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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND THE HOMELESS

City Hall, Room 400
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, June 3, 2025
1:00 p.m.

Bill Nos.: 250329, 250330, and 250331

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE-RICHARDSON
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY J. YOUNG, JR.
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

MS. JONES, CLERK

1

2

P R O C E E D I N G

3

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

4

afternoon, everyone. I now note

5

that the hour has come and this

6

hearing is called to order. This is

7

a public hearing of the City Council

8

Committee on Housing, Neighborhood

9

Development and The Homeless. The

10

purpose of this public hearing is to

11

hear testimony on Bill Nos. 250329,

12

250330 and 250331.

13

Ms. Jones, would you please

14

call the roll?

15

THE CLERK: Councilmember

16

Squilla. Councilmember Jones.

17

COUNCILMEMBER JONES:

18

Present.

19

THE CLERK: Councilmember

20

Bass. Councilmember Driscoll.

21

COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

22

Present.

23

THE CLERK: Vice Chair

24

Landau.

1

2

VICE CHAIR LANDAU:

3

Present.

4

THE CLERK: Chair Gauthier

5

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

6

Present.

7

Thank you, Ms. Jones.

8

Joining us also is Minority

9

Whip Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke.

10

All right. All right. All right.

11

Let's get started. We all love

12

Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke.

13

Let's -- but let's move

14

this process along. I note for the

15

record that a quorum of this

16

committee is present and this

17

hearing is called to order.

18

Good afternoon. It is

19

wonderful, truly wonderful to see so

20

many people here in this chamber.

21

Thank you for getting involved with

22

your local government.

23

As a renter myself, I know

24

how important it is to make sure

1

2 every renter in the city of
3 Philadelphia has access to
4 affordable, stable and safe housing.

5 We are not here talking
6 about would be nices or cherries on
7 top, but we are talking about
8 fundamentals, things that frankly
9 should be the basic necessity that
10 anyone who pays to live somewhere
11 should be guaranteed.

12 If you do not have a safe
13 home, nothing else matters. We know
14 this. So when we talk about our
15 affordable housing crisis, we cannot
16 forget about the tens of thousands
17 of Philadelphians who are living in
18 units with a leaky roof, with
19 raccoons and possums scurrying
20 across the roof with appliances that
21 only work half the time.

22 Of course, we need to
23 build, but 40 percent of rental
24 properties in our city are in need

1

2 of repair, and we will never solve
3 our affordable housing crisis
4 without bringing these homes back
5 into good condition.

6

I applaud Minority Whip
7 Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke for
8 coming up with a legislative package
9 that rewards landlords who comply
10 with the local law and do well by
11 doing good while holding negligent
12 landlords accountable. Government's
13 No. 1 priority is to keep people
14 safe, and this is what today's
15 hearing is about.

16 Do any of the committee
17 members have opening comments?

18 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: I just
19 wanted to say --

20 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Vice
21 Chair Landau.

22 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Good
23 afternoon, everybody. I just wanted
24 to also just lend my voice to what

1
2 we're talking about at being an
3 incredibly important issue of making
4 sure that people have safe and
5 healthy homes to live in. There is
6 -- as someone who used to run the
7 City's Fair Housing Commission, and
8 as a former tenant lawyer, I saw
9 time and time again of people living
10 in very, very poor conditions that
11 needed repairs.

12 And this -- this package of
13 bills is our first step, a big step,
14 a leap towards getting ourselves to
15 a place where everybody can feel
16 safe and healthy in their home. And
17 we also -- as we've been focusing a
18 lot on the cost of moving lately, it
19 is essential that if people can stay
20 in the homes they're in now, let's
21 do that because moving, sure, costs
22 a lot, and we want people to be able
23 to stay in their communities, become
24 a part of the neighborhood, a part

1

2 of the fabric of the communities,
3 let's do everything we can to make
4 sure that we -- that people are safe
5 and healthy in their homes.

6 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
7 you so much. Councilmember Jones.

8 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So I
9 love Nicolas O'Rourke, too, and I'm
10 not ashamed to say it. It was
11 Nicolas O'Rourke among other members
12 that accompanied me, along with
13 Driscoll, along with Landau up to a
14 place called Brith Sholom.

15 We toured that facility and
16 saw how people lived, many of whom
17 are in protected classes such as
18 veterans, people with disabilities,
19 people who were seniors that were
20 living the fourth quarter of their
21 life in horrid conditions.

22 What is important to me is
23 that even though there were laws on
24 the books, there was no enforcement.

1

2 That people got fined and that
3 insidious owners ignored those fines
4 and said that we'll take out loans,
5 take the value out of the property,
6 and let people figure it out. These
7 packages are an answer to a lot of
8 that.

9 And so therefore, with some
10 work on the details, we are going to
11 figure this out on behalf of the
12 people. So thank you, Nick. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
15 you so much. And now we'll move to
16 our bill sponsor, Councilmember
17 Nicolas O'Rourke for work for any
18 opening comments.

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

20 Good afternoon, Chair
21 Gauthier, Vice Chair Landau, members
22 of the housing committee, members of
23 listening public. Actually, good
24 afternoon. I come before you today

1
2 with, if I'm honest, righteous
3 conviction to fight for safe healthy
4 homes in the city of Philadelphia,
5 not by myself, not in isolation, not
6 as an individual, but shoulder to
7 shoulder with working class people,
8 responsible landlords, union
9 members, healthcare workers, faith
10 leaders, all.

11 Allow me to begin not just
12 as a policy advocate and organizer,
13 but also now as a father. My son,
14 Augustine Leslie O'Rourke was born
15 just last week. He is in the NICU.
16 He is fighting for his health. And
17 I should be with my family right
18 now. I deserve to be with my family
19 right now. But last night I was
20 told something that stopped me in my
21 tracks, that if I didn't come here
22 to defend the Safe Healthy Homes
23 Act, that these bills would not
24 receive a vote.

1
2 I was forced to make an
3 impossible choice, but here I am,
4 because I am not an individual; I am
5 one of the people, because too many
6 people have sacrificed already too
7 much for us to give up on this now,
8 because this movement is bigger than
9 any individual, any one person, any
10 one of us, and because I believe
11 that safe, healthy homes are a human
12 right and not a privilege.

13 Listen, I know that I am
14 not the only person who has made
15 sacrifices to be here. The chambers
16 reveal it as such, more than 70
17 members, 7-0 members of the public
18 have signed up to testify in support
19 of these bills: Tenants, landlords,
20 union members, nurses, social
21 workers, immigrants, faith leaders.
22 That is an unprecedented number of
23 people who have taken off work, who
24 have arranged childcare of their

1

2 own, who have coordinated
3 transportation to be in this place
4 and showed up to support these
5 bills.

6 I see you all. I'm
7 grateful for you all. I'm empowered
8 because of you all. I'm encouraged
9 because of you all. I honor you all
10 and I fight beside every single one
11 of you.

12 Due to time constraints --
13 due to time constraints, public
14 comment has been limited. Not
15 everyone who signed up will get to
16 speak today. But make no mistake,
17 the people are powerful and your
18 needs are holy. And when the people
19 speak with one voice, it is the
20 voice of moral authority.

21 Everybody from the mayor's
22 office to public commenters has said
23 it plainly, has said it clearly, has
24 said it repeatedly, we are in the

1

2 midst of a housing crisis. That we
3 have profound power over a human
4 need and that we must act. Not we
5 should; we got to.

6 Today, we'll hear painful
7 truths. We'll hear stories of
8 tenants living without heat,
9 children sick from mold, elders
10 climbing stairs in buildings with no
11 rails, with no lights. These are
12 not isolated cases either. These
13 aren't individual islands on
14 themselves. These are symptoms of a
15 broken system. We'll also hear from
16 those opposing these bills that
17 they're far too burdensome, that
18 they're far too broad. I have one
19 response to such claims. These
20 bills simply will not apply to the
21 vast majority of landlords.

22 The policies laid out today
23 are designed to address the most
24 egregious cases of negligent

1

2 property management as defined
3 already by our city charter. It's
4 already defined as such. It's
5 addressing those persons. This is
6 not anti-landlord legislation. This
7 is anti-neglect legislation. This
8 is anti-squalor legislation. This
9 is pro-dignity legislation.

10 We are not regulating the
11 occasional L&I violation. We are
12 confronting chronic willful
13 disregard, disgraceful disregard for
14 human life.

15 So in closing, I'd like to
16 thank the deeply committed
17 homeowners, the tenants and
18 organizers of Philly Thrive and
19 OnePA Renters United Philadelphia
20 for your willingness to fight -- to
21 fight for yourselves, your
22 willingness to fight for your
23 neighbors, for sharing the essence
24 of grassroots democracy with my team

1

2 and with me. Your passion, your
3 persistence, your power are the only
4 way a democracy worth its name will
5 persist.

6 Thank you. I thank the
7 members of the committee that have
8 taken their time to be present
9 today. Let the records show the
10 people are watching, the people are
11 ready, and the people will not wait.
12 Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you so much, Councilmember. Thank
15 you so much, Councilmember, for the
16 passion and the conviction that you
17 bring to this work. Ms. Jones, will
18 you now read the title of the bills.

19 THE CLERK: Bill No.
20 250329. An ordinance amending
21 chapter 9-3900 of the Philadelphia
22 Code entitled Property Licenses and
23 Owner Accountability to clarify
24 licensing requirements, authorize

1

2 the department to create a proactive
3 inspection program, require public
4 reporting related to code
5 compliance, and established
6 remedies, damages and protections
7 for tenants, all under certain terms
8 and conditions.

9

Bill No. 250330. An
10 ordinance amending chapter 9-800 of
11 the Philadelphia Code entitled
12 Landlord and Tenant to modify the
13 requirements related to good cause
14 for ending a tenancy, add
15 protections against retaliation and
16 harassment for tenants and tenant
17 organizations, specify tenants'
18 rights related to the implied
19 warranty of habitability, and
20 provide a legal presumption related
21 to breaches of the implied warranty
22 of habitability, create a tenant
23 right to organize, specify deadlines
24 for asserting claims, and establish

1

2 and enhance enforcement mechanism,
3 remedies, damages, and protections,
4 all under certain terms and
5 conditions.

6

Bill No. 250331. An
7 ordinance amending chapter 9-800 of
8 the Philadelphia Code entitled
9 Landlord and Tenant to hereby
10 authorize the creation of an anti-
11 displacement fund to establish
12 violations for displacement and to
13 authorize the Department of Planning
14 and Development to administer the
15 Anti-Displacement Fund and amending
16 section 8-505, entitled Cease
17 Operations Order to add notice
18 requirements, all under certain
19 terms and conditions.

20

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
21 Will the clerk please call the first
22 panel of witnesses to testify on the
23 resolution?

24

I am going to ask -- we

1

2 have a very packed agenda today.

3 I'm going to ask witnesses to

4 summarize their testimony and be

5 concise. We are setting a timer for

6 four minutes for every witness.

7 Please help me -- help me in order

8 to move this hearing along.

9 Ms. Jones?

10 THE CLERK: On our first

11 panel, we have Sarah Adamo, Randy

12 Duque, John Mondlak.

13 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

14 afternoon. Please state your name

15 for the record and proceed with your

16 testimony. I guess we can go with

17 L&I first.

18 MS. ADAMO: Do you have a

19 preference of who goes first?

20 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: It

21 doesn't matter. Go ahead.

22 MS. ADAMO: Good afternoon,

23 Chairperson Gauthier and members of

24 the Housing, Neighborhood

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2 Development and the Homeless
3 Committee. My name is Sarah Adamo
4 and I am the Director of Zoning and
5 Legislation for the Department of
6 Licenses and Inspections Quality of
7 Life.

8 I'm here today to provide
9 testimony on Bill No. 250329
10 introduced by Councilmember
11 O'Rourke. As amended, this bill
12 proposes to create additional
13 protections and notifications
14 associated with tenant -- with
15 tenants of properties that have
16 rental licenses.

17 The administration strongly
18 supports the spirit of this bill and
19 recognizes the importance of safe
20 and healthy housing for Philadelphia
21 residents. It is critical to
22 encourage property owners to
23 maintain their properties in a way
24 that prevents the displacement of

1

2 residents whenever possible.

3

4 The administration does
5 have concerns about this bill in its
6 current form and believes that
7 additional amendments and
8 discussions are necessary to ensure
9 the ordinance can be effectively
10 enforced.

11

12 Due to -- due to the tight
13 timeline ahead of the hearing, we
14 were unable to review the latest
15 amendments received this morning as
16 thoroughly as we would've preferred.
17 Given that these changes will impact
18 over 80,000 licenses and all renters
19 in the city, we believe that it is
20 critical that we review these
21 changes thoroughly to ensure that
22 there are no unintended consequences
23 and the department is able to
24 actualize the changes.

25

26 As the Mayor's H.O.M.E.
27 Initiative is currently -- is under

1
2 current consideration by City
3 Council, we have committed to
4 increasing the housing stock,
5 especially affordable housing across
6 the city. We believe that as
7 written, there are potentially
8 several unintended consequences that
9 could reduce our affordable housing
10 stock in our city, driving good
11 acting landlords out of the market
12 and increasing the number of rentals
13 who will operate without a rental
14 license.

15 We have worked with Council
16 over the years to streamline the
17 rental renewal process and as the
18 bill stands, it will have the
19 opposite effect of what City Council
20 has recommended. We are committed
21 to working with Council to address
22 these concerns and to help advance
23 this and future legislation so that
24 we can achieve the bill's intended

1

2 goals.

3

To highlight a few of the

4

administration's concerns -- and

5

please note these are based on the

6

version of the bill that was sent to

7

us yesterday, so it may not be a

8

hundred percent accurate to the most

9

recent amendment. Much of the bill

10

that's currently written would be

11

impossible for the department to

12

operationalize.

13

Most notably 9-39014D,

14

which requires the department to

15

provide notice to tenants when a

16

rental license is suspended or not

17

renewed after 30 days. We recognize

18

that this is a key component. This

19

provision is a key component to the

20

legislation and respectfully urge

21

Council to allow time for us to

22

develop a practical and

23

implementable solution.

24

The bill also requires that

1

2 during application for a new or
3 renewed rental license, an
4 applicant's self-report that certain
5 habitability standards are met.

6 This application modification would
7 require change to eCLIPSE, which
8 could not -- could not be effective
9 immediately.

10 The application change
11 would not take place until after the
12 WebUI project is completed and would
13 need to be added to a queue of
14 changes.

15 Furthermore, due to the
16 volume of licenses that are
17 impacted, any change that impacts
18 rental license renewals needs to be
19 carefully considered to minimize
20 delays and confusion for license
21 holders. There are several
22 technical amendments and potential
23 conflicts that have been flagged by
24 L&I and law that needs to be

1

2 addressed.

3 And lastly, the

4 implementation date would not be

5 able to be met as there are several

6 regulatory changes that need to be

7 developed and implemented. As

8 previously mentioned, we also need

9 to make several updates to eCLIPSE,

10 which would not be able to be done

11 until 2027.

12 Considering the potential

13 significant impacts on renters and

14 the city resources required to

15 achieve the goals of this

16 legislation, we believe that further

17 amendments are necessary to develop

18 effective legislation.

19 We respectfully request

20 that this bill be held, so that we

21 can continue working through these

22 concerns and ensure the legislation

23 functions as intended.

24 Thank you for the

1

2 opportunity to provide testimony on
3 behalf of the Department of Licenses
4 and Inspections Quality of Life.

5 I'm happy to answer any questions at
6 this time.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
8 you for your testimony. Whomever
9 wants to go next, please state your
10 name for the record and proceed with
11 your testimony.

12 MR. MONDLAK: Good
13 afternoon, Chairperson Gauthier, and
14 members of the Committee on Housing
15 and Neighborhood Development and the
16 Homeless.

17 My name is John Mondlak and
18 I serve as the first deputy and
19 chief of staff in the Department of
20 Planning and Development, and I'm
21 here to testify on Bill 250331
22 introduced by Councilmember
23 O'Rourke.

24 Bill 250331 would allow the

1

2 creation of an anti-displacement
3 fund for residential tenants who
4 cannot stay in their homes because
5 the building they live in has been
6 closed down due to cease operations
7 order. And we appreciate that this
8 bill recognizes the very thorny
9 problem in code enforcement.

10 While it's common to call
11 for stricter code enforcement on
12 rental properties, few acknowledge
13 that stricter code enforcement may
14 require the rental property to be
15 ceased and that when residential
16 properties are ceased, tenants lose
17 their homes.

18 In addition, we welcome the
19 amendment -- the amendment to Bill
20 250331, clarifying that the city is
21 to provide notice to tenants 10 days
22 in advance of executing a cease
23 operations order unless doing so
24 would endanger the tenant's health

1

2 and safety.

3 Today, a cease operations

4 order in a landlord tenant context

5 is issued as a penalty of last

6 resort. Typically, cease violation

7 orders are issued only when the

8 landlord has been cited repeatedly

9 for significant violations of the

10 city code provision that govern the

11 standards of safety and

12 functionality for the rental

13 properties and has failed to remedy

14 these violations.

15 Under Bill 250331, a cease

16 operations order executed against

17 the landlord property would no

18 longer just be a penalty. For the

19 first time it would be a separate

20 violation in and of itself.

21 The administration's

22 understanding is that the rationale

23 for creating a cease operations

24 violation is a mechanism to force

1
2 bad landlords to pay for the harm
3 they have caused. The dollars would
4 presumably go into an anti-
5 displacement fund. Having bad
6 landlords pay into the fund is just
7 unfair. Given the length and
8 complexity of code enforcement
9 process, however, we're concerned
10 about the efficacy of using
11 violations as a source of revenue.

12 We are also concerned about
13 the unintended effects creating a
14 new violation it could have on the
15 city's small landlords. Cease
16 operation orders causing tenants to
17 be relocated can be caused by
18 circumstances well beyond the
19 control of a landlord, such as a
20 water main breach, breach of fire, a
21 natural disaster or construction on
22 an adjacent property.

23 Being subject to a
24 violation, actually, a separate

1
2 violation for each displaced
3 resident just as their properties
4 are being damaged through no fault
5 of their own could be a disincentive
6 to operate rental housing. The
7 amendment to the bill respect --
8 that was circulated a couple days
9 ago, specifies a cease operation
10 order only occurs when the property
11 is ceased due to the owner's
12 negligent or fault in helping with
13 this regard.

14 However, it may not be
15 enough to retain landlords who are
16 contemplating dropping out of the
17 rental market and some may prefer to
18 avoid the risk of being judged
19 inaccurately as negligent or at
20 fault. Given the shortage of
21 affordable housing in Philadelphia,
22 we are concerned about any potential
23 loss of rental units from good
24 landlords.

1
2 The Mayor is committed to a
3 bold, historic and unprecedented
4 vision to build, preserve, and
5 restore 30,000 units of housing in
6 Philadelphia. And in order to
7 ensure that we meet this goal, we
8 need to avoid reducing our housing
9 stock and decreasing the number of
10 affordable units as good acting
11 landlords exist in the market.

12 We appreciate the
13 opportunity to testify today and
14 respectfully requesting that this
15 bill be held in committee to work
16 through the concerns and we're happy
17 to answer any questions you may
18 have.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you so much.

21 MR. DUQUE: Good afternoon,
22 Chairperson Gauthier and Members of
23 the Committee on Housing,
24 Neighborhood Development and the

1

2 Homeless. My name is Randy Duque.

3 I am the acting executive director

4 of the Philadelphia Commission on

5 Human Relations and Fair Housing

6 Commission. I'm here to testify on

7 Bill No. 250330 introduced by

8 Councilmember O'Rourke.

9 The Philadelphia Commission

10 on Human Relations or PCHR is the

11 city's official civil rights and

12 peacemaking agency. We enforce an

13 important set of laws that prevent

14 discrimination and promote equality.

15 Within the PCHR is a separate

16 commission that works to ensure

17 renters have safe places to live and

18 decent living conditions while

19 landlords abide by landlord tenant

20 laws through the enforcement of the

21 city's fair housing ordinance. This

22 commission is known as the Fair

23 Housing Commission.

24 The Fair Housing Commission

1
2 or FHC is comprised of five members
3 who are appointed by the mayor and
4 serve as volunteers on a weekly
5 basis. The commissioners conduct
6 hearings to decide complaints and
7 investigate unfair rental practices
8 in properties. The FHC's work is
9 supported by a small team of city
10 staff, and together they process
11 over 500 cases annually.

12 As introduced, Bill 250330
13 aims to expand residential renter
14 protections by preventing landlords
15 from retaliating or refusing or to
16 renew or lease to a tenant without
17 good cause and adding tenant
18 harassment and tentative collective
19 actions expansions that apply to
20 renters' rights in general.

21 While we appreciate the
22 spirit of the legislation as
23 introduced -- as introduced, the
24 legislation raises several concerns

1

2 that we believe will negatively
3 impact the good acting housing
4 providers across the city at a time
5 that the administration's committed
6 to addressing the housing crisis
7 facing our city through Mayor
8 Parker's Home Initiative.

