12 the equipment will eliminate the need for  
13 a lot of the temporary staff that does a  
14 lot of the laborious work of opening the  
15 envelopes and whatnot.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,  
17 Madam Chair.

18 Mr. Chair, thank you for this  
19 hearing today.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER SABIR:  
22 Councilman, if I can just add to that.  
23 In Denver, Denver has 400,000 voters and  
24 their budget was \$10 million. We have  
25 about a million voters and our budget is

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2 about \$10 million. So Denver is making  
3 that commitment, you know, for the voting  
4 process. Again, we have to make that  
5 commitment.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,  
7 Commissioner Sabir. Duly noted. Also  
8 looking forward how we can work with you  
9 and Councilmember Thomas as well as the  
10 other members of Council and our State  
11 Representatives, even State Senate  
12 counterparts, to help work and get  
13 information out regarding the election in  
14 the fall through social media and other  
15 means to really try to educate the  
16 citizens of the City of Philadelphia. So  
17 thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
19 Member Green.

20 Ms. Williams, are there any --

21 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
22 Squilla.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Vice Chair  
24 Squilla.

25 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: How are

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2 you? Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
3 you, Samantha.

4 I do want to thank the  
5 Commissioner and her team, all the  
6 Commissioners, for a job well done under  
7 the circumstances. It was very  
8 difficult, but I did go around Election  
9 Day looking at some of the polling  
10 places, and you're right, the workers  
11 that were there, in the timeframe that we  
12 had with the unrest and with the pandemic  
13 and everything else that's going on, did  
14 a tremendous job and they should be  
15 thanked and praised for everything that  
16 they did.

17 My question -- and a lot of my  
18 questions were answered already by  
19 previous questions, but the one that we  
20 talked about, people filing for an  
21 absentee -- or a mail-in ballot late and  
22 then the books being printed even though  
23 some people filed after the books were  
24 already printed. Is it possible, if we  
25 don't have the technology or if we don't



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2 have the iPads at hand, to be able to  
3 have a sign-in on a virtual sign-in? Can  
4 we have an iPad available even if we have  
5 books where they can just check on site  
6 if that person has already applied for a  
7 mail-in ballot and whether it was  
8 received or not?

9 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: So the  
10 supplemental poll sheets that we  
11 delivered to the polling locations have  
12 the most up to date, which after -- which  
13 would be from the time the poll books  
14 were printed to the deadline, and we get  
15 those out to the polling places. The  
16 issue is that, especially in June, some  
17 of the poll workers didn't see them,  
18 didn't look at them, because they were so  
19 overwhelmed, but like I said, by the  
20 books being so voluminous, and the  
21 Department of State is working with us to  
22 find a way to better signify those  
23 particular individuals. It's a training  
24 issue. So, I mean, if we were to  
25 introduce something new right now, it

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2 would be counterproductive, because we're  
3 in a situation where we have to teach  
4 them so much before November already with  
5 Act 77 and the mail-in voting and we have  
6 to make sure that they -- another thing I  
7 didn't even get to mention. We gave them  
8 all this PPE just in a box, right? So  
9 this time we're going to be able to  
10 explain to them what the PPE is for, what  
11 they should be doing when voters come in.

12 So we don't want to overwhelm  
13 them, and I do believe that the training  
14 aspect will make a big difference in that  
15 double voting issue that we saw in June.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Are we  
17 looking to do the training virtually this  
18 time knowing that we probably won't be  
19 able to do it in a room again?

20 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Right now  
21 we are planning to do both, but we're  
22 trying to do in-person in smaller  
23 numbers, because some of our poll  
24 workers, they're just not going to do the  
25 virtual for whatever reason, but we are

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2 also looking at a virtual training  
3 program that we've seen in other  
4 jurisdictions. That is something that we  
5 are working on right now.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Are we  
7 also looking to keep the same polling  
8 places from the primary to the general or  
9 are we looking to expand to have more  
10 locations?

11 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: We are  
12 looking to stand up the Election Day in a  
13 typical fashion similar to what we saw in  
14 November of last year, having every  
15 division stand up on its own. We do know  
16 that we will lose polling locations that  
17 are no longer available to us because of  
18 the pandemic, but the divisions right now  
19 as of today will stand up on their own.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.  
21 I think that will be easier too knowing  
22 that I think the amount of people that  
23 you'd have to go through to look to see  
24 if they had put in a mail-in ballot or  
25 not would be a lot easier, because you

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2 have that sheet and it's not on an iPad  
3 or not virtual. They could just say, all  
4 right, did you mail in your vote or did  
5 you not, and they could do a provisional  
6 ballot or --

7 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Yeah,  
8 exactly. I mean, the books that we used  
9 in the zone format were so voluminous  
10 that it was a challenge for our poll  
11 workers. But now the books will be just  
12 printed for their divisions, so hopefully  
13 that will be a big help.

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And I know  
15 you stated earlier in the hearing that as  
16 far as mailing out everybody a mail-in  
17 ballot application, the cost of that, but  
18 the best way to do it is online, if  
19 possible. If we do -- I mean, can we  
20 have counties help with that? Can we  
21 have -- I know individuals with people  
22 who are running for office sent out  
23 applications for people to do mail-in  
24 ballots. Is there a way to collaborate  
25 with people so that we don't have 20

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2 different people sending out applications  
3 for mail-in ballots?

4 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: You know,  
5 I wish there was, and I fear, Councilman,  
6 that that's going to be a huge challenge  
7 for us as we get to November. I mean,  
8 I've already heard myself personally of  
9 three different groups that are going to  
10 be mail-in applications. So it's going  
11 to be a challenge similar to the voter  
12 registration. You know, when people will  
13 say, oh, you're not -- somebody says, oh,  
14 you're not registered. Look, your name  
15 is not here, and then the people don't  
16 get their register, so they register  
17 again, or they don't get their card fast  
18 enough, so they think we didn't get it,  
19 so they register again. We're going to  
20 see that issue unfortunately with the  
21 mail-in ballot applications, I'm sure.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah. I  
23 mean, if we can encourage them to do it  
24 online, like you said, it's easier to  
25 process and get through than the manual

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2 ones. I'm not sure if these third  
3 parties are going to be doing that also,  
4 because I did receive them to my home and  
5 even names that I don't even know who  
6 they are, but saying you're not  
7 registered, we see that you're not  
8 registered at this address. So, I mean,  
9 there's going to be some confusion there,  
10 and hopefully that doesn't add to the  
11 problems that people think that there  
12 might be inequities in the process.

13 But I really appreciate  
14 everything you've done, looking forward  
15 to continue to work with you and our  
16 state legislators to make sure that  
17 November's process is if not as smooth,  
18 smoother than the primary.

19 Thank you so much.

20 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Thank  
21 you.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
23 Member Squilla.

24 Ms. Williams.

25 THE CLERK: Councilmember

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2 Sanchez.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member

4 Sanchez.

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member

7 Sanchez.

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Maybe she  
10 will join us back.

11 Who do you have next?

12 THE CLERK: There were no other  
13 Councilmembers who indicated that they  
14 wanted to be recognized in the Chat.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, with  
16 that, I think you've done a really good  
17 job of crystallizing where things are and  
18 where potentially both good and bad that  
19 can be.

20 I'm very pleased that our state  
21 partners were able to hear that and be  
22 able to be helpful moving forward. So  
23 thank you all for your testimony. Feel  
24 free to stay on the line just in case  
25 other issues come up, but thank you.

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2 COMMISSIONER DEELEY: Thank you  
3 all. Stay safe.

4 COMMISSIONER SCHMIDT: Thank  
5 you.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Ms.  
7 Williams, the next panel to testify.

8 THE CLERK: Next up we have Pat  
9 Christmas, Suzanne Almeida, and Murielle  
10 McCarthy.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
12 guys for your patience. Don't forget to  
13 take your button off mute and state your  
14 name for the stenographer and begin your  
15 testimony, please.

16 MR. CHRISTMAS: Okay. I'll go  
17 first. Pat Christmas, Policy Director  
18 for the Committee of Seventy. I'm happy  
19 to be here. I also understand we have a  
20 bit of a time crunch, so I'll keep my  
21 comments brief.

22 Thank you, Councilman Jones,  
23 for helping organize this and members of  
24 the Committee for having this public  
25 discussion obviously around -- of all



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2 crises that the country and the state and  
3 the city are dealing with, this is the  
4 one that's right in front of us, and we  
5 are running out of time to properly  
6 prepare.

7 Representative Boyle was not  
8 wrong in that without the proper  
9 investments and the planning and the  
10 collaboration that has to take place  
11 before the November election, if we  
12 basically just repeat what we did in  
13 June, we're going to have a disaster on  
14 our hands. So it is urgent that these  
15 things are taken care of.