9 Several sections of this
10 legislation leave definitions and
11 interpretations too ambiguous,
12 making the intent unclear through
13 phrases such as timely manner,
14 reasonable notice, or an abuse of
15 government process, which due to
16 vagueness will make almost every
17 landlord-tenant issue disputable
18 such as a repair taking longer than
19 expected.

20 This legislation also
21 creates duplicative requirements of
22 already existing laws leading to
23 confusion, not only for housing
24 providers but for attorneys, judges

1

2 and our commission to interpret.

3 This would lead directly to the Fair

4 Housing Commission to be overloaded

5 with cases due to the significant

6 increases of potential violations by

7 a housing provider that would

8 seriously strain our capacity.

9 For instance, extending a

10 good cause to any lease alone would

11 significantly expand the eligibility

12 of those who can file with Fair

13 Housing Commission under this

14 provision where such cases,

15 typically, are handled in municipal

16 court.

17 Furthermore, adding the

18 tenant harassment section to the

19 Fair Housing ordinance massively

20 broadens this type of violations

21 heard by the FHC as practically any

22 landlord-tenant dispute would fall

23 into one of the provisions in the

24 section, effectively making us a de

1

2 facto in municipal court.

3

4 There is also potential for
5 provisions in this bill to be
6 misused, for example, while we agree
7 with the importance of for tenants
8 to have the right to organize as
9 listed in section 9814, it would
10 prohibit a landlord from taking any
11 action if another tenant complains
12 if they feel they are being harassed
13 by organizers or unsafe because a
14 non-resident is knocking on their
15 door.

16

17 Finally, some of the
18 provisions are currently in the Fair
19 Housing ordinance such as the
20 provision under tenant harassment on
21 retaliation -- retaliating against,
22 threatening or interfering with
23 tenants or tenant organizers 90413K,
24 which is already covered under
25 section 98042 on retaliation.

26

27 We appreciate some of the

1
2 most recent additions to this bill,
3 such as adding Section 980415D to
4 give the Fair Housing Commission
5 permissive jurisdiction, but still
6 see a potential strain on the
7 services as they are benefits for a
8 tenant to file with us, such as no
9 cost service and not needing a
10 lawyer to fully participate in our
11 processes.

12 We respect -- we
13 respectfully request that this
14 legislation be held in committee to
15 address these concerns to ensure we
16 are achieving the goals of this
17 legislation without negatively
18 impacting those good acting housing
19 providers desperately needed across
20 our city. And I'm happy to answer
21 any questions you may have.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

23 Thanks to all of you for your
24 testimony, but more importantly, for

1

2 the work that you do on behalf of
3 the city every day.

4 I'm going to -- wait a
5 minute. I'm going to recognize
6 members first. I'm going to -- we
7 have to get through the hearing
8 folks. We have to get through the
9 hearing.

10 I'm going to take a card
11 from -- I'm going to take a card
12 from our Council President's book.
13 I'm going to ask that we minimize
14 booing towards testimony. I'm going
15 to ask that we keep the noise level
16 down in chambers because that's how
17 we'll get through this hearing,
18 right?

19 And, you know, you all are
20 here for the legislative process and
21 they're going to -- you're -- you
22 showed up in mass to show your
23 support, and that's a strong
24 statement. But people are going to

1

2 say things that you like and they're
3 going to say things that you don't
4 like and that's how we get through
5 it at the end of the day. So thank
6 you very much.

7 I want to note, for the
8 record, the presence of
9 Councilmember Mark Squilla and
10 Deputy Majority Whip Councilmember
11 Cindy Bass. Thank you for joining
12 us, both of you.

13 I want to start with a
14 question for the panel and then I'll
15 open to members and then the bill
16 sponsor. So I understand, you know,
17 all of what you all kind of
18 addressed your concerns around
19 capacity and, sort of, the
20 administrative functions that you
21 would have to expand in order to
22 carry these bills forward, and that
23 you're asking for more time to work
24 on language and amendments.

1
2 But I do want to just note
3 that we are embarking upon a
4 historic investment in housing and
5 building and preserving affordable
6 housing. I, for one, and I know I'm
7 not alone in Council, I'm cheering
8 for the mayor to get that full \$800
9 million. I think it's amazing that
10 this is her number one priority.
11 But I think we have to admit that
12 what minority Whip O'Rourke is
13 bringing to the floor is a timely
14 conversation. We're not going to be
15 able to get to 30,000 units if we
16 don't make sure our existing housing
17 is in good shape.

18 So for L&I, I know that the
19 Councilmember has tried to propose
20 an increase in your funding in order
21 -- and to acknowledge that you would
22 have to greatly expand your
23 capacity.

24 So for L&I, I want you to

1
2 talk about how the 10 million in
3 propose L&I funding that's a part of
4 this campaign could help with those
5 capacity concerns that you listed.
6 And then for the other two
7 departments, I hear your concerns,
8 but I'm hopeful that this will be a
9 conversation that's not just about
10 no, given the importance of
11 everything that the Councilmember is
12 trying to do and that this can
13 instead be a conversation that is
14 about getting to, yes.

15 So I'd like for you to
16 follow up -- I'd like for you to
17 follow up your concerns with your
18 thoughts on how we can get those
19 concerns addressed in concert with
20 the Councilmember. So we could
21 start with L&I.

22 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

23 Good afternoon, committee
24 members. My name is Bridget

1

2 Collins-Greenwald. I'm the
3 commissioner of the L&I Licenses and
4 Inspections Quality of Life
5 department. Good afternoon.

6 So I think the question was
7 -- I was walking up and I heard it.
8 I think the question was the \$10
9 million figure that's been thrown
10 around. So what L&I proposes to do
11 -- and we have been working with the
12 councilman's office on this and
13 various other offices on this -- is
14 to develop a proactive inspection
15 program.

16 As I stated during our
17 budget hearing, we're in the
18 preliminary process of that. We're
19 looking at all different kinds of
20 things -- ways to make that happen:
21 incentivizing good landlords, doing
22 proactive inspections on new
23 licenses, giving -- doing virtual
24 inspections, which we just launched

1

2 two days ago, so we're going to see
3 how that works out.

4 So we have a number of
5 various things that are going to go
6 along with this pro action proactive
7 inspection program. So the 10
8 million that is proposed, we've said
9 we're not really sure where that
10 number comes from because we haven't
11 even put the plan together yet.

12 So what we do plan to do is
13 come up with a number that we say,
14 hey, if this is what we're going to
15 do, here's the full-fledged program,
16 proactive inspection program, and
17 here's what it'll cost and here's
18 what it'll look like and here's the
19 measures we'll have and here's what
20 we plan to get on.

21 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: And I
22 would love for you to talk about
23 timeline. Because this is -- this
24 is not just a philosophical

1
2 conversation. This is life and
3 death. Like, I've had people die in
4 my district because of the condition
5 of their property. So I'd love to
6 hear you talk -- I would love to
7 hear you give some more specificity
8 around your timeline in doing these
9 things that I know that you know are
10 necessary.

11 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So
12 our timeline is, as some of you are
13 aware, we're waiting on a research
14 project to be completed, which will
15 not be completed for a few months.
16 We are working internally on putting
17 something together. So while I
18 don't have -- I'm going to give a
19 ballpark figure.

20 I think we could have a
21 plan together within the next
22 several months, by the end of the
23 summer, which I believe is why we've
24 asked for this to be held so we can

1

2 work through those details which
3 we've all acknowledged that the
4 devil's in the details, right? So I
5 think we could get something
6 together by the end of the summer.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

8 Thank you for your transparency
9 around that. And then I'd love
10 Planning and Development Human
11 Relations, if you could just -- you
12 know, you listed the concerns, but I
13 want to hear you talk about how we
14 get there with such an important
15 effort and what the timing around
16 that is and what you need to get
17 there.

18 MR. DUQUE: For us, a lot
19 of it is like just trying to make
20 sure that the -- this bill and these
21 laws are airtight so that when
22 people do have problems, there's no
23 extended litigation, no extended
24 investigation. Because you're

1

2 right, like, we -- like, people need
3 remedy immediately.

4 And as it stands now, like,
5 the problem is like -- because it
6 could be opened up to
7 interpretation, it can go -- like, a
8 case can go on for a longer amount
9 of time than intended. So it's not
10 really -- we're not against it. We
11 just -- we want to make sure it's
12 tighter.

13 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Do
14 you have a sense of what you need
15 from a resource perspective?

16 MR. DUQUE: With that, I
17 mean, our Fair Housing Commission,
18 as you heard, there's only five
19 full-time staff and then we have
20 volunteer commissioners. So
21 capacity-wise, like, we would --
22 like, we would need to essentially
23 expand the Fair Housing Commission
24 in itself.

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

3

you.

4

MR. MONDLAK: I would just

5

add that from Planning and

6

Development, I don't -- I wouldn't

7

say that there's a capacity issue.

8

I think that as a lot of people

9

know, we don't manage the temporary

10

housing closely. That's Office of

11

Emergency Management and Office of

12

Homeless Services.

13

So presumably -- but they

14

-- presumably they would have the

15

capacity to do that. For us, it's

16

more about -- it's things like

17

setting up the fund, the timing of

18

it. If you have people that are

19

displaced now because of maybe fault

20

of the landlord, maybe not, they

21

need resources now.

22

And are we waiting around

23

for somebody to get cited for

24

something they did on their own

1
2 fault, pay the citation, maybe
3 there's a collection issue, maybe
4 they fight it, maybe you don't get
5 the money for six months. And so
6 it's really about -- for me, it's
7 what programs do OEM and OHS have
8 that maybe aren't working, if that's
9 the concern, because I separate the
10 two and say, if people need help,
11 let's sit down and figure out how to
12 help them.

13 And, yeah, separately, if
14 there are bad landlords, let's make
15 sure that they're paying for the
16 damage that they're doing. But I
17 don't -- it's the tying of --
18 together that I think creates the
19 challenge and just the -- you know,
20 creating of funds.

21 Generally, the funding is
22 done through the budgetary process
23 and that's how the money flows. And
24 if everybody just created funds for

1

2 the things that were important to
3 them, eventually that gets really
4 challenging to manage the finances
5 of it.

6 So it's better to keep it
7 altogether in the conversation of
8 the budget. But I do think that if
9 we don't have programs that help the
10 people that need it, then we should
11 make the programs or fix the
12 programs and make sure they have the
13 help that they need.

14 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Well,
15 we happen to be in the budget
16 process. So from a resource
17 perspective it's a timely moment.
18 I'll open up for questions from
19 members. I'll start with
20 Councilmember Driscoll, and then
21 Vice Chair Landau.

22 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
23 Well, thank you for your
24 testimony. You know, I want to

1

2 commend the maker of the bills. The
3 spirit of the legislation is spot
4 on. But we got to make sure this
5 legislation is legal, enforceable,
6 and of course you scared me with
7 that 2027 number.

8 But listen, today is -- to
9 be honest, right, we're all here to
10 try and get to the right spot. So I
11 guess to get to Chair Guathier's
12 concern, when there are these
13 immediate before we can figure all
14 this stuff out, including this
15 year's budget which we are
16 contemplating for the next couple
17 weeks.

18 What remedies are currently
19 in place to make sure these life
20 safety issues are addressed in a
21 timely fashion?

22 MS. ADAMO: So most of our
23 inspections are done on a complaint
24 basis. So when we receive

1
2 complaints, they are prioritized
3 according to what the complaint is.
4 So something like no heat in the
5 middle of winter, we're going to be
6 out there immediately and make sure
7 that, you know, the more egregious
8 violations are addressed
9 immediately. So that's L&I's role
10 in that.

11 And then when we come to
12 the cases where people are
13 displaced, that's when L&I is not
14 necessarily involved in that process
15 as much. And I don't know if either
16 of you want -- have anything to --
17 but L&I's role is essentially a
18 complaint based process of
19 responding to violations.

20 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

21 But what happens when
22 Member Jones, you know, brought us
23 out to Brith Sholom and there were
24 these registered complaints and

1

2 there were life safety issues, how
3 do we -- how do we get it right?
4 And I know you -- it's a hardworking
5 department and I, as the chair and
6 the legislative oversight chair here
7 for Council, I'm a fan of L&I, but I
8 know we have more work to do.

9 I just want to make sure
10 this legislation's right, but I also
11 want to make sure that not a day
12 goes by where we're putting anybody
13 at risk. And so, complaint driven,
14 I get that that's the way it usually
15 works, usually way it works with
16 policing as well, but we also have
17 preventive policing.

18 So I guess what I'm asking
19 you is that regardless of this bill,
20 you know, that we pay attention to
21 the preventive aspects of the
22 violations so that we protect each
23 and every resident in the city of
24 Philadelphia.

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I

3

have to agree with the

4

Councilmember, and I think you all

5

would agree. Complaint driven is

6

not good enough. There's a host of

7

reasons why tenants would feel --

8

could feel uncomfortable coming

9

forward with complaints. So we have

10

to be willing to address this with

11

urgency. Vice Chair Landau.

12

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank

13

you so much and thank you all for

14

being here. We absolutely need you

15

to be partners in this. So in order

16

for this to be a success, we look

17

forward to continuing to work with

18

you in the future.

19

I did want to get a little

20

bit to L&I's complaint process. Do

21

you have an idea of how many of the

22

complaints that come to L&I are from

23

tenants about repairs needed in

24

their rental properties?

1

2 MS. ADAMO: Almost all
3 complaints for residential
4 properties are for rental
5 properties. So in most cases, they
6 -- we are getting that information
7 from the tenants.

8 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Do you
9 know how many you get a year?

10 MS. ADAMO: No.

11 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: And do
12 you know what percentage of those
13 calls, the complaints that come in,
14 are for the more egregious issues?

15 MS. ADAMO: I mean, we
16 could get that information for you
17 if you give us a list of what you
18 would consider egregious.

19 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: I think
20 the question is --

21 MS. ADAMO: Like, we can
22 look it up by code violation.

23 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: As
24 somebody who worked for this city

1
2 for so many years and now looking at
3 it from a different perspective, I
4 really see that there's so many
5 different ways that we can work that
6 we sometimes don't think about. So
7 how are we looking at what's coming
8 in, how to triage it, how to look at
9 the metrics and look at the data and
10 see what needs to happen on a more
11 quick -- a quicker basis.

12 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: We
13 can definitely get you the exact
14 information that you're looking for.
15 I will say this, that out of the
16 cease operations we've done for the
17 last year, so that would be our most
18 egregious, seven percent of all of
19 our ceases were for rental unit --
20 rental properties. The other were
21 mostly for businesses, nuisance
22 businesses and things of that --
23 like, so for us, egregious would,
24 you know, be a cease.

1

2 So 7 percent of them, it's
3 not a huge number. It's about 445
4 on the total ceases for the year.

5 And -- so whatever that math is, I'm
6 going to say I knew it, when I came
7 in here, maybe 36 --

8 MS. ADAMO: Thirty-one.

9 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: --
10 31 were rental properties. And to
11 add on to what Sarah said a minute
12 ago, a majority -- a vast majority
13 of the complaints that we do get in
14 -- are -- for interior inspections
15 are for rental properties. Okay.
16 So exterior's a little bit
17 different, but interior is rental.
18 So we'll get you that exact number
19 when we get, you know --

20 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: I think
21 what I'm -- what I'm trying to say
22 is that there is a way that we can
23 look at the data of what has --
24 what's -- I hope through eCLIPSE we

1
2 can look at the data about what the
3 complaints are for the rental
4 properties and try to handle those
5 on a basis that we never get to a
6 cease operations level. And the --
7 just to add something about
8 proactive inspections, we have no
9 idea if the person who got to the
10 level of living in a property where
11 they had cease operations, did they
12 -- had they called L&I over and over
13 again or did they never call L&I?

14 And I just say there's --
15 the reason for proactive inspections
16 is to make sure that we never get to
17 that place, and that that would be
18 the beauty of it. But while we're
19 talking about cease operations, I
20 did have a question of, what steps
21 do you take now for the tenants when
22 you have a cease operations order
23 and tell tenants they need to leave
24 the property?

1

2

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So

3

we issue an intent to cease before

4

we would cease the property, unless

5

something is completely egregious,

6

like there was a fire or something

7

that was completely damaged by flood

8

or something like that.

9

So we issue an intent to

10

cease which is usually a 30-day

11

notice to the tenants, and they have

12

30 days to -- 30 days for the

13

landlord to comply, or the property

14

owner to comply the violation. If

15

it's that bad and they cannot, then

16

we would have to cease the property.

17

So it's typically a 30-day window.

18

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: And

19

last question really about

20

communication and technology. I'm

21

concerned to hear eCLIPSE took us so

22

many years to get it, and now to

23

hear that it would take years to

24

update it to get new systems in

1

2 there, I wanted to -- can you please
3 talk a little bit about updating
4 eCLIPSE and also communication to
5 landlords and tenants?

6 How do you know that when a
7 landlord gets a -- you issue a
8 violation for a landlord that that
9 landlord actually saw the violation.
10 Is there any outreach that's done?
11 Could you do any outreach to them?
12 Could you also pick up the phone and
13 make a phone call to make sure that
14 they received it? Thank you so
15 much.

16 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

17 Sure. So, part -- the date that
18 Sarah gave is -- it's a date that I
19 know it seems a little crazy, 2027,
20 but here's what happens with the
21 eCLIPSE system. So right now we're
22 in the process of this WebUI
23 process, which I know we've probably
24 talked about as nauseam to city

1

2 council. But for those who don't
3 know what that is, that's going to
4 make ECLIPSE more accessible on the
5 front end to our license -- our
6 license holders and our end users.
7 So that is taking place right now.

8 Because that is taking
9 place, anything else that is
10 touching eCLIPSE on the public end
11 on that front end, we are -- we've
12 put in a queue. So they're -- we
13 call them enhancements. Okay? So
14 we're working on WebUI that should
15 be done sometime in the fall. I
16 think the last date -- I think it's
17 October, end of October of 2020 --
18 of this year.

19 So once that's done, we
20 have this whole list of projects
21 that are in the queue that are --
22 that we all consider mission-
23 critical. So what we would have to
24 do is see 2027 is where we're out to

1

2 in these enhancements. So if this
3 was something that we said, okay,
4 we're going to re prioritize and
5 this will go in, in, you know, March
6 of 2026 or whatever, you know,
7 whatever that is, that's what would
8 have to happen, but that's the way
9 the eCLIPSE system works.

10 So it does work, but after
11 this enhancement that we have, like,
12 I'm going to call them like mini
13 enhancements that we do along the
14 way to just keep improving the
15 system.

16 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
19 you. Councilmember Jones, or --
20 yeah, Councilmember Jones,
21 Councilmember Bass, Councilmember
22 Squilla.

23 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
24 you, Madam Chair. Quick question.

1

2 How many rental licenses did we
3 issue last year?

4 MD. ADAMO: We have 80 --
5 I'll just use this one. We have
6 80,000 active rental licenses.

7 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
8 there are 80,000 active rental
9 licenses --

10 MS. ADAMO: And that --

11 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: --
12 and we already -- go ahead.

13 THE CLERK: -- that equates
14 to 210 units.

15 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
16 210,000.

17 MS. ADAMO: Yeah. Thank
18 you. 210,000 units.

19 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
20 there are 210,000 units --

21 MS. ADAMO: Yes.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: --
23 80,000 rental license?

24 MS. ADAMO: Yes.

1

2

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: And

3

we all acknowledge that there's some

4

people operating under the radar

5

that don't bother to stop in and get

6

a rental license. What is your

7

estimate of the number of those

8

kinds of units?

9

MS. ADAMO: I don't know if

10

we have an actual estimate. I would

11

assume the majority of those are

12

probably single family.

13

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Okay.

14

But can you get to the chair what

15

the rough estimate is of people that

16

hang a shingle never bother to stop

17

in City Hall that we don't know

18

about? So you may not have it now,

19

but that is something that we need

20

to find out a number of. Now, how

21

many L&I inspections did we make

22

last year?

23

MS. GREEWALD: We could get

24

back to you with an exact number,

1

2 but Renee over here saying at least
3 10,000 so that -- and they're all
4 different disciplines of
5 inspections.

6 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Can
7 you repeat that? Sorry.

8 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: I
9 said I'm not exactly sure, but Renee
10 said a good estimate is 10,000.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: And
12 out of those 10,000, roughly, how
13 many resulted in a cease, close the
14 door --

15 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
16 445.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: 145?

18 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
19 445.

20 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: 445.

21 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: 31 were
22 rentals.

23 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: And
24 only 31 were rentals?

1

2

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

3

Yes.

4

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: All

5

right. If this bill is passed, how

6

many inspections can you make a year

7

where we preemptively inspect?

8

What's your estimate?

9

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: I

10

don't believe this bill is attached

11

to funding. So I don't know the

12

answer to that. This bill is, as it

13

is, isn't -- there's no funding

14

attached to it unless I'm missing

15

out. So --

16

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Let

17

me rephrase the question.

18

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So

19

what we were trying to do though,

20

was --

21

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Point

22

of information.

23

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: --

24

come up with that --

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Point

3

of information. I just want to --

4

obviously, we're in the negotiation

5

process, but I do want to note that

6

the campaign does include or is

7

proposing \$10 million in funding.

8

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So

9

I know that there's a \$10 million

10

number that's been -- that's been

11

put out there. I don't know where

12

that stands with negotiations and

13

budget. I'm not, you know, in those

14

negotiations. But I do know that we

15

had said we are working on our own

16

proactive rental inspection program.

17

And we do not know the cost yet

18

because it won't just be

19

inspections. There will be these

20

virtual inspections, there will be

21

incentives for good landlords, ones

22

that are in compliance. That's why

23

we were asking to work through all

24

the details on these.

1

2

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So at

3

some point you will provide the

4

author this bill, the chair of this

5

committee with those particulars.

6

Because what I will not do is pass

7

an unfunded mandate, meaning they go

8

out here and do good, but we're not

9

going to give you bricks nor straw

10

to get things done.

11

That is unfair to you and

12

unfair to those people in this room.

13

So we need a comprehensive ask of us

14

so that we can address it through

15

the budget. That's No. 1.

16

The next question I will

17

ask, out of the universe of

18

properties that are in the city of

19

Philadelphia, define for me the

20

number in your estimation that you

21

would call egregious and what makes

22

them egregious?

23

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So

24

the number I'm providing of

1

2 egregious properties are the numbers
3 that we cease. So that's the same
4 number, 445. So if it gets to that
5 egregious point where we have to do
6 a cease operation, that is the most
7 egregious.

8

Now, we do have different
9 layers of violations as you know
10 that we work -- our main goal is to
11 get people into compliance, right?
12 That is what our main goal is, to
13 have people in the compliance and
14 are adherent to the code. And
15 that's what we work to do.

16

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
17 you can do approximately 400
18 inspections currently a year,
19 correct?

20

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
21 What was that? I'm sorry, there was
22 noise.

23

COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Can
24 you, under your current financial

1

2 and staffing conditions, do
3 approximately 400?

4 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: She
5 said 10,000.

6 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Is it
7 10,000?

8 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: The
9 400 was the cease -- they're ceases.

10 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
11 you can do --

12 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: No,
13 we do a lot more. We gave an
14 estimate of about 10,000.

15 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Okay.
16 So if you were to define and add the
17 pre-inspection point, you have an
18 idea of who is the worst of the
19 worst. And if we could find a list
20 of those worst of worst, could we
21 prioritize them?

22 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
23 Yes. So we actually are working
24 from a list that we worked with

1
2 OnePA and Renters Unite on. So we
3 have a list of four, what we would
4 consider maybe egregious -- maybe I
5 want to -- I shouldn't say that --
6 four landlords that we were given
7 their information. We are actually
8 researching all of that, and, yes,
9 the plan is to do proactive
10 inspections of those properties.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: My --
12 so I want to switch back to two
13 properties: One, Brith Sholom, and
14 one, in my district, we did a walk
15 around. And we walked around and
16 there was a lady sitting on her
17 porch. I don't know if Marvin
18 Robinson was with me on that walk
19 around. It was on 56th Street,
20 right near Stewart.

21 And what was interesting
22 was it was cold and she was sitting
23 on her porch and she told me that
24 she was sunning because it was

1

2 colder in her house than it was on
3 her porch. And what we looked at
4 next to her was a ceiling that had
5 partially collapsed. And she talked
6 about the raccoons that ran through
7 it. As a result of that -- brought
8 tears to my eyes when I saw it, we
9 passed Bill No. 210205.

10 And what that is, is an
11 urgent repair bill that says that if
12 you go in and see what's going on,
13 you or PHDC could make the repairs
14 and that we put the lien of those
15 costs of those repairs on the
16 property. The reason I raised this,
17 this was never funded. So you don't
18 have to worry. It's not your fault.

19 This body, this last
20 administration never put a dime in
21 it. So I warned people that we
22 passed things and often don't put
23 the money to back it up. Had we had
24 money in this program, we could have

1

2 went in Brith Sholom, we could have
3 fixed the egregious renovations and
4 put a lien on the property. Thus,
5 when they sold that property for \$23
6 million, they would've had to pay us
7 back.

8 We need to look at these
9 kinds of things, Member O'Rourke, to
10 put teeth financially. You were
11 there, you saw what it was -- and I
12 got to -- I got to close out. But
13 as we look at how to amend and do
14 things, I want you to consider this.
15 Thank you, Madam Chair.

16 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
17 you so much. We're going to do
18 Councilmember Bass, Councilmember
19 Squilla. We're going to hear
20 comments and questions from our bill
21 sponsor, and then we're going to try
22 to move to panel number 2.
23 Councilmember Bass.

24 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank

1
2 you, Madam Chair. So I just had a
3 couple of questions, or actually
4 more like statements because I think
5 Councilman Jones really asked a lot
6 of the questions that I wanted to
7 ask in terms of the number of
8 landlords and really how big the
9 universe is that, you know, that
10 we're talking about here. And it
11 sounds like if we have 80,000 active
12 licenses affecting 210,000 units,
13 you know, the -- and the number of
14 landlords who have active
15 violations, can you give us a number
16 on that right now? Like roughly?

17 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: I
18 cannot give you a number on that
19 right now. I do know that four are
20 at the top, you know what I mean?
21 There's the top four that we're
22 prioritizing. So --

23 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So I
24 was given a number -- I was given a

1

2 number from somewhere, and I can't
3 remember where exactly, but that
4 there were actively about 800 really
5 egregious landlords without standing
6 violations right now.

7 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: And
8 yeah, I've heard that number too. I
9 don't know where that number came
10 from.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay.

12 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So
13 if someone is willing to give me
14 that information, I would act on it.
15 But the information I was given by
16 OnePA and Renters Unite were four
17 separate landlords, and that's what
18 we're working on right now.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay.
20 So, if -- this is my thought, if the
21 number is 800 and, you know, how do
22 we get in front of those -- you
23 know, whatever that number is right
24 now, with having a number of

1
2 landlords affecting a number of
3 rental properties and making sure
4 that we can address those units
5 within the next 30 days, 60 days.
6 Like, what would something like that
7 take as we're here now before budget
8 season? Because, you know, while I
9 commend the author of the bill, my
10 concern is that we have the
11 potential, if we don't get this
12 right, to create the biggest housing
13 problem crisis. If it's big now, we
14 could make it worse if we don't do
15 it the right way. And so when
16 Councilman Jones, you know, talked
17 about, you know, unfunded mandates,
18 you know, listen, my thought is, if
19 the money is right, then the deal is
20 real. If there's no money involved,
21 then there's no possibility that
22 this is going to be real. And
23 that's, you know, just being
24 completely transparent. If we don't

1

2 put money in, then we're just
3 sitting here talking. It doesn't
4 matter what we pass. If the money's
5 not there to make it real, then it
6 doesn't really move the needle in
7 terms of addressing these issues.

8 And, you know, again, I
9 have a great amount of concern for
10 displacement that if folks are
11 waiting on us to be able to do
12 inspections before they can move in,
13 then we as a city of Philadelphia
14 have the potential to create a
15 significant housing crisis even far
16 and beyond what -- where we are
17 right now.

18 So enforcement has been a
19 longstanding issue with the city.
20 I've talked about enforcement for
21 many years now as we talk about
22 nuisance businesses and other
23 nuisance, you know, issues in our
24 community, quality of life issues.

1
2 And we just still haven't been able
3 to, you know, move this any further
4 down the line than where we started
5 at, you know, years ago. It's very
6 small in terms of the amount of
7 change that we've been able to make
8 and the enforcement that we've been
9 able to get. So, you know, I don't
10 know if you have a response in terms
11 of how do we build up to getting
12 that enforcement. I think that my
13 colleagues have already asked that,
14 but I just don't -- you know, I'm
15 not really clear as to what the
16 enforcement would look like and how
17 do we scale to it. Because again,
18 this is a -- you know, it's a --
19 it's a great idea. But if we don't
20 have the enforcement, if we don't
21 have the funding, then, you know,
22 it's going nowhere. So --

23 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

24 Agreed. Agreed a thousand percent.

1
2 So I think as far as the enforcement
3 is concerned, that's where we're
4 trying to get the numbers together
5 for what does this proactive program
6 look like. I don't think it looks
7 like inspecting 210,000 properties
8 in the city because some are --
9 these properties are fine. I think
10 to your point, if there were 800 or
11 600 or 400, or whatever it is, I
12 think we'd hone in on them. So we
13 would use -- we would use
14 technology, we would use GIS, we
15 would use data that we have, you
16 know, in the 311 system and that --
17 so we would correlate all that data,
18 come up with what we have in our
19 eCLIPSE system and say, okay, here's
20 where we're going to focus, right?
21 And the department of L&I -- the
22 first time I was around an L&I, had
23 a program like that, you might
24 remember, it was back -- God,

1
2 probably about 15 years ago. And
3 that's exactly what the department
4 did. It honed in, it took -- it
5 took data from like the housing
6 trust fund. It took data from -- oh
7 no, the reinvestment fund, I'm
8 sorry. Reinvestment fund, it
9 overlaid it with violations and it
10 said, okay, here's some areas of the
11 city where we're seeing the most --
12 the most violations. And that's
13 like what we plan on doing, using
14 technology to hone in on where we
15 really need to be. And then
16 landlords that are doing the right
17 thing and these small mom and pop
18 landlords that have, you know, one
19 in two -- one in two properties that
20 they own and are trying to do the
21 right thing, we're not focusing on
22 them. We're focusing on these ones
23 that have the most violations and
24 the most egregious.

1

2

And I did want to give one

3

pitch just real quick for -- I know

4

Councilman Jones' bill did not pass,

5

you know, with the funded, the

6

unfunded mandate. But I mean, the

7

program that PHDC does have, the RIF

8

program, the rental assistant fund

9

--

10

COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Right.

11

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: --

12

is fantastic.

13

COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Right.

14

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: And

15

we work with -- we work with PHDC on

16

that. Rachel that runs that plan

17

and Dave Thomas, they're wonderful.

18

They've already given out over 8

19

million -- almost \$9 million to

20

small rental landlords.

21

COUNCILMEMBER BASS: So

22

what -- so can you give us an idea

23

if they've given out \$8 or \$9

24

million? What has been the number

1

2 of applicants for that funding?

3 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: I

4 don't know the number of applicants,

5 but I can tell you I pulled some

6 data out from them. They gave out

7 350 loans. This is in a year -- in

8 a year and a half, 350 loans, \$8.7

9 million. So what they do, they give

10 forgivable loans an upwards of

11 \$50,000. So this would handle the

12 woman who's -- you know, the

13 raccoons were getting and things

14 like that, if her landlord had had

15 the opportunity to go for that

16 funding. So I just wanted to give a

17 pitch that there is a fund out there

18 and it's really well maintained,

19 really well managed by Rachel Mulbry

20 and her crew. And -- so there is

21 that for -- I don't know if you guys

22 give stuff out, we had said we work

23 with them on, if we got the most

24 egregious or we got, hey, here's

1
2 these, we're going to refer you over
3 to PHDC and have a formal process.
4 Right now, it's very informal, but
5 we're formalizing that. So we're
6 going to say, if we see X, Y, and Z,
7 we're going to send this landlord --
8 we're going to talk to the landlord
9 and say, hey, go see PHDC and we'll
10 work together to try to get you --
11 these things fixed so you can keep
12 your property and the tenants can
13 have a good place to live.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Very
15 good. And one last question, which
16 is: what are other cities doing?
17 What are -- what are they doing in,
18 you know, cities nearby, you know,
19 like Wilmington and Trenton and
20 Newark and, you know, what -- are --
21 is anyone else doing anything
22 similar to this or anything that we
23 should be doing.

24 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So

1

2 there's -- so we are doing this
3 research project with a whole bunch
4 of different municipalities. We're
5 looking at Milwaukee is doing some
6 good things.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay.

8 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

9 We're looking at Baltimore is doing
10 some good things. DC is doing some
11 good things. So what we're doing is
12 we're taking little pieces of each
13 of them and saying, how do they work
14 here? Like, what are the best
15 practices and how would they work
16 here, and how can we make a really
17 well-rounded program. That's what
18 we want to have. We want to have a
19 multifaceted program, like, you know
20 what I mean, where we're giving
21 information.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay.

23 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

24 Where we're doing enforcement, we're

1

2 -- you know, all the -- all the good
3 things to make a successful program.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: As you
5 finish your research, can you
6 provide the information to the chair
7 and the committee?

8 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

9 Sure.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay,
11 great.

12 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

13 Sure.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
15 you so much.

16 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
17 you, Councilmember Bass. I do have
18 to say I'm surprised at some of the
19 data points we don't have for today.
20 So I would ask that you all -- I
21 would ask that you all, within the
22 next week, if you could get, you
23 know, specifics on inspections,
24 chronic offenders, like kind of the

1

2 things that have been asked
3 throughout the hearing, if we could
4 have that in the next week to the
5 sponsor as well as to myself, we
6 would be very appreciative.

7 I want to note the presence
8 of Council President -- he doesn't
9 want me to note his presence. Okay.
10 I want to note that Council
11 President Kenyatta Johnson is in the
12 room. Councilmember Squilla, and
13 then our bill sponsor.

14 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
15 Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank
16 you for answering a lot of these
17 questions. And I think I heard that
18 there was 80,000 rental licenses
19 that the city has and 400,000 units?

20 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
21 80,000 rental -- active rental
22 licenses and 210,000 units.

23 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: So
24 you have -- some licenses have

1

2 multiple units on them?

3 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

4 Uh-huh.

5 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

6 What happens in the case of this,

7 where if we have one rental unit

8 that is -- has a problem and we need

9 to cease that one, all the units

10 would then go away; is that correct?

11 If you were to --

12 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: We

13 could do a partial cease operations.

14 But I think part of the -- as I was

15 saying, the devil's in the details,

16 I'm not sure how that works with

17 this piece of legislation, because

18 if we have to do a cease, do we do

19 it -- do we suspend the license and

20 then that person has no license for

21 all of their units, even though some

22 of them might be fine. You know

23 what I mean? So I think, like,

24 that's -- I think that's what our

1

2 overarching theme is. We keep
3 coming back to, is like, if we had a
4 little bit more time to go over the
5 details, I think we can come up with
6 a strong piece of legislation.

7 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

8 Because what I'm hearing is that
9 you're basically in favor of it, but
10 you have some concerns on language
11 and issues like this.

12 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: Oh,
13 yeah.

14 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

15 Because my other question, like,
16 obviously PHA housing and other ones
17 that, you know, we have some issues
18 with violations on those and we know
19 they have some big properties that
20 have multiple units under one rental
21 license.

22 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

23 Yeah.

24 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: And

1

2 if we remove that rental license,

3 I'm just curious how we do that.

4 And --

5 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: For

6 PHA, we don't -- we don't do

7 inspections for PHA, right? Well,

8 we do. I'm sorry. I thought we

9 didn't do those inspections. I'm

10 sorry. Yeah, sorry about that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: But

12 we didn't use to do them. They --

13 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

14 Yeah. I'm sorry.

15 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: We

16 didn't use to do them.

17 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: I

18 was like -- sorry about that.

19 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: But

20 I think we have to figure out how

21 that rental license -- how, in this

22 legislation, that rental license

23 worked. Because I wouldn't want to

24 have one unit that's not usable and

1

2 then we wouldn't be able to use any
3 of the units in that building
4 because (indiscernible).

5 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

6 That's the way it read to us with
7 the last --

8 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

9 Right.

10 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: --

11 you know, group of amendments we
12 got. And then there was the thing
13 about the renewal, right, so if you
14 got a renewal, right, that was
15 something that was going to hold
16 things up. Because now there's
17 another provision in there.

18 I think this is the
19 Councilwoman Bass's point. There's
20 another provision in there that it
21 wouldn't be automatic if you -- you
22 know, like, right now, if you get a
23 rental license and you have no
24 violations, it's automatic. You go

1

2 in for it, you pay your money and
3 you get it. If there's another
4 provision put in there, it's not
5 going to be automatic.

6 So now there's another
7 step, there would be a check box or
8 something like that. So then it's
9 going to hold up renewal licenses
10 for people that don't have any
11 violations. So that's something we
12 wanted to walk through too.

13 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: All
14 right. Because the goal is to make
15 sure every property is safe and
16 everybody has a safe house, and a
17 safe place to live.

18 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:
19 Yeah.

20 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: And
21 so it just sounds like with these
22 questions and concerns, you're still
23 not sure how the bill would be
24 regulated or enforced?

1

2

MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD:

3

That's -- yeah, that's our concern.

4

We're completely in agreement with

5

the spirit of the law. We complete

6

-- you know, we completely want

7

people to obviously have safe homes

8

and we want people to live in. We

9

want landlords and owners and

10

everyone to be co-compliant.

11

We just have some -- we

12

have questions and we would like to

13

work through them before something

14

will become law and then we have

15

something that maybe isn't

16

operationally enforceable for us or

17

legal.

18

COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

19

Okay. Thank you.

20

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

21

you, Councilmember Squilla.

22

Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke, and

23

then we'll wrap this panel.

24

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

1
2 Thank you, Madam Chair. I
3 appreciated the question around what
4 other cities are doing from Member
5 Bass, and I appreciated also the
6 response being good things. But to
7 put a pin on what good things are,
8 to clarify what that means is
9 they're doing proactive rental
10 inspections, which is the thing that
11 we're trying to bring about here.

12 What has already come up
13 has been a lot of questions around,
14 you know, Member Jones's point
15 around, you know, bricks without
16 straw, creating legislation that
17 does not have any money. Member
18 Bass's phrase around, if there's not
19 an -- if the money's not real, then
20 the deal's not real, heard, which is
21 the reason why we are -- in terms of
22 timeline, why this is happening
23 conglomerately with the actual
24 budget process.

1
2 Why we have been asking
3 through the budget process, well
4 before the budget process even
5 started, to advocate for the \$10
6 million that is necessary, and that
7 we have also heard others say it is
8 necessary in order to be able to do
9 any of this work. Even without it,
10 L&I could use that sort of money,
11 which -- so that's why it's so
12 important.

13 If we do not have that
14 money given, then the next time we
15 would be able to actually get a bite
16 at this apple would be the next
17 budget process in 2026. And so the
18 idea is to have that right now to
19 get this done now.

20 That having been said, I
21 don't actually have questions, but I
22 just want to acknowledge and thank
23 the administration for their
24 detailed feedback and the degrees

1

2 that they have brought those
3 details. We've been in these
4 conversations about rental repairs
5 for over a year now.

6 I've only been in this -- a
7 member of this body for about a year
8 and five months. And we have worked
9 hard to incorporate all the feedback
10 from the Law Department, from
11 License and Inspections, from the
12 Philadelphia Commission on Human
13 Relations, and DPD.

14 We introduced these bills
15 on April 10th. We sent them to the
16 administration on April 8th. That's
17 42 days to date. We did not receive
18 written feedback from any
19 departments until Wednesday.
20 Wednesday. We worked hard. My
21 team, who I'm extremely proud of,
22 worked extremely hard over the
23 weekend to comprehensively address
24 each concern and believe that we

1

2 have done so.

3

Your testimony today

4

responds to previous drafts and

5

issues, as you mentioned -- I

6

believe Sarah mentioned at the

7

beginning that they hadn't seen

8

necessarily today's or whatever's

9

amendments.

10

We -- you responded to

11

previous drafts and issues that we

12

actually have resolved, including

13

L&I's primary concern is with Bill

14

250329, subsection 939014D regarding

15

L&I notice of tenants. This has

16

been removed. It's been removed

17

from the bill. It should not be a

18

concern. It's not even a thing to

19

amend. It's been taken out. Our

20

amendments to 250330 gives FHC

21

optional jurisdiction. So there

22

should be no calls for concern. You

23

have optional jurisdiction on this.

24

Our amendment to 250331

1

2 only applies penalties to landlords
3 who are negligent or at fault. Very
4 focused, very tight, very specific.
5 There are no remaining issues that
6 we have received from law that have
7 not actually been addressed.

8 That only leaves at this
9 point the implementation date as the
10 administration's remaining relevant
11 concern, which we are happy to
12 change for relevant sections. In
13 fact, I believe I heard somebody say
14 end of summer fits -- that actually
15 fits our timeline for this
16 legislation.

17 This bill just authorizes
18 L&I to start a program actually by
19 2030 on their timeline. We're not
20 telling L&I how to design the
21 program. We're just saying we need
22 this and we're authorizing you to be
23 able to go forward and do this as we
24 make sure that we get the money to

1

2 make sure that it actually happens.

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

5 you. Thank you. Thank you. Let's

6 move forward with the conversation.

7 Let's move forward with the

8 conversation. Thank you so much,

9 Councilmember O'Rourke, for those

10 important clarifications. I want to

11 allow the administration to respond

12 to the council member's points.

13 But I also want to take a

14 moment to acknowledge the presence

15 of our majority whip, Councilmember

16 Isaiah Thomas. I would love for you

17 all to respond to what the

18 Councilmember noted.

19 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: So

20 the -- so I heard the Councilmember

21 say some things were taken out of

22 the bill. We got amendments Sunday

23 night, and we reviewed them all day

24 yesterday and we sent them back.

1

2 And then I guess amendments came
3 over this morning about 9:00, and we
4 looked at -- I mean, we looked at
5 them. I mean, that's was four hours
6 before the hearing started.