16 And I have to acknowledge the  
17 fact that the City Commissioners and  
18 their staff worked extremely hard, long  
19 hours, on weekends, for weeks and weeks  
20 and weeks to try to pull off the June  
21 primary, and even with their best  
22 efforts, there were a lot of problems and  
23 a lot of folks were disenfranchised. So  
24 that's why this is urgent, and then  
25 again, thank you again for having this

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2 space to talk about this.

3 The Commissioners are also  
4 correct in that they have to run two  
5 major elections at the same time. Other  
6 states that predominantly do it by mail  
7 have had years to switch over their  
8 operations and also critically for the  
9 electorates to get comfortable voting  
10 that way. We're having to do this  
11 overnight, and we're having to do this  
12 overnight also in the middle of a  
13 pandemic and all sorts of other political  
14 noise that's out there. So the scale is  
15 substantial.

16 And the Commissioners are also  
17 correct in that they need this equipment.  
18 It's at least a couple million dollars  
19 worth of equipment just for vote by mail.  
20 These are the things that will put the  
21 ballot packs together accurately,  
22 efficiently, quickly, sort them for the  
23 U.S. Postal Service. Also, when the  
24 ballots come in, you have to sort them,  
25 open them quickly, and get them ready to

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2 scan.

3 Part of the reason this  
4 equipment is necessary is not just for  
5 the sake of minimizing staffing costs,  
6 but because there are surges here. It's  
7 an additional challenge, just a fact of  
8 life of elections, in that mail-in  
9 applications don't come in all at the  
10 same time, voter registration  
11 applications don't come in all at the  
12 same time, and the ballots don't come in  
13 all at the same time, and the surges,  
14 especially as the deadlines draw near, is  
15 where we risk disenfranchisement.

16 So the equipment is critical.  
17 The space is needed too. Allegheny  
18 County had a whole warehouse where they  
19 could line up their equipment just the  
20 way they needed and work things  
21 efficiently. We had to squeeze things  
22 into our regular Delaware and Spring  
23 Garden office as best we could, and folks  
24 were crunched together there.

25 The other critical components

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2 of the vote-by-mail election has to be  
3 run -- and these are outlined in our  
4 written testimony -- are the drop-off  
5 options and the early voting sites. Now,  
6 some of this is being litigated right  
7 now, and of course the General Assembly  
8 hasn't finalized and negotiated their  
9 changes to the election code either, but  
10 we have to plan right now given what we  
11 do know. And the early voting sites and  
12 the drop-off locations are essential  
13 pieces of a vote-by-mail system, and the  
14 reason is this: I mean, we want to  
15 obviously minimize the number of people  
16 who are showing up on Election Day,  
17 especially during these pandemic  
18 conditions, so the early voting sites,  
19 some number of early voting sites in each  
20 council district, and also informed by  
21 the voter data, will be needed.

22 They also provide an  
23 opportunity for people to get replacement  
24 ballots, and this is something that we  
25 had a lot of trouble with in the spring,

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2 because this was a brand new system.

3 Folks either didn't get their ballot at

4 all. That happened to some number of

5 people. A small number, but some number

6 of folks. Or if they had -- the ballot

7 got damaged and they made a mis-mark on

8 it, they need a chance to replace that.

9 That's something that can happen at the

10 early voting locations.

11 And the drop-off boxes, however

12 those are allowed given the law and

13 litigation that we're dealing with, those

14 are important because the deadlines. I

15 mean, we heard from a lot of folks who

16 they weren't sure at what point they

17 could confidently put their ballot in the

18 mail and it would get back in time, which

19 is why on the legislative side it's so

20 important that we have a postmark

21 deadline and not a received by deadline,

22 because that's a really, really

23 uncomfortable place to put voters and a

24 lot of people got clipped by those

25 deadlines in June. I mean, thousands of

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2 thousands of voters have been clipped by  
3 these deadlines for years now.

4 So just on the vote-by-mail  
5 side, I mean, if you're looking at  
6 300,000, 400,000 people voting by mail,  
7 potentially it's that scale that the  
8 Commissioners really need this equipment  
9 and the space to deal with.

10 Just a couple quick remarks  
11 about the in-person voting situation,  
12 which we've already discussed  
13 extensively. It is a good thing that  
14 we're not going to have the massive  
15 consolidation we had in the fall. That  
16 does have a suppressive effect. It's  
17 tougher for people to get around the  
18 corner to the church or their rec center  
19 or the school that they usually go. So  
20 that's a good thing.

21 The challenge will be getting  
22 the spaces filled. Pennsylvania is one  
23 of several states in the country where we  
24 still elect our poll workers. Government  
25 employees can't fill in those slots

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2 either. Both those conditions are in our  
3 state constitution. We're going to have  
4 to come back to that next session, but  
5 one of the things that we need the  
6 General Assembly to do, if they're not  
7 going to allow limited, limited point  
8 place consolidation, then they do have  
9 to, at a minimum, allow poll workers to  
10 be assigned anywhere within a given  
11 county so that our county Boards of  
12 Election and our City Commissioners can  
13 make sure these places are fully staffed.  
14 I mean, 700 or 800 polling places, 1,700  
15 precincts means 8,000, 8,500 positions  
16 that need to be filled. So it is a good  
17 thing that in this in-person election  
18 that we're running, we're going to be  
19 back to something more typical of a usual  
20 election as far as polling places, but  
21 the staffing is going to be a real  
22 challenge.

23 The last thing I'll name,  
24 again, keeping in mind that time is  
25 short, is that -- and, Councilman, you

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2 named this at the outset, communication  
3 and voter outreach is going to be  
4 critical. Two basic reasons. One is  
5 that when you change the voting  
6 procedures, they don't have the same  
7 impact on all the voters. There's always  
8 disproportionate impact. One of the  
9 things we saw in the primary is that  
10 communities of color did not use mail-in  
11 voting at the same rate, a number of  
12 different reasons for that, but they  
13 didn't use it at the same rate. And  
14 further, they applied later in the  
15 process and, therefore, were more subject  
16 to the tight deadlines and the crush of  
17 processing that had to happen at the very  
18 end. So that's just hard, on-the-street  
19 communications using everything we got.  
20 That's 17 Council offices, the  
21 Administration, the Philly Counts  
22 infrastructure, civic groups, community  
23 organizations, businesses. Everybody has  
24 got to be all on top of the voting  
25 procedures once they're clear, and they



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2 aren't entirely clear yet. Once they are  
3 clear later this summer, that has to be a  
4 top priority.

5 The other thing you named was  
6 the fact that there will be unfounded  
7 allegations of widespread voter fraud and  
8 election fraud. We know it's coming,  
9 right? So we have to make sure that the  
10 trusted messengers are there. A new  
11 initiative, VoteSafe PA, actually just  
12 launched this week. Credible republican  
13 and democratic messengers are going to  
14 speak to the fact that our elections  
15 aren't perfect, and here in Pennsylvania  
16 they're actually -- in many ways they're  
17 quite old and antiquated the way we run  
18 them, but widespread fraud is not one of  
19 our problems, and that's something we'll  
20 have to speak to.

21 So we do have a lot on our  
22 plates. The Commissioners did cover a  
23 lot of the details. It is true that they  
24 have to run two big elections at the same  
25 time. That will need more money and that

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2 will need more equipment and space, but  
3 there does have to be a plan, and the  
4 Commissioners, I believe, are working on  
5 this, because these questions came up  
6 earlier. We need to know exactly what  
7 equipment so we can procure that right  
8 now. That's really at the top of a list  
9 of really urgent needs. That's at the  
10 very top. We need to know how many early  
11 voting sites, how many drop-off  
12 locations, how much those will actually  
13 cost, and then ultimately I think a  
14 degree of collaboration we have not had  
15 in the City of Philadelphia around  
16 elections ever before really.

17 This is the most challenging  
18 election perhaps we've ever had to run,  
19 right, for all the reasons we know, and  
20 the City Commissioners need -- they need  
21 City Council, they need the  
22 Administration, they need the state, and  
23 they need all the other stakeholders  
24 around the table to make this happen.

25 So, again, I very much

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2 appreciate you and the Committee taking  
3 the time this afternoon to provide a  
4 forum about this. Of course, happy to  
5 answer any questions now or later.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
7 for your testimony. Please stick around.  
8 We're going to let the second participant  
9 in the panel testify and then we'll open  
10 up for questions.

11 Please state your name for the  
12 record and begin your testimony.

13 MS. ALMEIDA: Great. Thank you  
14 so much for having me. My name is  
15 Suzanne Almeida. I'm the Interim  
16 Executive Director for Common Cause  
17 Pennsylvania. It is great to be here.  
18 This is such an important conversation,  
19 and I really appreciate that we are  
20 taking the time to focus in on what needs  
21 to happen to make November a success.