7 So that's what we're
8 saying. We don't even -- how could
9 we have thoughtfully reviewed
10 something we got four hours before
11 the hearing?

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: If
13 I may, if -- again, it's been 42
14 days since this has been submitted
15 to the administration. If the idea
16 is that we wait literally till
17 Wednesday to get responses back at
18 -- a month and some change, then who
19 is the one that's actually not
20 actually following up or doing their
21 due diligence to get things
22 addressed and done?

23 We have done -- we have
24 given ample time. And with the

1

2 ample time -- with the ample time
3 that has been given, my team has
4 been extremely responsive to make
5 sure that you got it back in time.
6 So the idea that you're out of time
7 is not necessarily a thing that we
8 have done. It's a thing that seems
9 to be on the other side here.

10 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
11 you, Councilmember. I'm going to
12 ask again, I know everybody's so
13 passionate about this is such an
14 important issue, but we have to keep
15 the noise level down or we won't be
16 able to have a real discussion.

17 So I'm going to -- one last
18 opportunity to sort of respond to
19 those concerns. And then I'm going
20 to ask that we move to the next
21 panel.

22 MS. COLLINS-GREENWALD: I
23 know we provided comments on our
24 fifth amendment and that's what we

1

2 provided and that's what this
3 testimony is based on. So that's --
4 I'm going to just leave it at that.

5 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
6 you. And I know there'll be a lot
7 of conversation to continue moving
8 this discussion forward. I want to
9 thank all of you for your testimony
10 and your participation today. Will
11 the clerk please call the next panel
12 of witnesses.

13 And if you all could -- I'm
14 going to make a request. I know
15 everybody's busy, but if our
16 partners for the admin can stick
17 around if possible so that you can
18 hear the conversation, I think that
19 we'd be grateful. Will the clerk
20 please call the next panel?

21 THE CLERK: On panel 2, we
22 have Melissa Monds, Sonya Sanders,
23 Theresa Howell.

24 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

1
2 afternoon to all of you. Thank you
3 so much for joining us today. I'm
4 going to remind, you know, that --
5 our witnesses that, you know, I want
6 you to summarize your testimony. I
7 took a little liberty with our
8 partners from the administration
9 because they have to implement
10 whatever comes out of this
11 committee.

12 So it was important to take
13 that time and to, you know, have the
14 back and forth with them. But I'm
15 going to ask you all to please give
16 your testimony in four minutes and
17 when we reach that mark, I'm going
18 to kind of nudge you along, and if
19 you could help me, I would be so
20 appreciative.

21 So can you please state
22 your name for the record and proceed
23 with your testimony?

24 MS. SANDERS: Hi, my name

1

2 is Sonya Sanders. I'm from Philly

3 Thrive and I'm 52 years old,

4 longtime resident of Grays Ferry.

5 And I'm here to give my testimony.

6 My experience started -- I live in

7 Grays Ferry, of course, all my life

8 in South Philadelphia. I live at

9 1433 South 32nd Street for 28 years.

10 In this house I lived in, I

11 had no consistent water, I had to go

12 down to my neighbor's house to

13 actually get buckets of water to

14 bring down to my house so me and my

15 son and my husband at the time, Ray,

16 who passed away, could be able to

17 use the bathroom and to be able to

18 wash and to flush our toilets.

19 The pipes were so old in my

20 house. Long before I lived there,

21 it's the same house that was built,

22 I guess, like 100 years old. The

23 pipes were just that old. These

24 were lead-filled pipes. So these

1

2 pipes would bust in the basement.

3 And when we go to flush the

4 toilet, of course, the waste would

5 go downstairs. Can you imagine the

6 smell in our home? You know, we had

7 no electric during these heat waves.

8 No refrigerator, of course, because

9 there was no electric and no AC. So

10 we were hot, hot and smelling feces.

11 We had raccoons also.

12 Another Philly Thrive member here,

13 Crystal Heath, had -- her roof was

14 broke, and because of that raccoons

15 went in. I live a few doors from

16 her.

17 So the raccoons dug their

18 way down to my house and dug in my

19 house. I remember that during -- on

20 the ceiling, we used to see little

21 wet spots, and that was the

22 raccoon's waste, you know, over top

23 of us. We smelled that as well. So

24 we smelled sewer versus, you know,

1

2 raccoon feces. It was uninhabitable
3 where we lived.

4 When we lived here, we felt
5 like squatters. We lived so bad, we
6 felt like we were squatters. But
7 unlike squatters, we paid our rent.
8 But we had a landlord that refused
9 to do the work. We are here
10 fighting, fighting to be heard,
11 fighting to be listened to. And it
12 -- the fight didn't just start here.

13 The fight has been going on
14 for years in my home. You see,
15 because I tried L&I, I tried the
16 landlord time after time again. I
17 tried speaking out, but no one would
18 hear me. So the fight didn't start
19 here.

20 But now that we are here
21 and someone is finally listening, we
22 are asking you to hear us, hear us,
23 hear what we're saying, hearing that
24 we're suffering, hearing that when

1

2 we leave here and go home, that
3 we're still suffering, okay? We're
4 still going home to homes that need
5 help.

6 Whereas though, you can go
7 to sleep in your -- in your bed, but
8 there's no bugs crawling on you.

9 You know, but there's bugs crawling
10 on us. You know, you can -- you can
11 go home and have running water and
12 bathe. But while you're bathing,
13 remember there's people like us who
14 cannot bathe, who are home and
15 cannot bathe their children.

16 I have an autistic son at
17 home that's 25 years old. You know,
18 he heard Nicolas O'Rourke had showed
19 a video of me speaking last time
20 here. I wasn't going to come today.
21 I was debating not to come. You
22 know, my son heard it and said, mom,
23 I'm embarrassed. He said, I'm
24 embarrassed because we're not going

1

2 to get any help. No one's listening
3 to that. No one cares.

4 But I'm here to say
5 someone's going to hear, someone's
6 going to listen, someone's going to
7 hear us, someone's going to make the
8 difference, and that's why we're
9 here. I want you to remember each
10 face here, because of each face here
11 is like 500 people at home still
12 suffering. Say yes, and they will
13 suffer no longer.

14 That's why we want to vote,
15 yes, and they'll suffer no longer.
16 We only need the word yes. It's as
17 simple as saying yes, that you will
18 not suffer anymore. Yes, that
19 you'll not go home and you can have
20 a bath and your bathroom and it
21 should work. L&I should do their
22 job. Yes, they should. We're
23 asking you say, yes, this has to
24 stop. Yes, it should stop.

1

2 I'm here to speak for those
3 who can't speak for themselves and
4 for those that can't come here
5 today. It needs to stop. We are
6 hurting and suffering. Our health
7 needs -- we need people that take
8 our health seriously.

9 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you. Thank you so much. I'm very
11 -- I'm very sorry that you had to
12 experience such harrowing
13 conditions, but I'm glad that you
14 came here today. It's really
15 important. Thank you. Please state
16 your name for the record and proceed
17 with your testimony.

18 MS. MONDS: My name is
19 Melissa Monds. Before -- I'm
20 basically going to read my testimony
21 so I make sure I get everything. I
22 want to address, Councilmember
23 O'Rourke. Thank you for your
24 sacrifice, sir.

1

2

You've giving up being with

3

your son at this moment means the

4

world to me because I am a mother

5

and a grandmother and I cannot visit

6

my own grandchildren and children

7

because of the health condition,

8

because of my testimony today. So I

9

greatly appreciate your sacrifice.

10

My name is Melissa Bonds.

11

I am a mother and a grandmother, and

12

I have lived in Philadelphia since

13

October, 2007.

14

I'm here today to speak in

15

strong support of the Safe and

16

Healthy Homes Act. I've experienced

17

homelessness, I've slept in storage

18

units and under loading docks. But

19

it was an apartment owned by Odin

20

Properties in the Frankford section

21

of Philadelphia that made me sick as

22

I am today. I moved in on September

23

3rd, 2019. I was denied a walk-

24

through prior to signing my lease,

1

2 so I took photos the day I moved in.

3 One of the things I noticed

4 was a gap in the floor of the

5 bedroom where mice could run through

6 freely. I had just come from a

7 homeless shelter, so I was desperate

8 to have my own place. But even

9 those of us -- even those of us who

10 were recently homeless deserve safe

11 and healthy homes.

12 So many things happened in

13 that apartment. In October, 2019,

14 water began leaking in the bathroom.

15 A light fixture eventually fell and

16 shattered on the toilet. In March,

17 2020, the toilet started overflowing

18 with sewage and trash, including

19 cigarette butts. And I don't even

20 smoke. So that tells me that was

21 someone else's waste flowing into my

22 apartment for an entire weekend

23 because my emergency calls went

24 unanswered. I dealt with human

1

2 feces right outside my door and
3 trash piled up in hallways because
4 property management stopped paying
5 for removal. This led to severe
6 roach and mouse infestation. I
7 reported all of these issues, but
8 nothing was ever done.

9 In 2024, I joined Renters
10 United and we've pushed for L&I
11 inspectors to visit the building.
12 They confirmed what we already knew;
13 multiple pest violations among other
14 hazards. This is why proactive
15 inspections of rental units are so
16 necessary so that tenants don't have
17 to live in these conditions while
18 waiting for someone to finally
19 listen. My apartment made me sick.

20 In July of 2023 -- it was
21 actually Tuesday, July 11th, 2023 to
22 be exact, I woke up unable to
23 breathe. I thought I was just
24 congested, and a hot shower would

1

2 help, but it didn't. I could not
3 take in a full deep breath. I went
4 to the hospital and ended up in the
5 hospital for nine days with
6 pneumonia.

7 My doctor told me my living
8 conditions were most likely the
9 cause. He was quite shocked. When
10 I came home, his question to me was,
11 how did you catch pneumonia? This
12 is my primary care doctor that has
13 taken care of me for years. I
14 believe you have a copy of the
15 letter in front of you that he
16 wrote.

17 Later that year, I
18 underwent allergy testing and found
19 out that I am fatally allergic to
20 mice and cockroaches, both of which
21 are present in my apartment. Since
22 then, I've been diagnosed with
23 pulmonary hypertension, chronic
24 heart failure, and chronic

1
2 respiratory failure. Because of my
3 health, I can't travel to see my
4 children or grandchildren. I've
5 become reclusive, not because I want
6 to, but because every time I get
7 sick, it puts me at serious risk.
8 And going in public definitely puts
9 me at risk of picking up everything.
10 This has taken a major toll on my
11 mental health.

12 During the pandemic, I
13 contributed to a book titled The
14 Power of Mental Wealth alongside
15 well-known voices like Les Brown,
16 Johnny Wimbrey, and Heather Monahan.

17 As a published author, I
18 have spoken openly about the
19 importance of mental resilience.
20 But even with everything I have
21 learned and shared, the conditions I
22 was forced to live in broke me down
23 physically, emotionally, and
24 mentally.

1

2 I truly believe that if the
3 Safe Healthy Homes Act had been in
4 place, I might never have gotten
5 sick. Pre-inspections, tenant
6 protections, and relocation
7 assistance could have prevented the
8 long-term damage to my health and
9 quality of life.

10 Please, pass this
11 legislation. And it's not just for
12 me, or my grandchildren, or my
13 children, it's for the people you
14 can't hear, because they suffered in
15 silence and died. It's for the
16 people that are afraid that L&I is
17 going to come shut down the
18 building, if they find out how bad
19 it is. It's for the people that are
20 just plain afraid.

21 So I beg you, please don't
22 wait. If you got to do it, if you
23 got to go back and fix this and do
24 that, please, put it in place.

1

2 Please, put the money behind it.

3 Please, give them the \$10 million

4 they need. Please, give them the

5 \$10 million they need for

6 relocation.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

8 you. Thank you so much. Thank you

9 --

10 MS. MONS: Everyone

11 deserves --

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: -- so

13 much.

14 MS. MONDS: And everyone

15 deserves to live in a safe and

16 healthy home, not just those two who

17 can afford to fight for it. Thank

18 you for your time, your commitment

19 to making housing safer for all

20 Philadelphians.

21 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

22 you so much for your testimony, but

23 also for being here today. We can

24 see and hear how much of a sacrifice

1

2 that is and we appreciate you.

3 Please state your name for the

4 record and proceed with your

5 testimony.

6 MS. HOWELL: Hi, good

7 afternoon. My name is Theresa

8 Howell. I'm with OnePA's Renters

9 United to Councilman Gauthier, Rue

10 Landau, Driscoll, and the other ones

11 that left. Hello, how are you?

12 Nick, I love you, and I thank God

13 for you. You are in my prayers,

14 your family is in my prayers, and,

15 honey, God got you. God got you.

16 Everything's going to be okay.

17 Okay. So I've been in my

18 home for 11 years. I rent from a

19 landlord that owns over 500

20 properties. He doesn't follow the

21 law at all. He does exactly what he

22 wants to do, which is not make

23 repairs.

24 But the moment that you

1
2 say, I'm going to speak out, I'm
3 going to speak up, here comes the
4 retaliation. Like, he literally
5 locked me in my house. He tied a
6 rope from my railing outside to my
7 front door and literally locked me
8 in my house, because I was speaking
9 about the conditions in which I was
10 living in.

11 Well, I don't scare that
12 easy, because if I did, I wouldn't
13 be here now. I don't scare at all.
14 If I can live in those conditions,
15 there's no possible way I can't
16 speak up about it. None whatsoever.
17 I'm speaking for the folks like
18 Melissa. I'm speaking for the folks
19 that is shut in and shut down, and
20 can't speak, but they are dying in
21 silence. They're not living in
22 silence; they're dying in silence.

23 And it's ridiculous. We
24 need to catch up with the 21st

1

2 century, people. Other cities,
3 other states are doing it. They
4 have proactive inspections and it
5 works. We deserve it. We work --
6 we pay taxes in this city and we
7 deserve the same thing everybody
8 else deserves in this city.

9 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you to all of you for your
11 testimony, and for being brave and
12 sharing your stories. Are there any
13 questions or comments from members
14 of the committee? I have a
15 question, and I'll move to the bill
16 sponsor.

17 Ma'am, you talked about
18 dealing with L&I, I want to hear
19 what has that been like? Those of
20 you who reached out to L&I, or any,
21 you know, other city agencies, the
22 Human Relations, what has that
23 process been like for all of you as
24 you've been experiencing these

1

2 substandard conditions?

3

MS. SANDERS: I'll say that
4 when I reached out to L&I, I'm going
5 to honestly say, I'm still waiting
6 for a response. I can't tell you
7 what it's like, because they ain't
8 respond yet.

9

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you. I mean, it's important for us
11 to know that. And I know coming out
12 of this committee, we'll do some
13 follow up and make sure that you get
14 a response.

15 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

16

MS. MONS: My experience
17 with L&I -- my first experience was
18 prior to Odin, the landlord was --
19 didn't even have a renter's license,
20 and it was completely corrupt. And
21 I was one of those tenants that was
22 given the 10 days to move, because
23 L&I said I could not live in the
24 property. So, of course, when I

1

2 moved into Odin, that fear was
3 already there. Multiple L&I reports
4 had gone in. Nameless, a couple of
5 them weren't named. I pretty much
6 experienced the same that Sonya had
7 experienced, no response.

8 The only response I got
9 from L&I was after Renters United
10 had come around with me. I'd gone
11 around with them, went to a couple
12 of meetings, and they did get an
13 inspector to come out and he did
14 continue to follow up once he --
15 once he was assigned to my specific
16 situation, and that unit continued
17 to fail all of those inspections as
18 well.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: And I
20 think I can guess the answer to
21 this, but I wanted to ask you, when
22 you were given 10 days to vacate the
23 property, was there any assistance
24 from the city in finding somewhere

1

2 else to live?

3 MS. MONS: No.

4 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

5 you.

6 MS. HOWELL: Can I finish

7 my speech? I wasn't done.

8 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Oh, I

9 thought you were finished. I'm so

10 sorry. You ended at such a powerful

11 point. I thought it was done. Go

12 ahead.

13 MS. HOWELL: You get my

14 message, passionate. It's just

15 passion. Okay. So where was I? I

16 won't be long. I promise I won't be

17 long.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

19 MS. HOWELL: But it's just

20 a couple of points that I -- that I

21 have to say.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

23 Proceed.

24 MS. HOWELL: Okay. During

1
2 my time organizing, I've come to
3 discover that so many renters have
4 problems -- are having -- are having
5 the same problems or worse issues
6 than I have. The affordable option
7 that we are usually left in are the
8 predatory landlords. We don't have
9 the options that a lot of other
10 people have.

11 So I'll ask a question,
12 since my options are limited, and so
13 many other Philadelphians options
14 are limited, because we are on fixed
15 incomes, does that mean that we are
16 not entitled, or we are entitled to
17 less because we don't have the same
18 income as people with higher
19 incomes?

20 Do we not deserve safe,
21 healthy homes to raise our children
22 and our grandchildren? I have a
23 couple questions for the audience,
24 if you don't mind. I won't be long.

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: But

3

wait a minute. We can't -- the

4

audience is not going to be able to

5

respond to you --

6

MS. HOWELL: This is just a

7

raise -- a raise of hand.

8

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: So

9

you could just get them out, but

10

there's no means of, you know,

11

everybody who speaks has to be on

12

record, and we don't -- we're not

13

set up for that today. So you could

14

just read your questions out.

15

MS. HOWELL: Okay. Who

16

here has someone in their life who

17

they love who is a renter? Who here

18

has ever had to deal with

19

infestations like cockroaches, mice,

20

rats, bed bugs? Who here has ever

21

lived with mold or leaks? Who here

22

has ever had winter without enough

23

heat or hot water?

24

Who here has ever needed a

1
2 repair and got a patchwork job, or
3 had to wait too long to get help?
4 This is why we need the Rights to
5 Repair Bill. Now I have to -- I
6 have to say this last part. Voting
7 for the Safe and Healthy Homes
8 should be a no-brainer for Council,
9 but we know that we are here in this
10 room, and corporate landlords,
11 lobbyists who are trying to kill the
12 bill.

13 Groups like Philadelphia --
14 Pennsylvania Apartment Association
15 claims to represent the concerns of
16 small landlords, but their board --
17 their board and members include the
18 largest landlords in the country,
19 like Greystar and Morgan, which one
20 owns 800,000 properties and the
21 other owns a hundred thousand
22 properties.

23 Properties who they own
24 hundreds and thousands. Their

1
2 members also includes groups like
3 Odin Properties, which we know is a
4 piece of crap. These lobbyists have
5 the audacity to claim that these
6 bills will be bad for renters. I'm
7 here to tell you everything in the
8 Safe Home -- Safe Healthy Homes Act
9 was written based on the living
10 experiences that we have, that we
11 deal with on a daily basis.

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
13 you.

14 MS. HOWELL: The last thing
15 I want to talk about is retaliation.
16 I've already --

17 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Can
18 you summarize.

19 MS. HOWELL: -- spoke about
20 retaliation. I also want to say
21 Bridget Greenwald came up here and
22 said that we -- that there are only
23 four -- that we gave her four names
24 of landlords that are bad. She

1

2 asked for four names. That's not
3 the entire list. The list is a lot
4 longer than that, so please, don't
5 believe that it's just four.

6 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
7 you so much. Thank you so much.
8 Thank you for your testimony, and
9 this we clearly have to finish this
10 conversation with the
11 administration, so we will be
12 expecting that they respond to what
13 you've requested. Councilmember
14 Nicolas O'Rourke.

15 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
16 Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just
17 say that I think the people's voices
18 have spoken. I think that the
19 stories speak for themselves. I
20 appreciate the point made about
21 living experiences being articulated
22 here. We see them in our office as
23 your needs. Your experiences are
24 your lived real-life, not

1

2 hypothetical, not of a textbook, not
3 something that you heard on social
4 media, you live it every single day.

5 In our office, our mantra
6 is to treat the people's needs as
7 holy. Your needs are holy, and that
8 is the reason why we continue to
9 fight for what you need so that you
10 can live better. Everyone deserves
11 to be able to live better. I also
12 just want to simply say, several
13 folks have said, even members of the
14 committee have all -- have said
15 this. And I think it's important
16 that we say it in society. I love
17 you, too.

18 Thank you very, very much.
19 We need more of that, and it's out
20 of love that I continue to do this
21 work. Thank you for your advocacy.

22 MS. MONDS: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
24 you, Councilmember. Thank you,

1

2 thank you, thank you to all of you
3 for being here today and for your
4 advocacy. Will the clerk please
5 call the next panel of witnesses to
6 testify?

7 THE CLERK: Paul Cohen,
8 Steve Chintaman.

9 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
10 afternoon. Thank you so much for
11 joining us today. We are going to
12 try for four minutes. When we reach
13 four minutes, I'm going to nudge you
14 to, kind of, move it along and
15 summarize. Please help me, I would
16 appreciate that. Please state your
17 name for the record and proceed with
18 your testimony, whichever one of you
19 who wants to go first.