22 I want to lift up something  
23 that Pat just said, which is about  
24 teamwork. We know that this is going to  
25 be a complicated election. We know that

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2 there are a million different things, A,  
3 that have to be done that are technical;  
4 B, that have to be communicated to voters  
5 and then back to the election officials;  
6 and, C, they have to work between elected  
7 officials at the state, county, and  
8 federal levels, right? So this is not an  
9 easy thing to do.

10 All of that being said, I  
11 really want to emphasize the need for  
12 open and transparent communication  
13 between elected officials, our City  
14 Commissioners, voters, and advocates,  
15 right? This is a two-way street, so I  
16 think it's really important that in the  
17 mix of all of the other things that our  
18 City Commissioners are doing -- and I  
19 commend them deeply for the work that  
20 they have done to educate voters, to  
21 manage the minutia that is not small.  
22 It's just a lot of it, of running an  
23 election, to deal with changing election  
24 regulations. I commend them for all of  
25 that work, but I would encourage us as we

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2 go into November to really take a hard  
3 look at how we are communicating with the  
4 public expressly, right?

5 So we know that just like we  
6 are having a hearing today, it's  
7 important that the public and advocates  
8 have an ability to ask questions and get  
9 responses. We know that published  
10 meetings make it different. We know that  
11 taking the time, even though that time is  
12 so precious and so valuable, to actually  
13 respond to public questions, to answer  
14 the phone, to talk to people who are  
15 having a problem, whether it be an  
16 advocate like myself or, more  
17 importantly, a voter who has an issue, I  
18 think all of that is really important,  
19 and sometimes that piece, I know at least  
20 for me when I am in the midst of the  
21 craziness of trying to respond to the  
22 crazy of an election, it gets lost. But  
23 there is such an important role in just  
24 communicating with voters specifically.

25 So to that end, I would just

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2 outline kind of the four key problems  
3 that Common Cause thinks when we're  
4 looking at kind of how we want to engage  
5 with the public. So one is public  
6 notice. The second is public  
7 observation. The third is public  
8 participation, and then the fourth is  
9 public deliberation. So allowing members  
10 of the public to be part of these  
11 decision-making conversations, right?  
12 And we know that that's important, not  
13 just because we want people to feel part  
14 of their government and to hold their  
15 government accountable, but it actually  
16 leads to better decision-making, which  
17 leads me to my second point, and I want  
18 to echo a lot of what Pat said and what  
19 we heard earlier today.

20 There are a list, a relatively  
21 short list, of things that we can do,  
22 policy changes that can happen at the  
23 State Legislature level, that will make  
24 our elections run more smoothly in  
25 November. First and foremost is making

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2 sure that we are allowing pre-canvassing  
3 of ballots to start earlier than that  
4 7:00 a.m. on Election Day, and I think  
5 that that responds to a lot of concerns  
6 across the board, including those of  
7 Chairman Boyle's, in getting those  
8 election results out.

9 While we know it's more  
10 important to have correct election  
11 results than fast election results, if we  
12 can get some place in the middle of those  
13 two and get the most accurate results as  
14 quickly as possible, that's obviously the  
15 best option.

16 The second is extending the  
17 deadline to return those mail-in ballots.  
18 So making sure that as long as they are  
19 postmarked by Election Day, they can be  
20 returned up to seven days after that,  
21 which is going to capture the universe of  
22 people who decide later that they want to  
23 vote by mail for whatever reason, right?

24 And then moving on to the  
25 in-person voting, I think that while I

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2 very much hope we are able to stand up an  
3 election where we have all of our polling  
4 locations open, where we are fully  
5 staffed, I think that we need to start  
6 contingency planning now to what happens  
7 if that isn't possible, right, despite  
8 the best efforts of everyone.

9 We know that we are in the  
10 midst of a public health crisis. We're  
11 in the midst of a public health crisis  
12 that seems to be getting worse instead of  
13 better at this current point in time. So  
14 we need to be aware that what happens in  
15 November, while we can plan for the best,  
16 we also have to plan for the worst. So  
17 if we have to consolidate our polling  
18 places, what are the parameters around  
19 that. How do we make sure that they are  
20 consolidated in a way that doesn't  
21 disenfranchise voters, how do we make  
22 sure that, say, no more than 5,000 voters  
23 are consolidated into any single polling  
24 place, how do we make sure that, if  
25 possible, those polling place



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2 consolidations -- those consolidated  
3 polling places are located on easy public  
4 transportation, are located in places  
5 that communities can actually reach, and  
6 that they are staffed appropriately with  
7 trained poll workers to make that process  
8 possible.

9 It's not easy, and I'm not  
10 trying to say that it will be, but I do  
11 think that, as with many things, if we  
12 start contingency planning earlier, it's  
13 going to make the process better at the  
14 end.

15 And, finally, this is a request  
16 kind of both for Council and for the  
17 General Assembly, and if we have any of  
18 our friends on the federal level  
19 listening to us today, I think that it is  
20 absolutely essential that we fully fund  
21 our elections infrastructure. Elections  
22 infrastructure is criminally underfunded  
23 across the country, and I think that  
24 that's really evident in Pennsylvania,  
25 both at the state level and at the City

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2 Council level. This is a cornerstone of  
3 our democracy, and all of these changes  
4 that we're talking about, this  
5 contingency planning, this customer  
6 service, this making sure that we can cut  
7 out time to engage with the public if  
8 they have questions or concerns, all of  
9 that requires resources, and those  
10 resources have to come from somewhere,  
11 right? We cannot draw blood from a  
12 stone. We have to make sure that  
13 these -- the Commissioners who are doing  
14 yeomen's work of running the  
15 infrastructure of our democracy have the  
16 ability to do that.

17 So I will leave it there.

18 There's obviously more to talk about, but  
19 I know that we are short on time, so I'm  
20 happy to entertain any questions.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so  
22 much for your testimony.

23 I just want to thank you both  
24 for your advocacy. I've had an  
25 opportunity to participate in both

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2 non-profits. I go way back to -- what  
3 was his name? Just retired from the  
4 Committee of Seventy.

5 Take it off mute.

6 MR. CHRISTMAS: Zack Stalberg  
7 and Ellen Kaplan were with us for --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes. So I  
9 appreciate what you guys do to keep  
10 things honest and keep things keep going,  
11 and so thank you.

12 Ms. Williams, do we have any  
13 questions?

14 THE CLERK: I do not see any  
15 Councilmembers in the Chat who wish to  
16 ask questions at this time.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: So also Fred  
18 Voigt.

19 MR. CHRISTMAS: Fred, yeah.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Come on now.

21 MR. CHRISTMAS: Three decades,  
22 that's right. That was before my time,  
23 Councilman.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's all  
25 right. It was before a lot of people's

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2 time, but it's okay.

3 But thank you, and please stay  
4 engaged. We're going to need you. I  
5 know nobody, whether you talk about a  
6 sports analogy, nobody likes losing a  
7 game, but they really don't like it when  
8 they don't think the referee was playing  
9 fair. And we're at a critical juncture  
10 with the division in this country that  
11 one thing we got to prove is that the  
12 game was fair. So we count on you for  
13 that. All right? Thank you so very  
14 much.

15 Ms. Williams, can you bring  
16 forth the last panel, I believe.

17 THE CLERK: Is Murielle  
18 McCarthy on the call? She was a part of  
19 this panel.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh, I'm  
21 sorry. Ms. McCarthy. So I only saw two  
22 images. So okay.

23 MS. MCCARTHY: Hi there.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: State your  
25 name --

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2 MS. MCCARTHY: Good afternoon,  
3 Chairman and Committee members. Thank  
4 you for calling this important hearing on  
5 Philadelphia's elections and for this  
6 opportunity to testify. My name is  
7 Murielle McCarthy and I'm a resident of  
8 Philadelphia. I'm speaking on behalf of  
9 Protect Our Vote Philly, a non-partisan  
10 coalition of organizations and  
11 individuals such as myself who are  
12 working to make sure that we have free  
13 and fair elections in Philadelphia.

14 You may have seen our letter to  
15 the City Commissioners on July 8th,  
16 signed by over two dozen organizations,  
17 including Juntos, POWER, SEAMAAC, and  
18 NAACP PA State Conference. We are  
19 testifying today to raise election  
20 security issues noted in that letter as  
21 well as a number of other issues that we  
22 hope will be answered in this hearing and  
23 future hearings.

24 Resolution No. 200376 outlines  
25 several important concerns related to the

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2 delayed counting of mail-in ballots in  
3 last month's primary. However, there are  
4 a number of other significant issues in  
5 urgent need of solutions before November.  
6 There are four areas of concern that I'll  
7 speak to, including the solutions we urge  
8 the City Commissioners to adopt.