20 MR. CHINTAMAN: Good
21 afternoon, Chairwoman Gauthier,
22 sponsors, Councilmember O'Rourke,
23 and the members of the Committee on
24 Housing, Neighborhood Development,

1

2 and The Homeless. My name is Steven
3 Chintaman, and I'm the VP of
4 Government Affairs for the
5 Pennsylvania Apartment Association,
6 representing over 305,000 units and
7 316 property management companies
8 across the Commonwealth.

9

Locally here in
10 Philadelphia, we represent over
11 38,000 units and 49 property
12 management companies. I'd like to
13 thank you for the opportunity to
14 testify on bills 250329, 250330, and
15 250331.

16 At the Pennsylvania
17 Apartment Association, we are deeply
18 committed to holding bad actors
19 accountable and supporting policies
20 that protect residents. We believe
21 these bills impose broad-sweeping
22 regulations that unfairly burden all
23 housing providers regardless of
24 their compliance record. This

1
2 approach risks creating new
3 challenges without effectively
4 addressing the root issues. Our
5 members consistently strive to
6 uphold legal standards and provide
7 quality housing, but overregulation
8 can have serious consequences. Many
9 of the provisions outlined in the --
10 in the original bills duplicate
11 existing protections under landlord
12 tenant eviction and fair housing
13 laws, and may go well beyond what is
14 practical or enforceable. The
15 unattended result is often increased
16 operational costs, a shrinking
17 housing supply, and reduced
18 flexibility for both housing
19 providers and residents.

20 We've heard today from L&I
21 about concerns about operational
22 capacity. The department of L&I
23 currently lacks the capacity to
24 enforce the proposed measures

1

2 effectively. With limited staffing
3 and resources, even routine
4 approvals for minor repairs often
5 face delays of 30 to 60 days.

6 Delays beyond the control of the
7 housing provider.

8 The Mayor's office has
9 already committed to strengthening
10 L&I through the budget process. It
11 would be prudent to allow time for
12 these improvements before layering
13 on new regulatory burdens.

14 With regards to Bill
15 250329, the original version of the
16 bill, Right to Repairs, our major
17 concerns are focused on the
18 immediate license suspension for
19 unresolved violations and also with
20 the phase proactive inspections by
21 2030.

22 Mandatory inspection laws
23 impose considerable financial and
24 administrative burdens, especially

1

2 on small providers. These proper --
3 these policies disproportionately
4 target multi-family properties while
5 often exempting others creating an
6 uneven playing field. Costs
7 associated with compliance are
8 frequently passed down to renters.

9 A more effective approach
10 would be a complaint-based
11 inspection system that targets
12 problem properties without
13 penalizing responsible owners. With
14 regards to bill 250330, the Right to
15 Safety bill, the original version of
16 the bill, again, while tenant
17 protections are important, good
18 cause eviction rules can severely
19 limit a housing provider's ability
20 to manage properties and address
21 disruptive behavior. These policies
22 may deter investment and worsen the
23 city's housing shortage.

24 In addition, proposals that

1
2 alter fundamental contractual
3 relationships between tenants and
4 landlords, such as forced
5 negotiations or rigid lease terms
6 have the potential to destabilize
7 the rental market. We urge the
8 Council to instead focus on
9 sustainable measures that support
10 both tenants and housing providers,
11 such as increasing housing supply,
12 enhancing rental assistance
13 programs, and improving enforcement
14 of existing laws.

15 As we evaluate these
16 proposals, we ask the Council to
17 hold these bills. Let's have more
18 time to collaborate and look at some
19 of the root issues we're trying to
20 address here. We thank you for your
21 time and consideration.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: All
23 right. All right. All right.
24 Proceed.

1

2

MR. COHEN: Thank you. And

3

I will try to summarize my

4

testimony, make it as quick as

5

possible. Good afternoon,

6

Chairwoman and members of the

7

Committee. My name is Paul Cohen.

8

I am the General Counsel for HAPCO

9

Philadelphia, which is the largest

10

membership organization for low to

11

moderate income housing. Basically,

12

representing your mom-and-pops who

13

Councilmember Jones calls your

14

onesies and twosies. And thank you

15

for giving me the opportunity to

16

testify today and for being on the

17

panel, I do appreciate that.

18

We are all on the same

19

side. I'm going to -- I'm going to

20

tell you the universe, okay? So we

21

are all trying to go after bad

22

landlords. We're totally against

23

bad landlords. And believe it or

24

not, I'm going to hear is boos this

1

2 whole time, but we love tenants. We
3 love tenants. They are our -- go
4 ahead, laugh. They're our
5 customers, okay? We do not go after
6 good tenants.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hey,
8 hey, I'm going to ask for -- I'm
9 going to ask that we have quiet, we
10 have to -- a hearing means we hear
11 everybody's perspective. So I'm
12 going to ask that we allow that the
13 process to proceed.

14 MR. COHEN: Thank you,
15 Chairwoman. We need to work
16 together. We are all for working
17 with Council, we're all for working
18 with tenants. We want to be behind
19 tenants, good tenants. We need laws
20 that can actually go after bad
21 landlords.

22 Unfortunately, see this?
23 This is a book I put together of all
24 the laws in the city of Philadelphia

1
2 that a landlord -- look how thick
3 this is. That a landlord needs to
4 comply with in the city of
5 Philadelphia. And I'm going to --
6 I'm going to tell you what so what,
7 I'm going to tell you, okay? The
8 problem is that we have all these
9 laws, but we're still hearing,
10 there's still problems. I've been
11 doing this for 41 years.

12 And everyone comes up and
13 says, "Oh, I'm going to have a new
14 law, and this is going to solve the
15 problem." You know what, if you came
16 up with a law and said to me, "This
17 bill is going to be the last bill,
18 because this solves the problem,"
19 guess what? I'll figure out a way
20 to vote for this bill and support
21 this bill, okay? If this is the
22 last bill that we're going to see.
23 But unfortunately, it's not.
24 Because this bill, unfortunately, is

1

2 not the answer.

3

And I know everyone will
hear -- a lot of people here wanted
to hear that this is the bill.

6

Unfortunately, it's not. This
bill's not going to solve the
problem.

9

The biggest problem that we
have in the city of Philadelphia is
unlicensed landlords, right?

12

Because what happens is, if you're
an unlicensed landlord, you fly
under the radar. So L&I doesn't
even know that you exist. So you
want to talk about having proactive
inspections, L&I can't inspect the
unit they don't know the existence
out there.

20

The key is to go after all
those unlicensed, and Councilmember
Squilla had asked the question -- I
think it was Jones, had asked the
question and saying, how many units

1

2 are out there that are unlicensed?

3 I've been asking for that question

4 for 15 years, okay? I believe, and

5 this is just a belief from what I've

6 hear, and you hear the rumors, it's

7 around 40,000 units. That's a lot

8 of units, and that's a lot of

9 problems.

10 And we've talked about over

11 the years ways to go after those

12 landlords, that's the problem. The

13 other problem is when you pass a

14 bill that goes after good landlords

15 with unintended consequences in the

16 bill, it ends up affecting good

17 landlords. What you end up doing is

18 having those landlords spend extra

19 money, and guess who that money is

20 ultimately passed on to?

21 Unfortunately, that goes to the

22 tenants.

23 Do I still have some time?

24 Okay. I just want to address some

1

2 of the -- if I could, I want to
3 address some of the questions that
4 were asked during the hearing, so
5 maybe I can help Council with regard
6 to that, if I can respond to those
7 questions.

8 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Go
9 ahead, briefly.

10 MR. COHEN: I appreciate
11 that. Okay. One of the questions
12 was if there's a cease act that is
13 issued against one of the units, and
14 let's say you have a 50-unit
15 building, and there's a cease act
16 against one of the units, yes, it
17 does act as a cease act as to all
18 the 50 units.

19 So if there's one license
20 -- one unit that's not in compliance
21 under this bill, all 50 units would
22 be unlicensed. They wouldn't be
23 able to get it, and then what ends
24 up happening is notices goes out

1
2 under this bill to all the tenants
3 that you don't have to pay the rent,
4 and now you have a landlord who's
5 not collecting the rental 50 units,
6 guess what's going to happen? That
7 whole building is going to go in the
8 disrepair. So we can work on trying
9 to figure out a way to make this
10 common-sense bill that works for
11 everybody.

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm
13 going to thank you. Thank you for
14 --

15 MR. COHEN: I just --

16 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: One
17 more thing, very quickly.

18 MR. COHEN: One last thing
19 I do want to mention.

20 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.

21 MR. COHEN: Just that when
22 we talk about this industry and how
23 over regulated this industry is,
24 okay, you have to consider -- have

1

2 to consider that in order to be a
3 landlord, okay, and that's part of
4 the problem is that these are the
5 comments that you're getting when
6 you're trying to --

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
8 Please summarize --

9 MR. COHEN: -- to do the
10 right thing.

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: --
12 and conclude your testimony. Okay.

13 MR. COHEN: In order to be
14 a landlord, you have to get a
15 commercial license, a rental
16 license, a certificate of rental
17 suitability, a lead paint
18 certification, lead pipe
19 certification, bed bug
20 certification, Partners for Good
21 Housing brochure, bed bug brochure.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
23 you.

24 MR. COHEN: -- good housing

1

2 evictions.

3

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

4 you so much. Thank you. No, I

5 don't think -- sorry. I allowed you

6 to continue because I thought it was

7 something additive. I don't think

8 that we have to go through and list

9 all the things that a landlord has

10 to -- has to get. So, please, thank

11 you for your testimony.

12 I have a question, and then

13 I'm going to open up to members of

14 the committee and the bill sponsor.

15 So I understand that, you know, our

16 primary concern for both of your

17 organizations is that you believe

18 that the bills don't take more of a

19 targeted approach to address what

20 you see as isolated incidents of

21 poor housing conditions.

22 While we -- I think we all

23 can agree that most landlords are

24 not bad actors, most landlords are

1

2 trying to do the right thing by
3 their tenants. The most egregious
4 offenders among landlords have
5 significant impact across the city
6 and sometimes deadly impacts even.

7 So I have a figure in front
8 of me that says that the Federal
9 Reserve Bank has found that 40
10 percent of rental properties in
11 Philadelphia have outstanding repair
12 needs. Can -- so I want you both to
13 talk to us about what evidence you
14 have to support that poor housing
15 conditions or, you know, units
16 needing repairs are a rare
17 occurrence in Philadelphia.

18 And just to address
19 Mr. Chintemen, what you noted
20 earlier, I think all of us agree
21 that the complaint-based system,
22 it's not adequate. There's a huge
23 power imbalance between tenants and
24 landlords. And for a variety of

1

2 reasons, fear of retaliation, not
3 having faith in the city. There are
4 a number of reasons that people
5 aren't going to bring forward
6 complaints about their units. So I
7 think we have to move the discussion
8 further to talk about what proactive
9 inspections can look like.

10 So can you please both
11 address, you know, what do you think
12 about that Federal reserve figure
13 and how it relates to your
14 understanding of the landscape, and
15 how can you be a positive part of
16 moving us to a place where we need
17 to be, where every tenant has safe
18 and healthy housing?

19 MR. COHEN: The law current
20 -- as it currently exists, has the
21 protections that you're talking
22 about. The problem with the current
23 law is enforcement. The current law
24 is not being enforced. If the

1
2 current law was being enforced, a
3 lot of these things wouldn't be a
4 problem. What you're asking now is
5 for additional penalties, it doesn't
6 help with the enforcement. That's
7 the biggest problem with this bill.
8 You're not helping the enforcement,
9 which is where it really needs to
10 be.

11 And the enforcement needs
12 to be with your landlords that are
13 not licensed. They're the ones that
14 are getting away from murder. And
15 one of the women that testified
16 talked about that, was living in an
17 unlicensed unit. That's a problem.

18 MR. CHINTEMEN: Okay.

19 MR. COHEN: So if we could
20 address that, that would solve that
21 problem. And as far as this bill
22 goes, it doesn't help to solve the
23 problem. It's just going to create
24 more problem for good landlords that

1

2 might get caught up in this, for
3 example, when one unit is cited in a
4 50-unit building. That's going to
5 hurt a good landlord.

6 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
7 you.

8 MR. COHEN: That's not
9 going to help.

10 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
11 PAA, I'd love to hear you respond to
12 those questions.

13 MR. CHINTEMEN: Yes. So
14 thank you for the question,
15 Chairwoman. We have housing
16 providers here as a part of our
17 association, and I know that they
18 will be providing public comment
19 later on, so I would, definitely,
20 ask that we revisit that question
21 with them in terms of how do we
22 address more proactive behavior in
23 terms of the inspections.

24 But I also think -- and

1

2 we've had multiple conversations
3 with, you know, with Council and
4 with Council staffers regarding this
5 point, but I think we need more of
6 an approach, not just on our
7 legislative body to accomplish this
8 goal, but the courts need to get
9 involved here as well.

10 The District Attorney's
11 Office needs to take a more
12 proactive approach with this. If we
13 have a bad actor, if we have a bad
14 housing provider, go after them,
15 penalize them. But in some
16 instances, we don't -- we're not
17 seeing that. We're not seeing that
18 at all in certain isolated
19 incidents.

20 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you. Vice Chair Landau.

22 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
23 you. Thank you both so much for
24 being here. It's going to be a long

1

2 day with a lot of testimony, but we
3 really appreciate hearing from you.
4 I, kind of, first of all, for the
5 record, would like to recognize
6 there's a lot of great landlords out
7 there, okay? Very important to say
8 that.

9 MR. COHEN: Thank you.

10 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: But I
11 think right now is a time that we,
12 kind of, set the record straight
13 about some of what was said. Not
14 every instance of poor conditions of
15 a property, of a place that needs
16 tremendous repairs is like Brith
17 Sholom that hits the news, and we
18 all know it. And you're going to
19 hear story, after story, after story
20 of this today.

21 And in my years of doing
22 this work, I have seen horrifying
23 conditions in people's rental
24 properties that it's -- it's not

1

2 that they don't exist, because they
3 never hit the news, they exist, they
4 affect people's lives, like the
5 stories that you're hearing today,
6 and we cannot -- we will not have
7 those erased. So I want to start
8 there.

9 The second thing I want to
10 talk about is how even in your
11 written testimony, Steve from PAA,
12 that you talk about the cost
13 associated with running the business
14 of being a landlord. It is -- in
15 your testimony you talked about
16 these are costs that could get
17 passed down to the tenant, even the
18 repair costs could get passed down
19 to the tenant, landlords are
20 business people and have certain
21 obligations.

22 And just like all the
23 business people in this city, they
24 -- yes, you have to get a rental

1
2 license, yes, you have to get a
3 certificate of rental suitability,
4 yes, you have to get a lead
5 certification. You must do these
6 things for a lot of reasons to do
7 this, including so the city of
8 Philadelphia knows who you are,
9 knows who to contact if there's an
10 emergency, pay your taxes on the
11 income that you're receiving, and a
12 variety of other things.

13 So we appreciate the
14 landlords, the 80,000 licenses that
15 we now have and the landlords are
16 following the law.

17 When I first started
18 working at Community Legal Services
19 in 1998, landlords never got rental
20 licenses. They only got the license
21 two weeks before they wanted to file
22 a complaint in municipal court.
23 They were receiving all the money,
24 they were putting it in their

1

2 pockets, didn't pay taxes on it, L&I
3 didn't know who to call if something
4 was falling down, but now, we have
5 80,000 rental licenses in the city
6 of Philadelphia on, what was it?
7 400 and -- 214,000 properties.

8 That's tremendous. So that is
9 progress. That also comes from the
10 organizing of the tenants coming
11 together and demanding these things.

12 There are absolutely
13 unlicensed landlords out there, but
14 I want to be really clear that
15 landlords with licenses also have
16 repair issues. And I don't want to
17 start talking about the unknown
18 quantity of people we -- who are not
19 here, who we don't know about as the
20 only ones they're being a problem.

21 So it's very important that
22 we set the record straight on this.
23 This is not -- when you have to get
24 a license in the city of

1
2 Philadelphia, or commercial activity
3 license in the city, you don't pass
4 that cost off to a tenant. Just
5 like a restaurant is not -- a
6 restaurant has to get licenses, and
7 has to get health inspections and
8 all of these things because you're a
9 business person in the city of
10 Philadelphia and we appreciate the
11 business that you're -- that you
12 have here, including especially the
13 small mom-and-pop landlords.

14 These bills are literally
15 about -- some of it is about
16 memorializing some state laws into
17 local law, some of this is about
18 strengthening systems, there is
19 absolutely work that we need to do
20 to work with L&I to get them as up
21 to speed and as close to 2025-2026
22 as possible, so they can continue
23 going out and doing the inspections
24 and memorializing the notes from

1

2 their inspections, and then if
3 needed, also taking people to court
4 and having landlords actually comply
5 with the judgments that are entered
6 against them in code enforcement
7 court.

8 All of these things are
9 definitely things that have to
10 happen. But I want to be really
11 clear, this isn't just a rip up and
12 tear up these bills, like they are
13 not needed. There is so much in
14 here that is needed. That's it. I
15 have no questions.

16 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:
17 Councilmember Driscoll.

18 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
19 Well, thank you for your testimony.
20 Earlier, L&I had testified about
21 complaint-driven inspections, and we
22 all agree that, you know, we need to
23 do more than that.

24 I've seen in my district a

1
2 lot of renters that -- or not
3 renters, landlords that are not --
4 unlicensed. You know, they don't
5 have the -- all the license. And
6 that's, again, complaint-driven. I
7 only know it if somebody brings it
8 to my attention. But we suspect
9 that there is a lot out there. In
10 your industry, I mean, do you have
11 any sense in the city of
12 Philadelphia, how many -- how many
13 we're dealing with here?

14 MR. COHEN: Forty --

15 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
16 And the reason I ask that is because
17 once -- if we can identify them, and
18 get them to be compliant, we could
19 use -- that can bring a lot more
20 money and revenue in to address the
21 enforcement issues that we're all
22 talking about today.

23 MR. COHEN: We estimate
24 it's about 40,000 units. And one of

1
2 the ways, and we talked about this
3 10 years ago, where we said, all the
4 city has to do is cross reference
5 with the water bills. Where are the
6 water bills going? If it's not
7 going to the property, it's going to
8 some other address. That's a rental
9 property. Look to see if there's a
10 license. It's a simple fix. The
11 city has the capacity to do that,
12 but I don't know why they won't do
13 it.

14 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
15 That's a -- and we'll look into
16 that. So any other utilities or the
17 water bill? That's, I guess, that's
18 the easiest one, right?

19 MR. COHEN: Well, the
20 utilities are generally put in the
21 tenant's name. The easy one is the
22 water bill, because the water bill
23 is a -- it's a municipal utility.
24 So that goes to the -- yeah, it acts

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2 as a lien on the property, it goes
3 to the property. So you would know
4 from the water bill generally
5 speaking.

6

COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL: I

7

mean, I think that's one way of

8

doing it. But for instance, my

9

utilities in my home now, I'm not a

10

renter, but my wife had the

11

utilities in her name -- her maiden

12

name before, and so she still gets

13

building in her maiden name, and for

14

26 years she's been married to as a

15

Driscoll --

16

MR. COHEN: Now the key --

17

the key is what address it goes

18

though. Not the name it's in the

19

address. Is it going to the

20

property address, or is it going to

21

some other addresses you know?

22

COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

23

No, no, no, it goes to my home. So

24

-- but that was just, she never

1

2 changed it. But then, anyway, that
3 could be -- it's part --

4 MR. COHEN: We could talk
5 about that.

6 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL: --
7 it's part of the investigative
8 process, but I like -- I like that
9 as a suggestion and we'll certainly
10 try and figure out a way to do that,
11 because I think there's a lot of --
12 if it's 40,000 that you're talking
13 about here, you know, that's a lot
14 of money that we can use for
15 bolstering L&I, so your testimony
16 was very valuable today. Thank you.

17 MR. COHEN: Thank you. And
18 if I -- if I just might say that
19 we're willing to work with City
20 Council, we want to work with City
21 Council. We're all in this
22 together. We don't -- we don't like
23 bad landlords. Bad landlords hurt
24 good landlords. They make it very

1

2 difficult for good landlords to
3 operate. We're all forgoing after
4 bad landlords, it's the unintended
5 consequences that become a concern.

6 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Paul,
7 we've known each other for so many
8 years, and I want to tell you that I
9 do, personally, appreciate the ideas
10 that you come up with. And it is
11 absolutely true that we want the bad
12 landlords to stop being the bad
13 landlords. So there are -- keep
14 bringing the ideas, because we want
15 to -- we want to keep working with
16 you. As vice chair, I am calling on
17 the bill sponsor, Councilmember Nick
18 O'Rourke.

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
20 Thank you, Madam Vice Chair, and
21 thank you to the panelists that are
22 here speaking. Mr. Cohen, you
23 mentioned as Member Landau just said
24 -- Vice Chair just said that we are

1

2 all not in favor of bad landlords
3 and we want to get -- we want to
4 make sure that those are addressed.
5 Do you support the portion of this
6 legislation that actually increases
7 penalties for unlicensed landlords?

8

MR. COHEN: You have to
9 look at the bill in its totality and
10 look at what penalties that we're
11 talking about, and who -- and who
12 it's going to actually affect.