9 Number one, paper mail-in  
10 ballot applications were not accessible  
11 to all voters. It was a prohibitively  
12 difficult and lengthy process to procure  
13 a paper ballot application for those  
14 without access to the internet, computer  
15 or printer. This issue was exacerbated  
16 by library closings, which removed access  
17 to public computers, and the lack of  
18 communication and outreach. This  
19 particularly affected older voters who  
20 are at the greatest risk if exposed to  
21 COVID at polling places.

22 The solution: A paper mail-in  
23 ballot application should be sent to  
24 every registered voter in Philadelphia  
25 or, at the very least, the Commissioners

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2 should send applications upon request and  
3 carry out widespread outreach to ensure  
4 voters and organizers are aware of this  
5 option.

6 Two, drop box locations were  
7 limited and confusing. Especially given  
8 the risk associated with public transit  
9 during this pandemic, drop boxes were  
10 often inaccessible to those who needed  
11 them most, those who live farthest away  
12 from the best known location, which was  
13 outside of City Hall. That location was  
14 made yet more inaccessible with a heavy  
15 police and military presence in response  
16 to recent protests. Other locations were  
17 announced at the last minute and had  
18 varying dates, times, and locations,  
19 leading to widespread confusion.

20 Solutions: Secure ballot drop  
21 box locations should be established  
22 throughout the City, preferably at each  
23 polling location, and should be announced  
24 clearly and concisely at least two weeks  
25 before Election Day.

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2 Number three, vote counting was  
3 mismatched and oversight was lacking.  
4 Ballots were exposed to alteration and  
5 damage during canvassing. When damaged  
6 ballots needed to be duplicated, this  
7 duplication occurred without adequate  
8 supervision. Watchers were prohibited  
9 from recording what they saw and were  
10 kept too far away to adequately observe  
11 the canvas. These concerns were outlined  
12 in greater detail in an open letter to  
13 the City Commissioners on July 8th, which  
14 City Councilmembers received.

15 Solution: There should be  
16 clear, written policies that govern the  
17 canvas process and allow for close,  
18 verifiable observation by certified  
19 watchers and the public through available  
20 technological means.

21 Four, vote counting was  
22 delayed. The canvas of all votes took  
23 nearly two weeks in June, barely meeting  
24 the legal deadline, but thankfully it  
25 did. Most of this time was not taken by



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2 scanning, but by ballot perspiration,  
3 including several days delay to check for  
4 possible double votes. This delay was  
5 caused by the failure of an electronic  
6 poll book purchase and lack of poll  
7 worker training. A similar delay on a  
8 larger scale in November could be  
9 catastrophic.

10 Solution: Poll worker training  
11 and procedures must be improved. Board  
12 staff should do as much preparation of  
13 mail-in and absentee ballots for counting  
14 as the law permits before polls close so  
15 they could be scanned as quickly as  
16 possible after polls close. More  
17 high-speed scanners can help accelerate  
18 this process. Taken together, these  
19 problems threaten the integrity of our  
20 elections. They have the potential to  
21 disenfranchise thousands of voters, can  
22 cast doubt on our election validity, and  
23 expose our results to lawsuits. But the  
24 City Commissioners have the power to  
25 solve them.

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2 On the issue of funding, we  
3 understand that more may be required in  
4 order to implement solutions. Any  
5 increases in funding to the Commissioners  
6 must be accompanied by increases in  
7 transparency and how this money is used.

8 To note, number one,  
9 Philadelphia spends twice as much per  
10 voter on election administration compared  
11 to the median of the 15 largest counties  
12 in PA.

13 Two, Commissioners spent \$29  
14 million on voting machines last year in  
15 Philadelphia, the poorest big city in  
16 America, when better options would have  
17 saved millions of dollars. The City  
18 Controller issued a report that noted  
19 undue influence by the vendor.  
20 Commissioners have never presented cost  
21 projections for the various additional  
22 expenses they foresee, such as increased  
23 costs for handling mail-in ballots versus  
24 operating expenses for the voting  
25 machines.

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2 Therefore, we recommend first  
3 Philly investigate past spending of the  
4 City Commissioners Office to ensure  
5 taxpayer dollars were spent  
6 appropriately.

7 And, second, we recommend  
8 involving the City Controller's Office to  
9 ensure accountability to the public on  
10 how taxpayer money will be spent going  
11 forward.

12 In closing, in the upcoming  
13 public meetings, we ask that you  
14 investigate these issues and request a  
15 committed plan from the Commissioners  
16 Office on how they will work to address  
17 them. We would like to emphasize that if  
18 funding is to be provided, it is done so  
19 with a detailed audit on how taxpayer  
20 dollars will be spent.

21 Thank you very much, and have a  
22 good day.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: I want to  
24 thank you for your testimony, but I want  
25 to also thank you for your format. It is

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2 so rare that testimony is presented with  
3 a problem and then a potential solution  
4 attached. I do appreciate that.

5 MS. MCCARTHY: Thank you very  
6 much. We appreciate that.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Was it  
8 submitted in writing?

9 MS. MCCARTHY: Yes, it was.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.  
11 Then we have it.

12 MS. MCCARTHY: We look forward  
13 to working with City Council and the  
14 Commissioners. Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.  
16 Do we have any questions teed  
17 up, Ms. Williams?

18 THE CLERK: I believe that some  
19 of the State Representatives have  
20 questions, particularly Representative  
21 Boyle.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES:  
23 Representative Boyle, please proceed.

24 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Thank  
25 you, Councilman Jones. Just adjusting my

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2 phone again.

3 Thank you for the panel being  
4 here. Serving in the State House, we  
5 deal with a quite ideologically  
6 conservative Pennsylvania republican  
7 house caucus. I don't think that's a  
8 surprise to many people. And often we  
9 deal with misinformation. And during a  
10 debate related to allowing for the early  
11 counting of votes back in October, we  
12 heard concerns from republican members of  
13 the State House that if we allow for  
14 earlier counting than Election Day of the  
15 mail-in votes, that there would be  
16 rampant reporting of the outcome to  
17 elections before actually having Election  
18 Day. This is despite other states doing  
19 exactly that. And we on the House State  
20 Government Committee, at least on the  
21 democratic side, couldn't find any  
22 examples of what republicans were  
23 concerned about.

24 I was interested if the people  
25 who just testified, Committee of Seventy,

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2 Common Cause, and Protect Our Vote, if  
3 they had any knowledge that early vote  
4 tabulations allowed for voting results to  
5 get out to the media and the broader  
6 public before the polls closed at 8:00  
7 p.m. on election night.

8 Thank you, Councilman Jones.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
10 Representative Boyle.

11 MR. CHRISTMAS: I'll dive in  
12 first. Thank you for that question,  
13 Representative. It's an important one,  
14 because there's some legitimate concerns  
15 about elections out there and there's  
16 some illegitimate ones.

17 Other states, as you said, do  
18 this securely and safely. So  
19 Pennsylvania should be as well.

20 With regards to like, I mean,  
21 some within an elections office doing  
22 something they shouldn't do and letting  
23 results sneak out, I saw an election  
24 director quoted a few weeks ago as saying  
25 he's never met a candidate worth going to

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2 jail for.

3 So, I mean, we're not concerned  
4 at all. Other jurisdictions do this safe  
5 and securely, and it is something that we  
6 need here in Pennsylvania to avoid a  
7 delay, a delay in getting results in.

8 MS. ALMEIDA: This is Suzanne  
9 from Common Cause.

10 I would echo all of that. We  
11 don't have any concerns with things being  
12 released early. I would echo what you  
13 said, Chairman Boyle, about the level of  
14 disinformation and misinformation that's  
15 out there. And I think I just want to  
16 take the opportunity to really lift up  
17 the onus on everyone on this call. We  
18 are all folks who talk to people about  
19 elections, who people look to as trusted  
20 messengers about elections. I think  
21 anything we can do to bring election  
22 security and the right to vote out of a  
23 partisan framework and into a democracy  
24 framework, right? This is a cornerstone  
25 of our democracy. We want safe, secure,

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2 and accessible elections for everyone  
3 regardless of which party you vote in. I  
4 think that is ultimately going to get us  
5 further. And this is not in response to  
6 anything you said, just in general. One  
7 of my soapbox issues is when people try  
8 to attach the right to vote to a partisan  
9 D or an R, and that's just not the way  
10 our country was founded.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is that it?

12 MS. MCCARTHY: I'd like to make  
13 a remark. From Protect Our Vote Philly,  
14 we do have a couple of instances where  
15 there were issues at the poll worker  
16 level. So I think what's really  
17 important is that we make sure that there  
18 are strict rules about not reporting any  
19 information outside of the Commissioners  
20 Office, any during the canvas, so there  
21 has to be the funding. And we also have  
22 to make sure that if we are to -- the  
23 most time-consuming part of processing  
24 the election is the processing of the  
25 ballots, as we all know, right? And the



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2 shortest period of time is in the  
3 scanning of the ballots, the counting.  
4 And if we get high-speed scanners, as the  
5 Commissioners are wishing to get, which  
6 is a great idea, we can do counting  
7 within days, so we won't know if anything  
8 has been leaked, and I think that's one  
9 of our concerns, is how do you find out.  
10 And it's going to be especially important  
11 in the primaries. So not so much in the  
12 general. It's going to affect local  
13 elections probably more than the general  
14 elections.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so  
17 much.