13

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: I
14 take that as a no. And so this is
15 the reason why --

16

MR. COHEN: No, as a
17 general -- as a general rule, if you
18 just -- pardon me, I'm sorry.

19

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
20 And, excuse me, if I could take my
21 time. Thank you. There are a
22 number of members that do not have
23 faith in what's being stated here, a
24 number of, excuse me, members of the

1
2 community that didn't have faith
3 here in what you are saying, because
4 we start to get real abstract and
5 ambiguous about what we do and don't
6 support when we're talking about the
7 letter of the law that we're trying
8 to put into place now. You made a
9 comment about, you know, if this
10 bill was the final -- was the bill
11 that could just solve it all, then
12 I'd find a way to be in support of
13 it.

14 The unfortunate reality is
15 that is not how lawmaking works. No
16 where in society do you find the
17 magic marker or the magic bullet law
18 that spelled abracadabra, and it
19 resolves all the problems all at
20 once.

21 That is why we have a
22 process, that is the reason why we
23 have to back and forth, that is the
24 reason why we have to do what you

1
2 have to say, to take in
3 consideration, that's why there are
4 multiple members on the committee
5 who ask questions -- who ask
6 questions from their -- from their
7 line of thinking, from their
8 particular advantage points, from
9 their districts, because they have
10 unique vantages by which to come and
11 crack this nut.

12 And so the idea that
13 somehow, if this thing is in
14 everything that you, in particular,
15 the business person has in favor as
16 opposed to addressing the concerns
17 of the lived experience of the
18 people of the community, that, to
19 me, does not seem like you're
20 operating in good faith, which only
21 goes to further the lack of trust
22 that people would have in what
23 you're saying.

24 I would also mention that

1
2 there is no provision. You said
3 something that wasn't true. There
4 is no provision that revokes a
5 rental license for an entire
6 building if one unit has a
7 violation. Saying those sorts of
8 things only, again, causes more
9 distrust in the process, because the
10 fact is it's not -- it's just not
11 true. Mr. Chintemen, I apologize if
12 I didn't say your name correctly.
13 Please forgive me, Steve, if that's
14 appropriate. Your testimony, I
15 believe, centered on your concerns
16 that added regulation will drive up
17 cost for landlords and tenants
18 without producing the intended
19 benefits. However, there is
20 significant evidence to the
21 contrary.

22 Plentiful research
23 demonstrates that these types of
24 programs have been extremely

1
2 successful across the country in
3 cities like Rochester, Syracuse,
4 Greensboro, North Carolina, and
5 Washington, DC. So I want to talk
6 about what evidence you have for
7 your conclusion. The only evidence
8 that you have shared comes from a
9 white paper written by your own
10 partner organization, the National
11 Apartment Association.

12 We -- my team -- my team
13 looked into that paper, and your
14 evidence comes, exclusively, from a
15 single study from Milwaukee written
16 more than 20 years ago, which simply
17 found that there was inconclusive
18 evidence for the impact of proactive
19 inspections, specifically, in
20 Milwaukee.

21 My question is: what
22 credible evidence can you point to,
23 beyond personal anecdotes, sir, that
24 this legislative package is a real

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2 risk to the industry when we've
3 talked about how to focus this on
4 bad landlords, that we all agree
5 need to be addressed?

6 MR. CHINTEMEN: Councilman,
7 thank you -- thank you for that
8 question. I can -- I will
9 definitely -- we have more research.

10 I can definitely provide that to
11 your office. So just give some
12 time, I can share that after this
13 meeting. But also, I would also
14 add, as Paul indicated, and that
15 what you're going to hear from our
16 other housing providers that are
17 here, it's the totality of
18 everything, right?

19 It's how these bills are
20 going to be enforced in a practical
21 manner, and we just don't see that
22 it's going to have that impact, that
23 it's going to hold those bad actors
24 accountable. We think that if given

1

2 time, let's have further
3 conversations about this, and we can
4 figure out a way that we can find a
5 balanced approach and not hold the
6 good actors also under the same
7 breath. It's like we keep
8 penalizing the good actors.

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

10 Thank you for your response. And
11 again, to be very clear, we have
12 been specific and repeated this.
13 I've done this months ago when the
14 people were interviewing me about
15 this question. We are not here to
16 get -- these bills apply by the
17 letter of the law to people who are
18 egregious offenders. We're not --
19 it's not an arbitrary willy-nilly,
20 kind of, application of the law.

21 The idea is to address,
22 again, what we apparently agree
23 needs to be addressed, bad
24 landlords, and there is definition

1

2 within law to address that, which is
3 the reason why we're focusing it.

4 You said -- or that there
5 was a claim here coming from you
6 that rather than blanket
7 inspections, we support a more
8 effective and balanced solution,
9 complaint-based inspection programs
10 that address real documented issues
11 without imposing unnecessary burdens
12 on compliant housing providers.

13 Philadelphia currently operates a
14 complaint-based inspection program,
15 and it fails.

16 Research conducted by Pew
17 confirmed that Philadelphia has no
18 program for regularly inspecting
19 properties. Instead, it makes
20 physical examinations only in
21 response to formal complaints. As a
22 result, only about seven percent, as
23 I believe we heard already, of the
24 city's rental unions get inspected

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2 each year. "Under the current
3 system, though, landlords are not
4 required to complete an inspection
5 to receive a license or a
6 certificate of rental suitability."

7 To reiterate, the PAA is
8 arguing in favor of our current
9 broken status quo. That is not
10 helpful, I believe, to addressing
11 the concerns that people have raised
12 here.

13 I want to come back to you,
14 Mr. Cohen. I don't know if you
15 lifted it up or not, but I, you
16 know, and I think Member Landau
17 lifted this. We require that
18 restaurants and other businesses
19 post business licenses and
20 credentials to prove that health and
21 safety requirements are met. What
22 makes landlords special that they
23 should not have to post their
24 licenses and credentials?

1

2 MR. COHEN: Well, if a

3 landlord has a --

4 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

5 His mic -- I'm sorry, his mic is not

6 on. I'm sorry. Sorry, Mr. Cohen,

7 hold on. Go ahead, try now.

8 MR. COHEN: Can I respond?

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

10 Speak.

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Absolutely.

13 MR. COHEN: Thank you. If

14 a landlord has a 50-unit building,

15 he has one license for the 50 units,

16 so you're not going to have a

17 license posted in every single unit.

18 And if there's a violation against

19 one of those units, it's a violation

20 against the license, and the license

21 is for 50 units, so it will affect

22 all 50 of those units.

23 So if you have one

24 violation, and it could be whatever

1
2 that violation is against that unit,
3 all 50 units under this bill will
4 now get notified that they don't pay
5 the rent, and the landlord's not
6 going to be able to have the money
7 to make the repairs to that one
8 unit, because now he doesn't have
9 the money coming in the rent. There
10 are laws already on the books.
11 They're there now, and they're not
12 being enforced.

13 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you.

15 MR. COHEN: So to have more
16 laws that aren't going to be
17 enforced is not the answer. You can
18 have all the law -- all the enforced
19 -- all the additional penalties you
20 want, it's not going to change the
21 facts.

22 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
23 Mr. Cohen?

24 MR. COHEN: You're still

1

2 going to be in a situation --

3 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

4 Mr. Cohen?

5 MR. COHEN: -- where the

6 law is not being enforced.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

8 The question was --

9 MR. COHEN: Enforce the

10 law. It's a very simple thing.

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm

12 going to ask everybody --

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: --

14 what makes landlords special --

15 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: -- to

16 quite --

17 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: --

18 that they should not have to post

19 their license credentials? There is

20 no provision that speaks to what you

21 have stated. That wasn't my

22 question though. Thank you for

23 answering something else. My

24 question was, what makes landlords

1
2 special that they do not have to
3 post this? I sit in a barbershop
4 and every chair I look at, the
5 barber has a actual license in every
6 single one of those chairs, because
7 you have to address these sorts of
8 things, and there has to be some
9 sense of faith engendered into the
10 customers that are coming there.
11 Why should they get a pass to not
12 prove and make it accessible to be
13 able to do that?

14 We understand that license
15 information is available on Atlas,
16 restaurants and other businesses are
17 in a similar situation. The purpose
18 of our legislation is to help make
19 this information as accessible as
20 possible so that folks can actually
21 have faith that their issues are
22 being addressed.

23 MR. COHEN: Landlords --

24 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm

1

2 going to -- let me just pause for a
3 second. So a couple things. This
4 is a really important exchange, and
5 we need quiet in order to hear it.
6 Secondly --

7 MR. COHEN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: --

9 I'm going to ask to the best of your
10 ability, if you can provide a direct
11 response to the direct question that
12 the -- that the Councilmember asks.
13 And then I'm going to try to push us
14 along. We not only have one
15 additional panel, we have a number
16 of people for public comment, so I'd
17 like to, kind of, move things along.

18 MR. COHEN: Landlords are
19 the most regulated industry in the
20 world. Nobody's more regulated to
21 the -- than landlords. So to say
22 that landlords are getting away with
23 something, is ridiculous. And I
24 could - I wasn't allowed to read and

1

2 I won't do it again.

3 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

4 Please.

5 MR. COHEN: All the

6 different things that landlords have

7 to comply with. Look at this book.

8 This is how regulated landlords are,

9 and you want to complain that

10 landlords aren't regulated. Come

11 on.

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

13 I think that might be as good as

14 we're going to get in this moment.

15 I'm going to try to move us along;

16 is that okay, Councilmember?

17 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

18 Thank you, Madam Chair.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

20 you.

21 MR. COHEN: Thank you,

22 Madam Chair.

23 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

24 you so much for your testimony.

1

2 MR. COHEN: I appreciate
3 it.

4 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: And
5 obviously, we'll be, you know,
6 continuing to talk and work on this.
7 Will the clerk please call the last
8 panel of witnesses to testify?

9 THE CLERK: Dr. Tyra
10 Bryant-Stephens, and Adam Weintraub-
11 Barth.

12 MALE VOICE: Quiet please.

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
14 Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
16 you both so much for being with us
17 today. Please state your name for
18 the record and proceed with your
19 testimony. And again, four minutes
20 to the best of your ability.

21 MS. BRYANT-STEPHENS:
22 Chairperson Gauthier, my name is
23 Tyra Bryant-Stephens. I'm a
24 pediatrician, and I am the Chief

1
2 Health Equity Officer at Children's
3 Hospital of Philadelphia. I'm a
4 board-certified pediatrician in
5 clinical primary care practice for
6 over 30 years, and I want to thank
7 you for this opportunity to offer
8 testimony on Bills No. 250330 and
9 250331, which is intended to protect
10 Philadelphia renters from unsafe and
11 unhealthy housing conditions.

12 The first thing I would say
13 is that housing is health. And I
14 want us -- I'd like to begin by
15 grounding us in the fact that we've
16 known for decades, asthma being the
17 most chronic -- a common, chronic
18 disease in children has major
19 disparities. We know that they
20 persisted across the United States
21 for as long as we've been tracked at
22 -- tracking them.

23 Non-Hispanic Black children
24 are twice as likely to be diagnosed

1
2 with asthma and five times more
3 likely to be hospitalized compared
4 to their non-Hispanic White peers.
5 These disparities are especially
6 profound among children living in
7 substandard housing, like we have in
8 many of our rental properties in
9 Philadelphia, where exposure to
10 asthma triggers is more common.

11 Plumbing, and roof leaks,
12 and ventilator or damp basements and
13 worn carpeting can all contribute.
14 These conditions create environments
15 where mold, pests and allergens
16 thrive as we have already heard from
17 the community residents.

18 While housing disrepair can
19 happen anywhere, it's far more
20 common in low-income neighborhoods,
21 especially those with predominantly
22 underserved racial and ethnic
23 minority residents historically
24 redlined.

1

2

When children are exposed

3

to these triggers early in life, the

4

risk of developing asthma increases.

5

Continued exposure leads to more

6

emergency department visits, more

7

hospitalizations, and more

8

unscheduled doctor's appointments.

9

Even more concerning, symptoms can

10

worsen when children are exposed to

11

multiple triggers at the same time.

12

I've had the privilege and

13

the honor of working with my team at

14

CHOP to study how community-based

15

interventions impact low-resource

16

areas like West Philadelphia.

17

Our team has even mapped

18

asthma rates code violations from

19

Philadelphia's L&I Department. And

20

we've mapped that with CHOP's

21

Emergency Department use in 2019, as

22

well as hospitalizations. the

23

results were clear, more code

24

violations meant higher asthma

1

2 rates, and more emergency room
3 visits for children. We've started
4 home repairs.

5 In our home repairs, we
6 have found all the conditions
7 described today. It's very
8 heartbreaking to see children
9 growing up in these conditions,
10 which impacts their health --
11 impacts their ability to sleep. If
12 they can't sleep, they can't perform
13 well in school. So we are
14 preventing our children from
15 becoming economically independent
16 adults with these housing
17 conditions.

18 We appreciate City Council
19 and the mayor's commitment to
20 thoughtful consideration of how to
21 best build and repair existing homes
22 so that one day all of
23 Philadelphia's children have access
24 to healthy housing. Thank you for

1

2 this opportunity to testify today.

3 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

4 you so much. Thank you so much for

5 your testimony, and thank you for

6 the significant investment that CHOP

7 has made in making sure that homes

8 are healthy in West Philadelphia.

9 You're not just coming here and

10 sharing data, you're walking the

11 walk, and we appreciate it.

12 Proceed.

13 MR. WEINTRAUB-BARTH: Thank

14 you, Chairman Gauthier. My name is

15 Adam Weintraub-Barth. I'm a senior

16 attorney at the Senior Law Center in

17 the Tenant Rights Project. I want

18 to first, very quickly, congratulate

19 you Councilmember O'Rourke on the

20 birth of your child.

21 As the father of a NICU

22 graduate, who's 15 months old, he is

23 so full of life and strength, he was

24 from the very moment he was born.

1
2 So I want to send you all the
3 courage and strength, prayers to you
4 and your family, and if my son is
5 anything like yours, I'm sure your
6 son, as much strength as you are
7 displaying to be here today, he is
8 somehow displaying more right now
9 growing and improving, so all my
10 best to you and your family.

11 So I want to thank you for
12 the opportunity to testify today in
13 support of the Safe and Healthy
14 Homes Act. I'm going to do my best
15 to summarize my testimony, because I
16 also do want to provide some
17 feedback based on some of the prior
18 testimony that's been given today.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm
20 not even going to count that
21 beginning part. That was really
22 sweet.

23 MR. WEINTRAUB-BARTH: Oh,
24 thank you.

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: So

3

your clock starts now.

4

MR. WEINTRAUB-BARTH: Thank

5

you, Chair Woman. Us NICU parents,

6

we got to -- we got to hold

7

together. It's a very specific

8

experience, so I hope no one else

9

has to experience that, but it's a

10

very powerful experience, yeah.

11

So very quickly, Senior Law

12

Center, we prioritize services to

13

older people with the greatest

14

economic and social need, that is

15

older Philadelphians who are

16

low-income, cultural and racial

17

minorities, disabled victims of

18

crime and family violence, and those

19

facing other vulnerabilities and

20

challenges.

21

Our work addresses the

22

historic and persistent disparities

23

faced by older people we serve, as

24

well as those who are isolated by

1

2 language, culture, disability, and
3 poverty. Housing is an issue of
4 racial justice, of basic human need,
5 and the most -- perhaps, the most
6 important issue facing older
7 Americans.

8 Without a safe habitable
9 home, there is no ability to age in
10 place. Access to home and
11 community-based health support and
12 services to avoid
13 institutionalization and remain in
14 one's beloved community, near
15 family, doctors, supporters and
16 trusted places, and people,
17 spiritual resources and comfort.

18 I want to quickly highlight
19 a few of the aspects of the bill
20 that we strongly support. So I was
21 happy to hear today, it sounds like
22 license and inspection, whether in
23 response to this or not, is ready to
24 get a proactive inspection program

1

2 off the ground. We're happy to hear
3 that. We're -- we would love to see
4 it enshrined in this bill, and we
5 want to make sure that this is done
6 in the right way.

7 We want to make sure that
8 they're not gaping loopholes that
9 allow landlords to skirt through
10 attesting to the conditions and
11 property avoiding these proactive
12 inspections when they really are
13 needed the most.

14 In addition to that, we're
15 strongly in support of creating
16 broad anti-harassment protections in
17 the city code. Currently, there's
18 nothing to prevent or punish
19 landlords from harassing tenants.

20 The current section of the
21 Unfair Rental Practices Act
22 pertaining to anti-retaliation is
23 poorly and rarely enforced. This
24 bill strengthens that section and

1

2 adds more robust protections.

3

Finally, I want to talk

4 about the right to relocation. What

5 we've heard today is a lot of

6 tenants who basically have expressed

7 their concerns that if they call

8 L&I, they don't know what's going to

9 happen. If a cease operations order

10 is issued, there's a big question

11 mark that hangs over them for what

12 that means for them.

13

We heard the prior panel

14 talk about the problem of unlicensed

15 landlords, our clients, older

16 adults, any tenant who's sitting

17 behind me, they know if they call

18 L&I and whether their landlord is

19 licensed or not, if L&I comes out

20 and writes up a violation, if they

21 write up a cease operations order,

22 they don't know what their next move

23 is going to be. They're limited in

24 what they can do, they don't have

1

2 the resources to move, they don't
3 have the resources to quickly find
4 new, safe, stable housing, and that
5 directly impacts older adults the
6 most, it impacts disabled tenants
7 the most, it impacts families with
8 young children the most, the most
9 vulnerable in our society.

10 So in addition to that, I
11 want to quickly also address, right
12 now, currently, one of the big
13 things that we are strongly in favor
14 of this package of bills is it
15 addresses the question of what
16 happens when a landlord doesn't make
17 repairs, and they're not maintaining
18 the property.

19 The truth is, right now a
20 tenant has few options for what they
21 can do to get their landlord to
22 actually do those repairs. If they
23 withhold the rent as they're legally
24 entitled to do, their landlord is

1
2 likely to respond by filing a case
3 in municipal court that permanently
4 stains their eviction record, or
5 their tenant record, that it shows
6 an eviction filing, and then once
7 they're in court, it's anything but
8 certain about what's going to happen
9 to them at that point, even if
10 they've legally withheld the rent.

11 We, unfortunately, often
12 hear judges say, "If it's so bad,
13 why do you want to stay?" We know,
14 of course, one of the biggest
15 reasons people stay is they have
16 nowhere else to go.

17 There is a shortage of
18 safe, stable, affordable housing in
19 Philadelphia. I want to quickly
20 address that is why the good cause
21 expansion in this bill is so
22 critical, because good cause
23 provides specific protections for
24 tenants that they know if they call

1
2 L&I, or if they ask for repairs to
3 get done, that gives them an extra
4 protection from their landlord
5 turning around and saying, you know
6 what? I just don't want you here
7 anymore. That is one of the biggest
8 issues that tenants face and one of
9 the biggest fears that they have
10 that this bill would address.

11 And I want to go -- and I
12 want to thank Councilmember Jones,
13 thank you for addressing, again,
14 bringing up the tenants of Brith
15 Sholom. At Senior Law Center, we've
16 been really passionate about
17 fighting for those tenants. We
18 appreciate your, and the rest the
19 Councilmembers, dedication to this
20 as well. But I think that's raised
21 a lot of issues of the lack of
22 specific enforcement mechanisms for
23 those tenants in those
24 circumstances.

1

2

Councilmember Landau, I

3

think you said, that is one example.

4

We're never going to hear about the

5

extent of these problems throughout

6

the city. It doesn't make the news

7

all the time. We wish it did, but

8

this package of bills gives tenants

9

options that will actually create

10

some kind of incentive for their

11

landlord to make these repairs.

12

And last, I just want to

13

say good landlord, bad landlord, we

14

don't care what you call them. If a

15

landlord doesn't make repairs and

16

doesn't keep their rental unit

17

habitable and safe for a tenant to

18

be in, I don't care what you call

19

them, they're not doing their job,

20

they're not meeting their

21

obligations to their tenants, and

22

they're causing as the -- as the --

23

as the tenants who testified on the

24

panel before us said, those actions,

1
2 especially for tenants who are
3 older, who are disabled, those who
4 have children, those are creating
5 irreparable damages to people's
6 lives, to their health and safety,
7 that -- that's the end of it. So we
8 strongly urge the Council to advance
9 these bills and pass them on.

10 We are strongly in support
11 of any technical amendments, we're
12 prepared to work with the sponsor,
13 and with the Council overall, on
14 ways to tighten these up, make them
15 more practical, make sure there's
16 funding attached to it to make sure
17 L&I can do what they need to do, and
18 we are absolutely dedicated to that
19 work. So thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you so much. Thank you so much for
22 your testimony today, and more
23 importantly, your work. Any brief
24 comments from members? Okay. We

1

2 are going to actually recess the
3 hearing for 15 minutes or so. So we
4 will recess until 3:55. Thank you.

5 (Council at recess.)

6 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
7 afternoon, everyone. Good
8 afternoon, everyone.

9 Thank you so much for
10 sticking around. Thank you for your
11 participation in this process. I'm
12 going to make an announcement that
13 is a consensus of the committee, and
14 the bill sponsor, and then I'm going
15 to move to Councilmember Nicolas
16 O'Rourke to -- for him to have
17 comments.