18 Representative Boyle, does that  
19 cover --

20 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: Thank  
21 you to the panel. I don't think there  
22 are any examples that critics of allowing  
23 for an early vote tabulation can cite on  
24 any sort of mass level vote tabulations  
25 getting out there, and I appreciate the

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2 contributions of the panel.

3 Thank you, Councilman Jones.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

5 Ms. Williams.

6 THE CLERK: I believe there was  
7 another State Rep who would like to be  
8 recognized, State Rep Hohenstein.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are you  
10 there, Representative?

11 REPRESENTATIVE HOHENSTEIN:  
12 Yes. Thank you, Councilmember.

13 My question is relating to what  
14 are going to be the systems for us to use  
15 for that pre-canvassing. One of the  
16 things that was tossed around when we  
17 talked about pre-canvassing in the State  
18 Government Committee in Harrisburg was  
19 literally taking the uncounted ballots  
20 and placing them into an entry prison  
21 cell in the county prison. And this was  
22 one of the mechanisms that some of the  
23 folks in other counties were thinking  
24 about, and I know we're not going to do  
25 that in Philly, but what I would like to

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2 know -- and we can take the conversation  
3 later, but I would love to hear from any  
4 of these panelists if there are specific  
5 mechanisms that have been used, specific  
6 statutory language that is used in other  
7 states that have mail-in where they do a  
8 pre-canvassing or a pre-opening of the  
9 ballots and then a counting later, what  
10 is the system to have been the most  
11 effective in other places so that we  
12 don't have a free-for-all with some  
13 counties having good, strong, secure  
14 systems and other counties sticking  
15 ballots in prison cells.

16 MR. CHRISTMAS: Thank you,  
17 Representative. Well, first, it is  
18 important that all counties are doing  
19 things the same way, and fortunately it's  
20 not just a few other states and  
21 jurisdictions that manage the pre-canvas  
22 process safe and securely. Two-thirds of  
23 states allow some version of this, and  
24 there is some variation. In California,  
25 they can start opening envelopes almost

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2 30 days out. In some states it's like on  
3 a rolling basis. As a ballot comes in,  
4 they're able to open it and pre-process  
5 it.

6 So there are a number of  
7 examples to look at. I don't have the  
8 specifics to talk about right now, but we  
9 can certainly pull those together. And I  
10 think, if anything, to your question and  
11 Representative Boyle's question, like  
12 there are a lot of different ways to do  
13 this well, and we know that because you  
14 look pretty much anywhere else in the  
15 country and they can manage it. So we  
16 can certainly sidebar the specifics.

17 REPRESENTATIVE HOHENSTEIN:

18 Yeah, please do, because we know we don't  
19 get a whole lot of time to turn around  
20 and present our positive proposals in  
21 Harrisburg because of the partisan nature  
22 of the committee. We often have less  
23 than 24 hours to effectively provide  
24 amendments or proposals to make some of  
25 these pieces of legislation better. So

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2 the sooner we're able to talk, the  
3 better.

4 MR. CHRISTMAS: Of course.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
6 Representative.

7 Ms. Williams.

8 THE CLERK: I think we can move  
9 on to the next panel of witnesses.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
11 all for your testimony.

12 THE CLERK: Judith Max Palmer,  
13 Brenda Shelton-Dunston, John Zimmerman,  
14 Emma Tramble, and Sergio Cea. And we  
15 also will need to at some point connect  
16 another witness by phone.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

18 Thank you for your patience.  
19 Please state your name for the record and  
20 begin your testimony.

21 MS. PALMER: Hi. My name is  
22 Judith Max Palmer. Good afternoon. I'm  
23 a committee person in the 46th Ward.

24 A lot of the comments that I  
25 was going to make have already been

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2 addressed, so I just want to reiterate  
3 them briefly.

4 Yes, please eliminate that  
5 secrecy envelope. Please start  
6 processing ballots earlier, if at all  
7 possible. The multiple poll books I  
8 noticed generate a lot of confusion and  
9 delay. I know there is an electronic  
10 version available. We should absolutely  
11 use it, if possible. And, yes, the City  
12 Commissioners must have the staff to  
13 process ballots swiftly.

14 Please send mail-in ballots to  
15 all voters, and encourage voters to send  
16 their ballots in as soon as they've made  
17 their decisions. Many voters don't  
18 realize that sending ballots in early can  
19 expedite the process.

20 The number of people that we  
21 had to redirect from Christy Rec Center  
22 was shameful. Many had been told that  
23 they could drop off mail-in ballots at  
24 our polling place after having already  
25 been redirected to a weekend drop-off

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2 location from yet another polling place.

3 So these folks had to be sent in turn to  
4 the Blackwell Library. That's four stops  
5 for a mail-in ballot. I wonder how many  
6 were dropped in the trash because the  
7 voter was late for work.

8 We need drop-off boxes for  
9 early and day of voting at every polling  
10 place clearly marked what they're there  
11 for, who can use them. We also need more  
12 early voting centers, and they need to  
13 have week and weekend hours.

14 But watching voters get sent  
15 from one polling place to another has  
16 been a consistent and infuriating feature  
17 of every election I have seen since  
18 taking my office.

19 Please -- I want to take a page  
20 from the book of Ms. McCarthy and provide  
21 solutions. Please equip each polling  
22 place with a tablet so that people can  
23 look up their polling places. At the  
24 very least, have each polling place  
25 assign one person the task of helping

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2 people look up their polling place  
3 instead of just any given poll worker  
4 sending any given voter to wherever they  
5 think might be that voter's polling  
6 place. People kept saying that they've  
7 been sent from place to place to place,  
8 and this happens every single year twice  
9 a year.

10 I know that Sixty-Six Wards  
11 announced that the consolidation of  
12 polling places cost Philadelphia almost  
13 20,000 votes in the primary. We can't  
14 risk a proportion to undercount this  
15 fall.

16 Many committee people -- I'm  
17 going to give another solution, if  
18 possible. I know many committee people  
19 are eager to assist in voter education  
20 and turnout and outreach and process. We  
21 are unfortunately underutilized. If you  
22 can help us serve, then we will have  
23 better results, and Philadelphia deserves  
24 those results quickly and accurately.

25 Thank you for your time.



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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
3 for your participation. We appreciate  
4 it.

5 Yes, ma'am. Good afternoon.

6 MS. SHELTON-DUNSTON: Good  
7 afternoon. I am here from -- Chairman  
8 Jones and members of the Legislative  
9 Oversight Committee, my name is Brenda  
10 Shelton-Dunston and I am here to testify  
11 today on Resolution 200376. I'm coming  
12 to you as the Executive Director of the  
13 Philadelphia Black Women's Health  
14 Alliance, a public health professional, a  
15 committee person, a past poll watcher,  
16 advocate and, most important of all, as a  
17 citizen of the United States who has a  
18 right to vote during elections, as do  
19 other citizens in the U.S., acts that I  
20 successfully exercise my option to vote  
21 by mail-in ballot during the primary.  
22 However, that was not the case for others  
23 who attempted to enroll in and use the  
24 ballot.

25 The primary election occurred

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2 at a time, as you all were talking about,  
3 when COVID-19 was disproportionately  
4 impacting the black community due to  
5 increased vulnerability based on chronic  
6 health despair conditions, systemic  
7 health inequities, and social  
8 determinants of health.

9 As of July 20, 2020, 46.5  
10 percent of the Coronaviruses in Philly  
11 are occurring in the black community.  
12 There is an urgent need to rectify any  
13 and all operational and marketing  
14 issues -- I've heard great ones today.  
15 Thank you -- at all levels to ensure that  
16 all persons who desire to vote by mail-in  
17 ballot are able to do it without concern  
18 for their health and well-being.  
19 Therefore, I submit the following  
20 recommendation:

21 Collaborate with community  
22 advocates, leaders, ministers to ensure  
23 that all citizens are educated and have a  
24 working knowledge of how to request,  
25 receive, and submit a mail-in ballot.

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2 Conduct a marketing campaign to  
3 increase awareness, inclusive of  
4 door-to-door. Train community partners,  
5 advocates, and others to do this  
6 outreach, and assist family members,  
7 neighbors, church members to enroll to  
8 vote by mail. Having the mail-in option  
9 is critically needed now as we move  
10 toward the November election during the  
11 COVID-19 pandemic that in and of itself  
12 is a crisis within the crisis within the  
13 black community.