18 And I'm going to ask, I
19 know it's hard, this has been a
20 spirited process and it deals with
21 real life, so people are very
22 passionate about it. But I'm going
23 to ask that I have the space to get
24 out my full comments. Okay.

1

2

As a committee, and along

3

with the bill sponsor, I think

4

there's a consensus that we all

5

think these are very important vital

6

bills. No one is satisfied with the

7

status quo as it relates to our

8

city's ability to make sure that we

9

have safe housing for everyone, and

10

as it relates to L&I's ability to

11

hold landlords accountable.

12

And so we appreciate the

13

bill sponsor for bringing forward

14

this package, because it's needed

15

and necessary. Particularly, as we

16

embark on a historic investment in

17

housing in the city of Philadelphia.

18

But I also think that there is a

19

consensus that some of these bills

20

need more time.

21

We need more time to talk

22

through the amendments, we need more

23

time to work with the administration

24

to make sure that they can implement

1

2 these bills, because they're so
3 important that we want them to
4 happen in the right way. It's
5 critical that they happen in the
6 right way.

7 So what we want to put
8 forward, and then I have more
9 comments after that, if you will
10 allow, we would like to move forward
11 on Bill No. 250331. That is the
12 bill to create a relocation fund for
13 tenants that are being displaced
14 from properties that are not
15 habitable.

16 We would like to hold bills
17 250329, and 250330. Those are the
18 bills that deal with having L&I
19 create the proactive rental
20 inspection program, which we really
21 want to get, right? And the other
22 bill deals with having the city be
23 able to fight against retaliation if
24 tenants are making complaints.

1
2 And I know that's not what
3 people wanted to hear today, but I
4 do want to put out there that the
5 legislative process is complex,
6 right? And you don't always get
7 everything you want in a particular
8 moment. I'll also put out there
9 that, you know, I started talking
10 with Renters United about a
11 proactive inspection program a
12 couple of years ago. I've never
13 seen this discussion move forward in
14 this way.

15 Nick has done that better
16 than I did, and it's because he has
17 all of you. This is the furthest
18 that this discussion has ever gotten
19 to, and it's because you are so
20 invested in it, and you're so
21 passionate about it.

22 And so what I'd like to
23 also say is that, you know, we want
24 to move forward with the one bill to

1

2 show you all how important we think
3 this is, and how committed we are to
4 get the whole -- to getting the
5 whole package done.

6 The other thing that
7 there's consensus on, the whole
8 housing committee has agreed to
9 communicate to the Council President
10 and to the Mayor that we support
11 Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke's
12 budget request that is connected to
13 this legislative package. That's
14 another way that we want to show you
15 our commitment. We also are going
16 to tell, you know, tell the Council
17 President that we want the \$10
18 million for L&I, that we want to put
19 the funding into this relocation
20 fund.

21 So what I'm trying to
22 convey to you is there is consensus
23 among the committee that we want
24 more time to get this right, but

1
2 there's also a great sense of
3 commitment, and we are so grateful
4 to Councilmember O'Rourke for moving
5 this discussion forward, for making
6 sure that it's been informed by the
7 real life stories of people in our
8 communities, and for being here at
9 such a strenuous time for his
10 family. And so with that, I'm going
11 to move to the bill sponsor for
12 comments.

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
14 Thank you, Madam Chair. Again,
15 echoing what the Chair has lifted
16 up. A consensus was brought or
17 agreed to and I believe that we have
18 responded to some of the concerns
19 that were lifted up throughout the
20 course of this hearing.

21 But a consensus has come
22 that we need more time as it relates
23 to Bill No. 250329, that's the Right
24 to Repairs, and Bill No. 250330,

1

2 Right to Safety. But that there is
3 consensus to move forward with Bill
4 No. 250331, the Right to Relocation.

5 As we know, as I shared in
6 the previous line of questioning
7 with Panel No. 3, I believe, there
8 is no one law that magically
9 resolves all the issues. That is
10 the whole point of having a
11 legislative process.

12 That having been said,
13 there is no one legislator who is
14 able to move any particular one
15 thing through, they don't have that
16 kind of power. As we all know, the
17 real power is not in this building,
18 the real power is in the streets.
19 The real power is in your homes, the
20 real power is amongst all of you.

21 So as these things, and
22 then we have a commitment from folks
23 to make -- to take these things
24 seriously, there's an agreement that

1

2 we want to address bad landlords,
3 and that we do want to be able to
4 get these other two bills. 250329,
5 250330 correct, that you continue to
6 make your voices heard. I am one
7 voice, you are many. And the more
8 that you continue to organize, the
9 more, I believe, that we will win.

10 So that having been said,
11 thank you for your advocacy. Let's
12 keep our pedal to the medal, so that
13 we can see a brighter day, and have
14 the ability to live better in the
15 city of Philadelphia because every
16 single one of you deserve it. Thank
17 you for your advocacy today.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: So
19 from a process perspective, this is
20 what's going to happen. We need a
21 quorum in order to vote the bill
22 that we all agree on out of
23 committee. So what we're going to
24 do -- and some councilmembers are

1
2 going to have to start moving on to
3 other events, meetings. So what
4 we're going to do, we're going to
5 move into the public meeting to take
6 action on the bill, and then we're
7 going to move back into the public
8 hearing, and hear everybody who
9 signed up for public comment. So if
10 you're signed up for public comment,
11 you will get a chance to speak, but
12 we need to be able that we -- to
13 take legislative action as a
14 committee before members start to
15 leave.

16 We will now go into a
17 public meeting to consider the
18 action to be taken on Bill No.
19 250331 today. The other two bills,
20 250329 and 250330 will be held. Can
21 the clerk please call the role?

22 THE CLERK: Councilmember
23 Squilla?

24 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

1

2 Present.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember

4 Jones?

5 COUNCILMEMBER JONES:

6 Present.

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember

8 Bass?

9 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

10 Present.

11 THE CLERK: Councilmember

12 Driscoll?

13 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

14 Present.

15 THE CLERK: Vice Chair

16 Landau?

17 VICE CHAIR LANDAU:

18 Present.

19 THE CLERK: And Chair

20 Gauthier?

21 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

22 Present. The Chair recognizes Vice

23 Chair Landau for a motion on the

24 amendment to Bill No. 250331.

1

2 Sorry.

3

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank

4

you, Madam Chair. I offer an

5

amendment to Bill No. 250331. A

6

copy of the amendment has been

7

circulated to all members of the

8

Committee. I move that the

9

amendment to Bill No. 250331 be

10

approved.

11

COUNCILMEMBER JONES:

12

Second.

13

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: It

14

has been moved and properly seconded

15

that the amendment to Bill No.

16

250331 be approved. All those in

17

favor of the motion will signify by

18

saying aye.

19

Councilmembers: Aye.

20

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Those

21

opposed? The ayes have it, and the

22

motion carries. And the amendment

23

to Bill No. 250331 has been

24

approved.

1

2

The Chair recognizes Vice

3

Chair Landau for a motion on Bill

4

No. 250331 as amended.

5

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank

6

you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill

7

No. 250331 be reported from this

8

Committee with a favorable

9

recommendation as amended.

10

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Start

11

over again.

12

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: We just

13

take a moment to say, we love you,

14

Councilmember Nick O'Rourke. Thank

15

you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill

16

No. 250331 as amended be reported

17

from this Committee with a favorable

18

recommendation, and further move

19

that the rules of Council be

20

suspended to permit first reading of

21

this bill at the next session of

22

Council.

23

Councilmember BASS:

24

Second.

1
2 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: It
3 has been moved and properly seconded
4 that Bill No. 250331 as amended be
5 reported from this Committee with a
6 favorable recommendation. And
7 further move that the rules of
8 Council be suspended to permit first
9 reading of this bill at the next
10 session of Council. All those in
11 favor of the motion will signify by
12 saying aye.

13 Councilmembers: Aye.

14 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Those
15 opposed? The ayes have it, and the
16 motion carries. Bill No. 250331 as
17 amended will be reported from this
18 committee with the favorable
19 recommendation. With the request
20 that the rules of Council be
21 suspended to permit first reading at
22 the next session of Council. Okay.
23 We're going to go back to the public
24 hearing, and hear our -- from our

1

2 public commenters.

3

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Let's

4

do this for a second, please.

5

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

6

Will the clerk please call the first

7

set of public commenters?

8

THE CLERK: Okay. Malik

9

Carter, Dennis Drust, Sheryl Sitman,

10

Lori Peterson. No, excuse me. Is

11

Lori still here? No. Okay. Pam

12

Kane.

13

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

14

afternoon. It's been such a long

15

day, and we're excited to hear from

16

everyone, but I am going to request

17

that you try to put your public

18

comment within two minutes. We, at

19

a certain point, folks are going to

20

need to take a break and, kind of,

21

we've been here for a long time, so

22

thank you. And please help me to

23

move the conversation along. Please

24

state your name for the record and

1

2 proceed with your comment.

3 MR. DRUST: Good afternoon,

4 Chairwoman Gauthier, Sponsor

5 Councilmember O'Rourke, and members

6 of the Committee on Housing,

7 Neighborhood Development and The

8 Homeless. My name is Dennis Lee

9 Drust and I'm the Director of

10 Community Support with Scully

11 Company. We're a multifamily

12 housing provider with approximately

13 2,100 units among 11 communities

14 here within the city. Thank you for

15 the opportunity to speak today. I

16 want to focus specifically on the

17 good cause requirement for lease

18 non-renewals outlined in Bill

19 250330.

20 This provision, though well

21 intended, risks creating serious

22 challenges for housing providers and

23 unintended consequences for the very

24 communities it aims to protect.

1

2 Leases are more than legal
3 documents. They represent the
4 foundation of a social contract
5 between neighbors. Within them are
6 reasonable expectations, quiet
7 hours, cleanliness, safety
8 protocols, and respectful behavior.

9 They're essential to
10 creating stable, livable
11 communities. Most residents
12 understand and follow these
13 expectations. Unfortunately, some
14 do not. And when those norms break
15 down, the entire community can feel
16 the impact. I'm not referring to
17 minor inconveniences, but to
18 behavior that makes others feel
19 unsafe or interferes with their
20 right to peacefully enjoy their
21 homes.

22 Just recently, we had a
23 resident who after multiple
24 documented incidents of unsafe

1

2 behavior, physically assaulted a
3 staff member when we asked to stop
4 throwing waste from her balcony.

5 This is not a hypothetical, it's a
6 real situation. And in cases like
7 these, our residents look to us to
8 ensure that their homes remain safe,
9 respectful places to live. We try
10 every approach first, documenting
11 violations, issuing notices,
12 fostering dialogue, and engaging in
13 mediation.

14 Most often that works, but
15 sometimes it does not. And when it
16 doesn't, our final and often only
17 remaining tool is to non-renew a
18 lease when it expires.

19 We support efforts to
20 protect tenants from retaliation,
21 discrimination, and unjust
22 displacement. But these protections
23 should not come at the expense of
24 our ability to ensure safe and

1

2 respectful living environments for
3 all residents.

4 Under the proposed
5 framework, even when a housing
6 provider issues a non-renewal based
7 on documented serious behavioral
8 concerns, there is nothing to
9 prevent a tenant from filing a
10 retaliatory complaint, effectively
11 reversing the roles and casting the
12 landlord as the wrongdoer.

13 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you. Please summarize.

15 MR. DRUST: A rigid good
16 cause only requirement risks locking
17 everyone, tenant, staff and
18 management into unsafe or untenable
19 situations with no clear path to
20 resolutions. Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
22 you so much. I do want to just
23 state for the record before we move
24 on, there's nothing in good cause or

1

2 eviction diversion that would allow
3 for physical violence against a
4 landlord. So I just want to be very
5 clear about that. Please state your
6 name for the record and proceed with
7 your comment.

8 MS. SITMAN: Hi. My name
9 is Sheryl Sitman. I have an
10 initiative called Real Landlording
11 to help landlords navigate through
12 the complexity of Philadelphia.
13 Thank you to City Council. Sorry,
14 I'm not very formal, so, I don't
15 know how these things go.

16 The reason I started this
17 initiative in Philadelphia is
18 because it is so complex to be a
19 landlord in Philadelphia. I happen
20 to invest in other states and other
21 areas in Pennsylvania as well, there
22 is nothing like Philadelphia. It is
23 very, very complicated, and it costs
24 landlords quite a bit of money to do

1

2 this. The results are not better or
3 safer housing, the result is higher
4 rent.

5 And I had prepared a whole
6 statement, but a lot of the things
7 were already discussed. Just
8 another thing that I want to address
9 is the atmosphere in this room,
10 which is very, very anti landlord.

11 I think that -- I don't
12 have anything to be ashamed about.
13 My tenants are very happy. They
14 live in safe housing, they get
15 answer, you know, every kind of
16 issue that comes up, they're
17 responded to, and landlords, because
18 they own property are not villains.

19 And to villainize landlords
20 is a very dangerous thing to do. It
21 comes from City Council, it comes
22 from the media, it comes from
23 different kinds of advocacy groups,
24 and I think it's something that

1
2 doesn't serve anybody. Like Paul
3 Cohen had said, "We want the same
4 things." It's really true. I want
5 good things for Philadelphia. My
6 family came from Philadelphia, It's
7 -- it -- my grandparents had
8 businesses in Philadelphia, and I
9 think -- I invite -- my -- again, my
10 name is Cheryl.

11 If any tenants want to
12 speak to me and explain to me what
13 it is do you think that landlords
14 are doing wrong, then I'm happy to
15 listen.

16 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
17 you. I think we --

18 MS. SITMAN: And I'm happy
19 to help.

20 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: We've
21 heard a lot of conversation today.
22 Thank you so much for your --

23 MS. SITMAN: I don't know
24 why these things are funny.

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: --

3

for your comment.

4

COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

5

Thank you, Madam Chair. Cheryl,

6

thank you for giving your testimony.

7

As I've iterated several

8

times in public columns, in this

9

hearing today, as well, this is not

10

legislation that is focused on any

11

willy-nilly landlord, it is focused

12

on bad landlords, which Paul Cohen

13

also agreed we all want to get rid

14

of.

15

So thank you for addressing

16

that. It is a misconception -- it

17

is a misconception that is

18

continuously being perpetuated

19

online, as well as in this hearing

20

that we are trying to get go-out for

21

all landlords, half the city rents.

22

That means landlords are per

23

supplying that housing. What we

24

want to make sure is that all of

1

2 those landlords, not some of them,
3 not a couple of them, but every
4 single one of them are supplying
5 safe, healthy homes for our
6 residents. Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
9 you, Councilmember. Please state
10 your name for the record and
11 proceed.

12 MS. KANE: Good afternoon
13 and thank you to all the
14 Councilmembers, and I think
15 especially to Councilman O'Rourke.

16 MALE VOICE: Bring the mic
17 closer to you, please.

18 MS. KANE: My name is
19 Pamela Kane, and I'm here as both a
20 small landlord and a nurse midwife
21 to urge you to pass the Safe Healthy
22 Homes Act. I've lived in West
23 Philadelphia since 1995, and have
24 been a small landlord since 2013.

1
2 My partner and I own one
3 rental property located on the same
4 block where we've lived for almost
5 30 years, and where we've raised our
6 family. We know that it's our
7 responsibility as landlords to
8 provide a safe and healthy home for
9 our tenants, and I strongly support
10 this legislation to make sure that
11 all landlords take that
12 responsibility seriously.

13 I also know firsthand the
14 impact that it has when landlords
15 neglect their properties and
16 maximize profits at their tenant's
17 expense. As a midwife in
18 Philadelphia for over two decades, I
19 often care for people and their
20 families who do not have a safe,
21 decent place to live.

22 On one occasion, I cared
23 for a woman who was completely
24 covered in bedbug bites, her

1

2 landlord was not addressing the
3 situation, she had no recourse, and
4 she had no other -- nowhere else to
5 go.

6 We see mothers and children
7 with elevated lead levels, asthma
8 exacerbated by infestation or
9 allergic triggers in the home,
10 respiratory illness from mold, high
11 levels of stress from living in
12 substandard housing. Poor housing
13 conditions put families at higher
14 risk of both physical and
15 psychological harm.

16 A person's sense of
17 stability flows out of having a
18 decent place to come home to. The
19 state of disrepair of rental
20 properties in Philadelphia, some
21 rental properties, is a public
22 health crisis, and no landlord
23 should -- in this city should be
24 able to rent a property that they

1

2 themselves would not feel safe

3 living in.

4 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

5 you. Thank you for your comment,

6 and for sharing that perspective.

7 Thanks to all of you. May the clerk

8 please call the next set of public

9 commenters.

10 THE CLERK: Mo Rushdy, Ben

11 Altman, Todd Abney.

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

13 Please state your name and proceed

14 with your comment. Just a reminder,

15 two minutes.

16 MR. RUSHDY: Mo Rushdy,

17 representing 420 companies through

18 the Building Industry Association.

19 But before I start, I have twin

20 girls that were born premature, a

21 pound each, and they stayed in the

22 NICU for three months, so I

23 understand what you're going

24 through, and my heart goes out for

1

2 you. Congratulations, and I hope to
3 God everything goes fine.

4 To that effect, I think we
5 heard a lot of testimony today on
6 behalf of tenants, on behalf of
7 landlords, on behalf of the
8 administration and L&I, and I think
9 that there is a general consensus
10 that there is a problem that we need
11 to tackle landlords, or I'd like to
12 call them property owners, I don't
13 like the word landlords, but
14 property owners that are neglecting
15 their properties.

16 And I think that when we
17 say that there is work to be done, I
18 think the work needs to be done so
19 that we can actually target these
20 landlords that are neglecting, or
21 property owners that are neglecting
22 their properties.

23 I saw some of the pictures
24 that are out here, or some people

1

2 are -- have -- the advocates have
3 some of the pictures of what they're
4 going through, and it's sickening to
5 tell you the truth. It is very
6 sickening, and we don't advocate for
7 that.

8 So when we say we oppose
9 the bill, this is not us ever coming
10 in and saying that we accept this,
11 okay? If this was one of our
12 members, they would be kicked out of
13 our association, period, before
14 anything happens, okay? So we agree
15 -- don't interrupt me, I never
16 interrupted anyone.

17 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

18 That's okay.

19 MR. RUSHDY: Do not
20 interrupt me.

21 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Let's

22 --

23 MR. RUSHDY: Do not
24 interrupt me.

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Let's

3

continue the conversation

4

respectfully. Proceed.

5

MR. RUSHDY: So -- and if

6

they're a member, we address it.

7

When something happened with Odin

8

Properties, and that article came

9

out in the Inquire, the first thing

10

we did was we called Phil.

11

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Speak

12

into the mic.

13

MR. WEINTRAUB-BARTH: I

14

called Phil, and I said, what is

15

going on with that? He gave me a

16

rundown of the violations. And I

17

said, I'm working on it to get it

18

done within the next coming 10 days,

19

and we have inspections that are

20

scheduled. My -- the -- what I'm

21

trying to say here is that we're not

22

on opposite sides.

23

We want to be sure that we

24

are not considered to be on opposite

1

2 sides. We want to just make sure
3 that we are surgical, strategic, and
4 making sure that we are going to be
5 targeting these guys that are out
6 there that don't have licenses, and
7 people who are out there that have
8 repairs that need to be done.

9 The Mayor has \$44 million
10 as part of her \$800 million bond
11 that goes towards repairs for small
12 landlords. We've got to give this
13 bold mayor a chance. She's the
14 first in, I don't know what? Twenty
15 years, 30 years that came in with a
16 bold plan to fix things.

17 We got to -- we got to just
18 let it play out.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you.

21 MR. RUSHDY: So, again,
22 we're not against the bills in
23 intent. We want to work with
24 Councilman O'Rourke, and we are

1

2 committing meetings over the summer,
3 if you would allow us to, kind of,
4 go through it, and we work together
5 where we're actually we'll be happy
6 to get these bad landlords out.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
8 you so much.

9 MR. RUSHDY: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: We
11 look forward to continuing real
12 conversations and to work to push
13 this initiative forward. Please
14 state your name for the record and
15 proceed with your comment.

16 MR. ROCHE: Dear
17 Councilmembers, my name is Mark
18 Roche. I'm a -- I'm a small
19 landlord. I had a five-unit -- five
20 houses with nine units. I'm down to
21 seven units now in four houses, I
22 sold one. And I had good talks with
23 tenants in the back here, and we
24 agreed, yeah, on what the issue,

1

2 yeah. Many arguments have been
3 made.

4 I want to remind you of the
5 big picture, and I want to quote
6 Councilmember Bass and Councilmember
7 Landau, "This and other -- those
8 bills have the chance to really
9 worsen the housing crisis that is
10 definitely here, and we need to
11 partner on this." If a small
12 landlord like me, I know all my
13 tenants. No tenant leaves my
14 houses, they love me, yeah. They
15 recommend me to their friends, yeah.
16 When a tenant lives through
17 conditions that have been phrased
18 here, you should have other options.
19 You should just be able to move
20 somewhere else and have a good
21 house, but that will not happen if
22 the small landlords are driven out
23 of the city.