14 Thank you all so very much. I  
15 also would like to give thanks for the  
16 recommendations for the early voting  
17 centers as well as the urgent need for  
18 the funds to support our voting and our  
19 ability to vote. This is critical.  
20 Please take that under consideration.

21 Thank you for the opportunity.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
23 for your testimony, Ms. Dunston.

24 I don't see names, so I'm going  
25 to go with the gentleman and then the

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2 lady. State your name for the record.

3 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Hi. Yes. My  
4 name is John Zimmerman. I'm a committee  
5 person down in South Philly, Ward 26,  
6 Division 12. I just wanted to also just  
7 kind of discuss the letter from Protect  
8 Our Vote Philly. I was also one of the  
9 people that co-signed that letter. It  
10 outlines a number of issues that they  
11 were concerned about and that we're  
12 concerned about.

13 Obviously time is tight, and I  
14 think we all are very aware of some of  
15 the issues, but I just wanted to just  
16 emphasize the desire that I would love it  
17 if the Council would definitely take a  
18 look at that letter and try to take a  
19 look at as many of those policies as  
20 possible.

21 But the one thing I just wanted  
22 to leave you guys with is more of a  
23 personal (inaudible). I've lived in  
24 South Florida during the whole 2000  
25 election, hanging chad nonsense, and it

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2 is a blemish that Florida will never live  
3 down, and I just want to say on a  
4 personal note like it is not something  
5 that I'd like to see Philadelphia be in  
6 that club. I don't want to be in that  
7 club. I just want to leave you guys with  
8 that note, that we really need to do  
9 something about this or we're going to be  
10 in trouble.

11 I know everybody takes it  
12 seriously. I know everybody knows that,  
13 but just taking a look and to watch some  
14 of that stuff go down firsthand -- I was  
15 only a county away -- it is not something  
16 that we want to experience or be a part  
17 of in any way, and I just really want to  
18 encourage you guys to really just take  
19 this very seriously and just do what  
20 needs to be done.

21 And to the lady that said that  
22 the committee people want to be involved,  
23 I'm a committee person. I totally  
24 understand, and I agree with her. It's  
25 difficult, because we try to get all the

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2 work and do work and get the word out,  
3 and it's tough sometimes and we need all  
4 the support we can get.

5 So I know time is tight and I  
6 don't want to take up too much time, but  
7 I just want to thank you all for your  
8 time.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
10 for your testimony. And it's  
11 interesting, I was sitting here thinking  
12 about that very close election with the  
13 first Bush -- no; George Bush, Jr. It  
14 was Junior, right?

15 MR. ZIMMERMAN: George Bush,  
16 yes.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: And how  
18 close that was and how a recount right  
19 then could have split the country right  
20 in half. So fair processes are very  
21 important, no matter who wins.

22 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Absolutely.  
23 Absolutely.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

25 MR. ZIMMERMAN: Thank you, sir.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: And thank  
3 you for your patience, ma'am. Please  
4 state your name and begin your testimony.

5 MS. TRAMBLE: Hi. Hello,  
6 everyone. My name is Emma Tramble and I  
7 am a Philadelphia voter, and I have a  
8 different perspective than many members  
9 of the general public. Professionally I  
10 am a community and voter engagement  
11 strategist who works locally and  
12 nationally, including Georgia, Wisconsin,  
13 and Michigan. So I'm very familiar with  
14 quick-changing laws and all kind of  
15 things that need to happen as voters go  
16 to the polls. But the reason I'm here is  
17 because of my labor of love, Philly. I  
18 run a grassroots organization called My  
19 Family Votes that focuses on  
20 strengthening the power of black voters  
21 through shared information.

22 So one of the things that  
23 happened in May -- I'm sorry; April, I  
24 started calling the Commissioners Office  
25 to get clarification around mail-in

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2 voting, and I called so much basically  
3 they know my voice and my name and  
4 probably my number. And there are three  
5 areas that became crystal clear about  
6 operationally that we could see  
7 improvement in. I am really grateful to  
8 the Commissioners Office as well as  
9 people who simply work in Room 142 and  
10 Delaware Avenue, because they actually  
11 helped provide us with rules and  
12 regulations around mail-in voting, which  
13 made our work very accurate.

14 So one thing is the way the  
15 Commissioners' offices are set up creates  
16 information silos. So even when we go to  
17 the official website  
18 Philadelphiavotes.com and go to the  
19 Contact Us page, there are five phone  
20 numbers on that page, and voters have  
21 expressed that they don't know what  
22 Commissioners do, so they don't know  
23 which Commissioner's office to call, and  
24 they don't know which number to use. So  
25 I am suggesting that perhaps there be one



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2 number that routes voters possibly and  
3 spreads out the calls among the  
4 Commissioners' office just to relieve  
5 some of that confusion.

6 Also, information needs to be  
7 shared and standardized between the  
8 different Commissioners' offices, so that  
9 when you call, you get the same  
10 information regardless of where you call,  
11 particularly a deeper knowledge of laws,  
12 rules, and procedures so that the next  
13 steps for voters are clear.

14 The next area is more nimble  
15 and better online manning places for  
16 information. Commissioner Sabir did  
17 mention that they are looking at an  
18 online app and some other advertisements,  
19 but Philadelphiavotes.com is like the  
20 official landing place, and most voters  
21 do not know about that website. It  
22 contained information where you could put  
23 your address in and find out where that  
24 new polling place was. That was not  
25 included on the postcard. So any

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2 information that the Commissioners'  
3 offices send out to voters, it would be  
4 great if they include that website  
5 address.

6 Also, for fast-moving  
7 information, websites are very hard to  
8 update quickly in their work. There was  
9 a lot of missing information or was very  
10 slow to post around drop boxes or the  
11 deadline changes around mail-in voting,  
12 and if there was one official social  
13 media site that people could access. All  
14 of the Commissioners have their own  
15 sites, but they're not official, and of  
16 course, again, if you don't know who the  
17 Commissioners are or what they do, you  
18 may not visit them.

19 And the last piece is, those  
20 people who have big platforms can do a  
21 lot of great work. There are many, many,  
22 many, many -- and I mean many --  
23 telephone town halls given by officials,  
24 whether they were elected or they have a  
25 specific office. The information was not

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2 always accurate or confusing.

3 Commissioner Deeley did say that

4 information changes rapidly. We were

5 able to stay on top of the rapid

6 information because we do leverage social

7 media, and it would be great if maybe the

8 Commissioners Office offered like a cheat

9 sheet for elected officials when they do

10 give like telephone town halls so they

11 have the basic information, and then they

12 can provide phone numbers or the phone

13 number for people to call so that they

14 can follow up.

15 It's very heartbreaking to hear

16 seniors on those telephone town halls

17 weeks before the election lamenting about

18 how they may not be able to vote. There

19 are safety nets and checks built into the

20 system, but because of the information

21 flow, it wasn't sufficient for people to

22 know what to do.

23 So I do believe that we can do

24 better. Philly is a great town. We've

25 got a lot of smart people. And I

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2 appreciate this meeting and I look  
3 forward to whatever I can do to help us  
4 move forward.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
7 for -- we're glad to hear from My Family  
8 Votes. Is that the name of it?

9 MS. TRAMBLE: Yes; dot com.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Dot com.

11 All right. Ms. Williams.

12 THE CLERK: Sergio Cea, are you  
13 on the line?

14 MR. CEA: Yes. I'm here.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.  
16 Please state your name for the record and  
17 begin your testimony.

18 MR. CEA: Good afternoon,  
19 Councilmembers. My name is Sergio Cea.  
20 I use he/him pronouns and I'm a  
21 democratic committee person in the 46th  
22 Ward.

23 In my view, the primary  
24 election was a confusing mess and  
25 contributed to the disenfranchisement of

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2 our voters. There was a deep  
3 disinvestment when we looked at  
4 communities of color. Black voters  
5 picked up nearly 50 percent of our active  
6 voter base, but when it came to mail-in  
7 ballot applications, we're severely  
8 underrepresented. Latinos in North  
9 Philly divisions had the lowest use of  
10 mail-in ballots. That means that these  
11 folks either sat out the election or  
12 voted in person. And let us be clear  
13 that anyone who voted, worked or  
14 volunteered in person at the polls did so  
15 at great risk for their lives and health.

16 The consolidation of polls and  
17 lack of information on the poll closings,  
18 as mentioned before, cost us close to  
19 20,000 votes, according to the Sixty-Six  
20 Wards blog, which also noted that black  
21 voters' divisions had the strongest  
22 falloff when divisions were moved far  
23 away.

24 So like many people invested in  
25 elections, I have many questions about

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2 the primary given that we are going  
3 through changes from Act 77, a pandemic,  
4 civil rights uprising that is ongoing.  
5 We can all agree that these are great  
6 challenges. Getting information from the  
7 City Commissioners' offices was  
8 difficult, and we would get a last-minute  
9 notice about drop-off locations, both for  
10 ballot applications and actual ballots,  
11 many of which were one-time locations  
12 only for two hours, some in offices of  
13 candidates running for primary.

14 Our ward was promised by City  
15 Commissioners that all original polling  
16 places would have a sign informing voters  
17 that their location had changed at the  
18 location. That never happened. The  
19 simple solution there could be notifying  
20 committee people of both parties in  
21 advance so that we can address it  
22 ourselves, because we're more than  
23 willing to do that, if we're informed.  
24 If we're told to expect something, we  
25 will expect it.

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2 I'm worried about litigation  
3 targeting ballot drop-off locations and  
4 invalidating votes with ballots missing  
5 secrecy envelopes. That's a mistake that  
6 many voters I know made, including my  
7 partner. And on Election Day, I was  
8 volunteering from opening to closing  
9 alongside Judith, who spoke earlier, at  
10 Christy Rec Center in West Philly. That  
11 was where a combination of a dozen polls  
12 had been consolidated. And there was not  
13 enough hand sanitizer or PPE provided,  
14 and voters, board workers, and volunteers  
15 largely relied on candidates that were  
16 running for office for these public  
17 needs.

18 We had droves of people all day  
19 come to our location assuming it was a  
20 valid drop-off location, as Judith  
21 mentioned. Folks that went to Latin Boys  
22 went to us and then had to go to  
23 Blackwell Library. Many of them came  
24 like right before the end of time, so  
25 they wouldn't have had enough time to go

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2 from Christy Rec Center to Blackwell in  
3 time to make the deadline. So that was  
4 active disenfranchisement that we were  
5 seeing.

6 We had so many of the voters to  
7 apply for mail-in and never received it  
8 and were confused what to do next. Many  
9 of those voters didn't vote because of  
10 health concerns. I know that was a case  
11 for Karen Bojar, who is a committee  
12 person, who literally wrote the book on  
13 committee people. I think this might be  
14 the first election that she wasn't able  
15 to go, because she didn't receive one.

16 At the polls on Election Day,  
17 there was no social distancing. We had a  
18 long line of tables in a row with  
19 Election Board workers sitting right next  
20 to each other, many not using PPE  
21 properly or at all. Voters similarly  
22 were right next to each other, though  
23 some had social distancing in front and  
24 in back of them, but since they were all  
25 in lines next to each other, that wasn't



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2 really social distancing.

3 And similar to what other folks  
4 said, some folks, depending on their last  
5 name, were in and out and others were in  
6 really long lines, depending on their  
7 last name, and that was kind of unsafe.

8 At Christy Rec and because it was a nice  
9 day, we could have had more social  
10 distancing outside in an open area for  
11 people to wait before they go inside.  
12 But I know that November, we might be  
13 dealing with rain or other situations and  
14 we need to be preparing for that as well.

15 The majority of voters at  
16 Christy Rec were members of the black  
17 community, who faced disproportionate  
18 rates of infection and death from  
19 COVID-19 when compared to white peers.  
20 So we need to be doing better.

21 Committee people at other polls  
22 reported long lines. Election Board  
23 workers were told not to come in, but  
24 their replacements were no-shows. It's  
25 clear that more training is needed for

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2 our workers, and we should be feeding,  
3 paying, and supporting them for their  
4 service and sacrifice.

5 We also need to actively manage  
6 expectations for election results, which  
7 have been frustrating for many, just  
8 letting folks know it might take a while.  
9 But on Election Day, I was hearing people  
10 really close to the democratic party  
11 saying, just check results tomorrow,  
12 which was definitely not the case.

13 In this political moment,  
14 Philadelphia could be clear that if black  
15 lives matter, then black voters should  
16 matter as well. We need investment in  
17 black divisions to make sure that they  
18 are informed and registered for voting by  
19 mail. Barriers such as internet access  
20 and limited turnaround need to be  
21 addressed. Mail-in applications should  
22 be sent to every voter like they have  
23 been done in other counties, and postage  
24 payments should be covered.

25 Because of the stress with

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2 voting by mail, much of it coming  
3 directly from the President, we need  
4 messaging campaigns that inform voters  
5 that vote by mail is the most healthy and  
6 reliable way to vote, but also as  
7 Councilmember Thomas said earlier, making  
8 space for folks who do see voting in  
9 person as like a tradition and maybe  
10 making space for early voting.

11 Regardless of party or  
12 preferred candidate, I think we are all  
13 committed to having a just election that  
14 addresses our voters' needs in regards to  
15 health, access, reliability, and  
16 transparency.

17 I thank you for your time, and  
18 thanks to all of those who submitted  
19 testimony and solutions today.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: I want to  
21 thank you for taking a deeper dive. One  
22 of the things that we didn't cover as  
23 well as we probably should was the whole  
24 pandemic and social distancing aspect of  
25 an election. So thank you for kind of

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2 re-underlining that particular aspect of  
3 it.

4 MR. CEA: Yeah. And I  
5 definitely want to say we really need to  
6 be using a lens of race, because that's  
7 who is going to be disproportionately  
8 affected, especially in the general  
9 election.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
11 again.

12 Ms. Williams.

13 THE CLERK: Our last witness  
14 today is Kairol Rosenthal.

15 Ms. Rosenthal, are you on the  
16 line?

17 MS. ROSENTHAL: Yes. I'm here.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good  
19 afternoon, Ms. Rosenthal.

20 MS. ROSENTHAL: Hi.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Please state  
22 your name and begin your testimony.

23 MS. ROSENTHAL: Thank you. My  
24 name is Kairol Rosenthal. I live in  
25 Fairmount and I organize Fairmount Votes.

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2 I'm also a committee person here in the  
3 15th Ward.

4 We really used the primary in  
5 the 15th Ward as a dress rehearsal for  
6 the general, and we had a lot of success  
7 with getting folks to vote by mail. I  
8 think we had the second highest  
9 percentage of voters apply to vote by  
10 mail in the City, and there's a lot that  
11 we learned that we'd like to repeat and a  
12 lot of things that we know that we need  
13 to do and change. And I just wanted to  
14 share with you some of our observations  
15 and things that I think could be done  
16 both by City Council folks and State Reps  
17 since I have the attention of both of  
18 these categories of people.

19 One of them is training all of  
20 your constituent services staff to  
21 provide support to voters over the phone.  
22 Maybe some of you have already done this,  
23 and I also do not know what the workload  
24 currently is of your constituent services  
25 staff, so I apologize if this is not

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2 realistic, but I think it would be very  
3 useful to explore.

4 In the primary, hold times at  
5 the Department of State often exceeded 30  
6 minutes. People were calling to learn  
7 about vote by mail. These were the same  
8 people who were trying to call about  
9 unemployment. I mean, so many people  
10 right now are on hold just in their daily  
11 life, and 30 minutes is not -- there's no  
12 excuse for that.

13 Also, the Board of Elections  
14 was often just simply too swamped to take  
15 any calls at all, and that's so  
16 understandable when we hear about their  
17 great staffing needs that they have. So  
18 I think it's really important that a  
19 place that constituents know to call,  
20 State Reps, City Council, that instead of  
21 referring their questions out to a  
22 different phone number to call, if you  
23 can instead provide the answers to the  
24 questions that they have. If they need a  
25 paper application, that you have them on

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2 hand, along with stamped return  
3 envelopes. The City Commissioners Office  
4 was phenomenal about providing plenty of  
5 these to us. We ran our own voter  
6 hotline here in Fairmount. I got many,  
7 many calls a day because we publicized  
8 the hotline. And so when voters knew to  
9 call us and say, hey, I need a  
10 replacement ballot, I would get a list of  
11 everybody who called me throughout the  
12 day and I would make one call to Trish or  
13 Donna in Lisa Deeley's office, who were  
14 phenomenal, and I saved so many people  
15 the time waiting on hold or just not  
16 knowing the information. And so if  
17 there's the capacity to build out the  
18 constituent services staff in your  
19 offices to help alleviate some of this  
20 pressure on the Board of Elections, I  
21 think that would be really useful for  
22 voters, who sometimes feel left in the  
23 dark and frustrated.

24 Also, every person who is on  
25 City Council knows how to run a campaign,

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2 because you got elected. You ran a good  
3 one. Same with State Reps. You're in  
4 office. And so using your know-how about  
5 running campaigns, to reach out to your  
6 constituents about vote by mail, how to  
7 apply and also when to return the  
8 ballots.

9 I think it's important that we  
10 start to have consistent, simple  
11 messaging that is used throughout the  
12 City, and people look to you as leaders  
13 and leadership, and we know particularly  
14 in communities of color, it's important  
15 to have validators talking about vote by  
16 mail. It's important to see pictures of  
17 these validators filling out  
18 applications, putting them in the  
19 mailbox. And I think it's -- you all  
20 have a great power and a great role to  
21 play. And it's important going forward  
22 too that there's so many things that we  
23 don't know, because Harrisburg won't be  
24 in session until September and because  
25 there are lawsuits that we don't have a



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2 verdict on yet, but what we do know, as  
3 Commissioner Deeley said, is we have time  
4 and we have to start now. And we believe  
5 that one of the best things we can do is  
6 set a false deadline of applying to vote  
7 by mail for September 14th. That doesn't  
8 necessarily mean that you tell voters  
9 that that's when they have to do it, but  
10 your internal organizing around it needs  
11 to begin now so that voters apply by  
12 September 14th, and then you begin to  
13 send out the message that ballots have to  
14 be returned immediately. As soon as  
15 they're sent in the mail, start telling  
16 people, you get your ballot, return it  
17 immediately. I think these are things  
18 that we can do to help take pressure off  
19 of the Board of Elections.

20 Another thing is, the  
21 coordination of all of this great work  
22 that so many non-profits are doing,  
23 legislators, Councilpeople. When I heard  
24 Commissioner Deeley say, well, there are  
25 already three entities that are going to

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2 be sending out ballots to voters, I just  
3 think can we have one person who is  
4 helping with coordination. We need to  
5 make sure that entities and organizations  
6 aren't duplicating efforts. It's very  
7 confusing to voters.

8 I had many voters call me and  
9 say, I just got a paper application in  
10 the mail from my Councilperson. I think  
11 I have to apply again. My application  
12 must not have gone through. Because  
13 people are getting applications for  
14 multiple sources, it does become  
15 confusing. And so I think there is a  
16 great role for coordination and a  
17 coordinator, and there's funding to do  
18 this.

19 And two more things that I  
20 wanted to comment on are -- another thing  
21 that I know that there is funding for and  
22 I am aware of a lot of non-partisan  
23 funding sources that I am happy to share  
24 that can help do this work, and one thing  
25 that I think would be very useful is --

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2 some people alluded to the long lines  
3 that happen at polling locations, and so  
4 many people are being sent away because  
5 maybe they don't have the right ID to  
6 vote for the first time, maybe they're in  
7 the wrong polling location, they don't  
8 know their division, they weren't sure  
9 what to do because they've already  
10 applied for a mail-in ballot but got in  
11 line anyway. I think it's really  
12 important that we recruit customer  
13 service workers who are volunteers that  
14 can work the lines, particularly in  
15 communities of color where there is a  
16 higher rate of disenfranchisement and  
17 voter suppression, that we have folks who  
18 can be in the line and help people make  
19 sure that they're in the right polling  
20 place before they wait for two hours,  
21 that they have the right ID before they  
22 wait for two hours, that we're handing  
23 out to people diagrams of how the  
24 machines work. Many people who only vote  
25 in every presidential election but not

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2 the elections in between will never have  
3 used these machines, and they're  
4 confusing when you look at it for the  
5 first time. So that we're training  
6 people in line. When you go inside, this  
7 is what you're going to need to do.

8 There is funding to do this  
9 work, and we just need the leadership to  
10 coordinate it.

11 I believe the same is true with  
12 committee people. I felt extremely  
13 underutilized as a committee person, and  
14 I took it upon myself to do work of the  
15 last person who was speaking about  
16 polling locations not having any signage  
17 about where it changed and how the  
18 Commissioners said that they were going  
19 to hang those signs up. They did, and  
20 there happened to be many barriers that  
21 prevented them from being able to do  
22 that. So as committee people, we made  
23 our own signs to tell people where  
24 polling locations had changed to. We  
25 made our own sign saying here are the

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2 places that you can drop off a ballot.

3 Don't walk to the next polling location

4 and think you can take it there. You

5 can't. Here's where you can go instead.

6 We hope that systems are in

7 place so that we don't need to have this

8 sort of in-the-moment triage. However,

9 as we've seen in the last election,

10 challenges do arise, and I think we need

11 to make sure that we're using committee

12 people on the ground to, again, help take

13 the pressure off of the Board of

14 Elections. We have heard how much work

15 it is going to be to simply run an

16 in-person election and to do all of the

17 mail-in -- counting of mail-in ballots,

18 and we really need to get resourceful

19 about how volunteers and committee people

20 can best use their time.

21 So I also wanted to end by

22 including my phone number and saying

23 please feel free, if you are an elected

24 and you are interested in learning more

25 about non-partisan funding sources, I do

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2 a lot of fundraising. I am connected to  
3 a lot of national funders. They're very  
4 interested in supporting voting  
5 infrastructure throughout the country.  
6 And there are a lot of eyes on  
7 Philadelphia right now, and I think they  
8 could use some direction in how this  
9 money could be spent and who the best  
10 leaders in the community are to put the  
11 message about vote by mail for us.

12 So my phone number is  
13 215-765-1420. Again, 215-765-1420. My  
14 name is Kairol Rosenthal, and I really  
15 welcome any calls about connecting  
16 funding to ways that you can provide  
17 these services to constituents in your  
18 Council districts.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Putting your  
20 phone number out there like that is a  
21 true commitment. Thank you so very much.

22 MS. ROSENTHAL: You're welcome.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.  
24 Are there any questions from members of  
25 the Committee or members of the

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2 Pennsylvania State House?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Any closing  
5 comments, Representative Boyle?

6 REPRESENTATIVE BOYLE: I just  
7 wanted to thank you, Councilman Jones. I  
8 think we got a lot of useful information  
9 from this hearing, and we need to get to  
10 work to make sure that this election is a  
11 pivotal election, which I said earlier,  
12 the most important election since 1860,  
13 runs smoothly in the City of Philadelphia  
14 and also the Commonwealth of  
15 Pennsylvania. So thank you, Councilman,  
16 for everything you did to put this  
17 together.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.  
19 Samantha Williams, are there  
20 any other people to testify?

21 THE CLERK: We do not have any  
22 more witnesses to testify, but we do have  
23 some individuals who submitted written  
24 testimony to be incorporated into the  
25 record, and that is from Vanessa Fields,

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2 Margaret Shaw, Lena Smith, and Karen  
3 Bojar.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you  
5 for that, and we will include that in the  
6 official testimony.

7 Hearing no others to testify,  
8 this concludes the business before the  
9 Committee of Legislative Oversight today  
10 and this hearing --

11 THE CLERK: Councilmember  
12 Jones, I believe Councilmember Green  
13 wanted to be recognized.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES:  
15 Councilmember Green, please.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,  
17 sir.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member  
19 Green.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Just  
21 multi-tasking here this afternoon.

22 But thank you for a great  
23 hearing. I just hope that we'll be able  
24 to reconvene again, especially  
25 considering this was joint with our



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2 colleagues in Harrisburg and here in  
3 Philadelphia. This is such an important  
4 issue. This type of joint collaboration  
5 is very important. And I know before we  
6 know it, it will be Labor Day and then  
7 October and then we'll have the election.  
8 So hopefully this Committee could maybe  
9 come together or continue to have  
10 conversations even if it's not  
11 necessarily in a traditional public  
12 hearing, but still find ways to work  
13 collaboratively as we move into November.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: We want to  
15 again thank Representative Boyle for  
16 initiating this and making sure that city  
17 and state issues came together, because  
18 if you don't do joint hearings like this,  
19 by the time this group agrees with that  
20 group, the election will be over. And so  
21 everyone heard what they needed to hear  
22 from all of the panelists, and hopefully  
23 we can take this information, make it  
24 useful and apply the appropriate  
25 resources to make it a smooth election,

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2 and I hope we can do that.

3 Are there any other members who  
4 wish to --

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

6 Mr. Chairman, this is Mark Squilla. I do  
7 want to thank you too. I especially want  
8 to thank Samantha for her great job and  
9 delegating all the information out to the  
10 folks. It's not an easy job. Everybody  
11 has a lot of questions, and your team did  
12 a great job, so thank you and  
13 Representative Boyle and everybody else  
14 who was involved in this. There's a lot  
15 more work to do, but I think we're up to  
16 it, and looking forward to positive  
17 impact from it.

18 Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

20 All right. And is that it, Ms.  
21 Williams?

22 THE CLERK: Yes, that's it.

23 And thank you, Councilman  
24 Squilla.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I feel

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2 the same way, but I'll tell you another  
3 time, not doing it publicly.

4 Thank you very much, Ms.  
5 Williams, for your hard work and  
6 diligence.

7 This concludes the business  
8 before us today of the Committee on  
9 Legislative Oversight. We will stand at  
10 recess to the call of the Chair just in  
11 case we have to come back at this.

12 Thank you all very much.  
13 (Committee on Legislative  
14 Oversight adjourned at 4:40 p.m.)

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