24 And look at the big

1
2 picture, what happened the last
3 10-15 years, people like me, they
4 don't go to Philadelphia anymore.
5 They go to Upper Darby, they go
6 across the river, they go somewhere
7 else where they don't have to deal
8 with all those regulations. You
9 give us two choices, to leave the
10 city, or if it's too burdensome, to
11 increase the rent.

12 In Upper Darby, we have
13 proactive inspections, yeah. And
14 the inspector asked me right away
15 there, "Are you going to increase
16 the rent from whatever I write down
17 here?" That is what happens there.
18 Let's weed out those terrible
19 landlords.

20 I'm fully on board with
21 that, but there's better ways to
22 solve this housing crisis, yeah,
23 than what's have been presented
24 today. Let's cooperate, and this is

1

2 solvable.

3

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
4 you for your comment. Vice Chair
5 Landau.

6

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
7 you so much. Thanks for coming
8 here. Again, I just want to
9 clarify, I didn't say that I thought
10 the bills would make the housing
11 crisis work -- worse, but --

12

MR. ROCHE: No, Ms. Bass
13 did that.

14

COUNCILMEMBER BASS: No, he
15 said me.

16

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Oh, you
17 said --

18

MR. ROCHE: And you said we
19 need to talk about this.

20

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: You
21 said both of us?

22

MR. ROCHE: You said you
23 need to partner this and Ms. Bass
24 said it could make this bill worse,

1

2 if we don't do it right. And that
3 is true. It could make the
4 situation way worse.

5 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm
6 sorry, this time was for the Vice
7 Chair Landau to make a comment. But
8 thank you for your comment.

9 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: I
10 clarify.

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:
12 Please state your name for the
13 record, and proceed with your
14 comment.

15 MR. ABNEY: My name is Todd
16 Abney, and I'm a renter in the city
17 of Philadelphia. I've been living
18 in Philadelphia off and on since I
19 was born, and I became a resident in
20 1998, and I currently live in
21 Frankford in District 7.

22 I'm also a gas worker, and
23 a proud union member of Local 676,
24 excuse me 686, sorry. And a proud

1
2 member of OnePA Renters United. I'm
3 here to support the Safe and Healthy
4 Homes Act. I am very much in
5 support of the city creating a
6 displacement fund for everyone who
7 has been -- who has to leave their
8 home because of uninhabitable
9 conditions that are out of their
10 control.

11 I live through it myself.
12 In 2005, I was at 18th and Erie in
13 an apartment building and something
14 was causing us to get sick. And we
15 had -- we were having headaches and
16 we were feeling sleepy all the time,
17 and we also were waking up
18 exhausted. One of the tenants
19 called the gas company, the gas
20 company came out and they discovered
21 that there was a carbon monoxide
22 leak in the building.

23 Next, L&I came out to the
24 building and we found out that our

1

2 landlord did not have a suitable
3 rental license. The landlord told
4 L&I that we were squatters, and L&I
5 told us on a Friday that we had to
6 be out of the building by Monday
7 morning at 6:00 a.m. The -- there
8 were five of us in the -- in the
9 apartment building.

10 And we all were -- we were
11 all being kicked out with nowhere to
12 go. L&I offered that we could go to
13 a homeless shelter and didn't have
14 any other options for us. I managed
15 to stay in the building for another
16 week, and miraculously, I found a
17 room at 15th and Erie to stay in.

18 This is why I'm in support
19 of the City creating a displacement
20 fund for anyone -- for anyone who
21 finds themselves in a similar
22 situation and why we need stronger
23 enforcement for landlords who don't
24 do the right thing.

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Thank you for your time and
please vote for the Safe and Healthy
Homes Act.

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
you so much for coming here to share
your experience today. May the
clerk please call the next set of
public commenters.

THE CLERK: Matt Wolf, Lev
Kavinsky, Nitin Kulkarni, Craig
Summers.

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
afternoon.

MR. WOLF: Good --

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:
Please state your name for the
record and proceed.

MR. WOLF: Good afternoon,
Council. My name is Matthew Wolf.
I'm with AFSCME International,
speaking on behalf of our L&I
employees, not management, and
nearly 10,000 members of District

1

2 Council 33.

3

Our members are city

4

employees and the lifeblood of this

5

city. We represent the enforcement

6

officers and inspections teams that

7

would be acting in accordance with

8

this legislation. This bill is a

9

step forward for union members,

10

working families, and renters across

11

our city.

12

Nearly 40 percent of

13

Philadelphia's rental homes are in

14

dire need of repair, while

15

avaricious landlords and property

16

management companies get away with

17

their malicious negligence. This

18

status quo is unacceptable, and

19

Councilman O'Rourke's Bill would

20

grant the much needed right to

21

repair, right to relocation, right

22

to safety, and right for tenants to

23

unionize. This will provide every

24

Philadelphia tenant with the dignity

1

2 that they deserve.

3

4 This bill would give the
5 Office of Licensing and Inspection
6 the proper and necessary resource it
7 needs to do its job. Our office is
8 understaffed and fiscally restrained
9 from doing the full scope of
10 unnecessary duties to protect
11 Philadelphians.

12 The \$10 million allocated
13 from this bill is a drop in the
14 bucket for what would be
15 revolutionary savings and
16 protections for Philadelphians,
17 while also holding landlords
18 fiscally accountable. We would see
19 new jobs and opportunities for
20 inspectors and show the people of
21 Philadelphia that the city truly
22 works for them.

23 Now is the time for
24 Philadelphia to take the step
forward and protect its citizens

1
2 while bolstering its essential city
3 services. This is a bill for
4 unions, tenants, and ultimately the
5 people of Philadelphia. I implore
6 you all to please support this
7 legislation. Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
9 you. Thank you for your comment and
10 for your work. Please state your
11 name for the record and proceed with
12 your comment.

13 MR. KULKARNI: Hi. My name
14 is Nitin Kulkarni. I have a --
15 actually active eviction going on.
16 I would just like to state that the
17 system -- the court system has
18 really made a mockery of the
19 municipal court system. And I'll
20 tell you -- explain what has
21 happened. We had an eviction in
22 place, and we went through it. The
23 -- actually, it was a JBA where both
24 parties agreed that this is the

1

2 settlement and we went through with
3 it and I did go through it and gave
4 the tenant enough time to move on.

5 And the tenant, in the last
6 minute filed an emergency petition
7 in a common police court, and the
8 common police court allowed her, you
9 know, violated the JBA and allowed
10 her to stay for another couple of
11 weeks. And I -- I'm saying that
12 once this agreement is made, when
13 all parties agree to it, I as both
14 -- I am on Social Security because
15 not only do I have a liver
16 transplant and a kidney transplant
17 and I'm on Social Security. This
18 tenant, actually \$17,000 she owes
19 me, and that is a travesty.

20 It's a travesty because we
21 made a mockery of the municipal
22 court system, because everything was
23 in place and I didn't get justice
24 for it. And I hope -- I hope this

1

2 Council -- because of all these laws
3 and things that you want to do,
4 which are good things, but would
5 actually be burdensome for somebody
6 like me. I mean, I just have only
7 one unit, just one unit in
8 Philadelphia. So thank you for
9 hearing me out and I appreciate it.

10 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
11 you for your comment today.

12 MR. KULKARNI: Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:
14 Please state your name for the
15 record and proceed with your
16 comment.

17 MR. SUMMERS: My name is
18 Craig Summers and I'm here to let
19 you know that I used to be a former
20 tenant of Brith Sholom House and
21 it's worst experience I ever had in
22 my life. So much tragedy happened
23 in that apartment complex. Senior
24 citizens, mostly they weren't --

1

2 nothing went right in that building
3 at all.

4 I guess you -- I'm sure you
5 know most of the stories, but there
6 are horror stories where people died
7 from heat exhaustion, but they wrote
8 off as natural causes, stuff like
9 that. Now I'm at a different
10 apartment complex that's only 11
11 years old, and I'm looking at the
12 same situation happening all over
13 again. Beautiful building but, man,
14 landlords are out of state, they
15 don't care.

16 Management companies out of
17 state, they don't care. They have a
18 few local people that work there
19 that live in the area, but they're
20 not doing what they're supposed to
21 do. Maintenance, no clean crew,
22 it's terrible. No smoking building,
23 they're smoking in the building.
24 Tenants complain about it, they get

1

2 harassed, they get eviction notice.

3 They get, like, they're

4 going to get kicked out if they say

5 anything else about it. You can't

6 smoke in the bars in City of

7 Philadelphia, but you can smoke in a

8 senior citizens' complex. This is

9 -- this is -- this is -- I'm done

10 with it. Tell you the truth. I'm

11 really done with it.

12 And, Councilman O'Rourke

13 was here, we had a protest in

14 December. They're retaliating on

15 us. They won't let us use our

16 community room. That's supposed to

17 be one of the amenities that we

18 need. It's like kitty -- it's like,

19 get set or something. We can only

20 use it between the hours of

21 management being there, Ms. Manager

22 being there, from 8.00 to 4:30.

23 It's like they live there. I don't

24 get it.

1

2 But we need to change and
3 the bill needs to be passed. And I
4 thank you for doing what you do
5 brothers, so much for that. Also,
6 we need to change into the guards.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
8 you so much.

9 MR SUMMERS: We need a new
10 Council President.

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you so much for your comment today.
13 May the clerk please call the next
14 set of public commenters.

15 THE CLERK: Excuse me.
16 Seneca Grant, Kiana Markum, Jesse
17 Silverman.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
19 evening. Please state your name for
20 the record and proceed with your
21 comment.

22 MR. GRANT: Good afternoon,
23 Madam -- Madam Chair, Council, and
24 our bill sponsor, Mr. O'Rourke.

1

2 Thank you very much, sir. My name
3 -- my name is Seneca Grant and I'm a
4 resident at Bentley Manor, which is
5 an Odin Property in West Oak Lane.

6 And unlike the
7 representative from Odin Properties
8 that just came up here and
9 disrespectfully lied to all your
10 faces and everybody in this room,
11 I'm going to tell you what my and
12 the other resident experiences have
13 been like at this Odin property in
14 West Oak Lane for the last two years
15 that I've been there.

16 While living there -- while
17 living where I'm at now is safe in
18 terms of crime, repairs have been
19 abysmal. Twice in the first year,
20 my bedroom ceiling had a huge leak
21 in it. They came to fix it one
22 time, did a -- like a patch job.
23 Next time it rain, it happened
24 again. It took them three months to

1

2 fix these leaks both times that it
3 happened.

4

In the two winters that
5 I've been there, there have been
6 basically no heat. You come out and
7 bleed the radiators twice. Both
8 winters, radiators still get like
9 lukewarm. The radiators in the
10 hallway get hotter than the
11 radiators in the units. They
12 probably had to use space heaters
13 and that just blows out the wall
14 sockets.

15 So in addition to that --
16 in addition to that, L&I came to
17 inspect my building and the other
18 building adjacent to my building,
19 Mount West last November.

20 They failed them for an
21 unsafe building. It was all kinds
22 of bricks in the wall, or facades in
23 the wall. They were -- they were
24 falling off. They failed them for

1

2 that inspection. And yet for the
3 next three months and until the work
4 was done, they continued to collect
5 our rent and we were -- we were
6 under the impression that they had
7 lost their license.

8 Everything that I've talked
9 about -- and we've also had issues
10 with roach infestations, mice. Mice
11 that coming from other apartments
12 for me because I have a cat. And we
13 ask for proactive extermination and
14 they haven't done it. They only
15 come in like spray the common areas,
16 but we get to put in work orders
17 constantly for them to come to our
18 apartments and sometimes they don't
19 do that.

20 Everything I just talked
21 about today is why we need the Safe
22 Healthy Homes Act to protect
23 renters, improve L&I and improve the
24 properties that large corporate

1

2 slumlords like Odin maintain. I
3 would like to thank the
4 Councilmembers and your -- and
5 representatives for hearing me out
6 as well as my fellow residents, as
7 these are very serious issues that
8 concern us on a daily basis.

9 We appreciate your concern
10 and hope that you will pray -- hope
11 and pray that you will pass this
12 bill out of committee on June 3rd.
13 Please vote --

14 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
15 you.

16 MR. GRANT: Please vote yes
17 for Safe Healthy Homes.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
19 you so much.

20 MR. GRANT: Thank you.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: May
23 the clerk please call the next set
24 of public commenters.

1

2 THE CLERK: Igor Iben,
3 Martin Finkelstein, Ms. Sandra
4 Bryant.

5 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
6 evening. Thank you so much for
7 being here today. Please proceed
8 with your comment. Just a reminder,
9 try to stay within the two-minute
10 limit. Whichever one of you can
11 start. Whoever's ready.

12 MR. IBEN: Good afternoon.
13 My name is Igor Iben. I'm a small
14 landlord in Philadelphia. I just
15 want to agree with most of the panel
16 from the L&I committee. I think we
17 must be careful with the laws that
18 we pass even though they sound good
19 on paper. This won't be the first
20 time a piece of legislation would
21 have unintended consequences.

22 Because of a few bad actors
23 this bill would punish mom-and-pop
24 landlords by giving them additional

1
2 burden on top of what's already a
3 heavy burden being a landlord in the
4 city of Philadelphia. Taxes have
5 went up, those costs are ultimately
6 passed down to the renters. Rental
7 license requirements have increased,
8 ultimately those costs are going
9 down to the renters. It takes six
10 months to get a tenant out who
11 doesn't pay. Ultimately, rents go
12 up for good tenants to compensate
13 for the bad tenants.

14 I actually know hundreds of
15 landlords in Philadelphia. A lot of
16 my friends are in real estate, I'm
17 in real estate. I'm part of
18 organizations that are in real
19 estate. Every single person that I
20 talk to is thinking about the same
21 thing, about leaving Philadelphia.
22 And that would be terrible for the
23 renters.

24 It would be terrible in the

1
2 long term. Because of small
3 percentage of bad actors, I'm
4 against ultimately punishing renters
5 with higher end. I don't want the
6 rents to go up, neither do the
7 renters. So I urge you to please
8 work with organizations like HAPCO
9 to find the bad actors very
10 strategically, very surgically.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
13 you for your comment. Proceed.

14 MS. BRYANT: Hello,
15 everyone. Name is Sandra Bryant and
16 I'm a domestic worker and a member
17 of the National Domestic Workers
18 Alliance. I recently rent a
19 basement apartment --

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Ma'am,
21 you have speak to speak into the
22 mic, bring it closer to you.

23 MS. BRYANT: Okay.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: No, not

1

2 both.

3 MS. BRYANT: Hello

4 everyone. Name is Sandra Bryant and

5 I'm a domestic worker and a member

6 of the National Domestic Workers

7 Alliance. I recently rent a

8 basement apartment near 63rd and

9 Market, and it turned out to be a

10 nightmare. The apartment had a leak

11 and mold growth on which the

12 landlord refused to fix.

13 And despite requests, he

14 even made this criminal comment

15 saying, I shouldn't complain because

16 I'm from Jamaica and people in

17 Jamaica live in huts. I took

18 matters in my own hand and I stopped

19 paying rent and put the money in an

20 escrow account.

21 However, he retaliated, he

22 cursed me out and demand I leave.

23 In eviction court, the judge ruled

24 in my favor stating that the

1

2 landlord shouldn't have rented the
3 apartment due to past violations and
4 revoke licenses.

5 Luckily, I found a new
6 place and I'm still shaken by the
7 experience. The -- then it remain
8 empty as too many of the landlord
9 litigants. I'm speaking now to
10 prevent this from happening to
11 others, and we need a Safe Healthy
12 Home Act to ensure every unit is
13 inspected before rental and hold
14 landlord accountable.

15 No one deserves living in
16 hazardous condition because they are
17 vulnerable.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
19 you so much. Thank you. Proceed.

20 MR. FINKELSTEIN: Ready.
21 My name is Martin Finkelstein. I'm
22 a retired professor who has for the
23 last -- I'm also a stranger from New
24 Jersey. But for the last 40 years I

1

2 have worked as a -- I functioned as
3 a -- as a small landlord, renting
4 one or two units within usually my
5 large big old house. And I'm here
6 to speak in support of the Home
7 Safety and Health Home Safety Act.

8 And I want to -- I want to
9 make a point that hasn't been made
10 yet. The -- I have been in a
11 situation where my municipality has
12 adopted a proactive inspection
13 program, the last seven or eight
14 years. So I have it -- you know,
15 it's not a perfect experiment with
16 pre and post, but, you know, and the
17 world has changed in all kinds of
18 ways over that -- over that period.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Speak
20 into the mic.

21 MR. FINKELSTEIN: Yeah.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:
23 Please speak into the mic so we can
24 hear you.

1

2

MR. FINKELSTEIN: But what

3

I've observed is, it's changed a

4

little bit my relationship with my

5

tenants because we've actually sort

6

of added a third party to this

7

landlord-tenant thing, and that is

8

the municipality. And in fact, the

9

tenants know and have -- and see the

10

results of the inspection, and know

11

what has already been done.

12

And when they come in,

13

they're usually feeling pretty good,

14

I mean, they feel like they --

15

there's almost a sort of a

16

partnership between them, the

17

landlord and the municipality, and

18

that someone else has already sort

19

of tried to look out for their

20

interests besides the landlord. And

21

I think that has led, in my

22

experience, to fewer complaints,

23

easier time with my tenants. So I

24

wanted to make that point --

1

2

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

3

you.

4

MR. FINKELSTEIN: -- which

5

I think needs to be made.

6

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: And

7

please summarize.

8

MR. FINKELSTEIN: The one

9

other point which I'll make quickly

10

is that it's been a wonder for me

11

and my insurance company because I

12

have my municipality coming in

13

almost annually to do some kind of

14

inspection. And they inspect not

15

only the unit, but they inspect the

16

building.

17

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

18

MR. FINKELSTEIN: So I have

19

all the -- and my insurance company

20

understands that when I make a

21

claim, they need to pay the claim.

22

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

23

you.

24

MR. FINKELSTEIN: So I have

1

2 -- I have found it to be advantage.

3 And I will concede -- I will

4 concede.

5 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: And

6 we're going to have to -- we're

7 going to -- we're going to keep you

8 close. We need to talk to you more,

9 but I am going to have to move on

10 with the comment. Before you leave,

11 what municipality, just so we know.

12 MR. FINKELSTEIN: I'm

13 sorry.

14 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: What

15 municipality?

16 MR. FINKELSTEIN: East

17 Orange.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

19 We need to talk to you further.

20 Thank you so much for being here

21 today and sharing that important

22 perspective. May the clerk please

23 call the next set of public

24 commenters.

1

2

THE CLERK: Ryan Thomas,

3

Shawmar Pitts, April Webb Short, if

4

they're still here, Maria Yelverton.

5

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Just

6

state your name for the record.

7

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Do

8

you want to call one more?

9

SERGEANT AT ARMS: I got

10

one more coming.

11

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

12

Please state your name for the

13

record and proceed. I'm just going

14

to remind us, two minutes.

15

MR. THOMAS: Hello. My

16

name is Ryan Thomas. I'm a resident

17

of Point Breeze and a small

18

landlord, and I'm here to voice my

19

support for the bills -- all three

20

bills in the Safe Healthy Homes Act.

21

I own -- I own one rental property,

22

and owning that property has been a

23

source of financial security for me,

24

as I have weathered periods of

1

2 unemployment and periods of graduate
3 school.

4 And I want tenants and all
5 my neighbors to have the stability
6 and quality of housing that I do.

7 Those who have spoken against these
8 bills, the landlord lobbies, do not
9 speak for me as a small landlord.

10 The -- these large lobbies are led
11 by people with thousands of units,
12 and companies with thousands of
13 units. Their interests are not the
14 same as mine or many other small
15 landlords.

16 My interest as a small
17 landlord and a -- and a neighbor is
18 to preserve Philadelphia's
19 neighborhoods and communities, and
20 that starts with providing stable,
21 high quality housing.

22 Of course there's paperwork
23 and some risk involved in being a
24 landlord, but the -- at the end of

1

2 the day it's a privilege, not a
3 burden to own rental property. And
4 don't let anybody tell you
5 different.

6 I understand -- I don't
7 understand why any landlord who
8 maintains good living conditions
9 would be concerned about these
10 bills. I've read them in their
11 entirety and I don't see any issues
12 that would concern a landlord like
13 me. I urge the committee to support
14 all three of these bills and to fund
15 L&I to increase staffing, training
16 and improve city websites for city
17 services.

18 Furthermore, as a resident,
19 I'm concerned about large corporate
20 real estate companies that buy up
21 the city and try to maximize their
22 profits by maintaining poor living
23 conditions, cutting corners, and
24 retaliating against their tenants

1

2 who speak up.

3 These bills close loopholes

4 that allow powerful real estate

5 companies to push out small

6 landlords who have invested in

7 Philadelphia's neighborhoods and not

8 property portfolios. These bills

9 also recognize the important work

10 that tenants do when they organize,

11 and we should listen to tenants who

12 helped create these bills and turned

13 out today in support.

14 So I just want to again

15 voice my support for these bills as

16 a small landlord, and I want to say

17 that the lobbyists who are against

18 them, are not really looking out for

19 really small landlords who are

20 invested in communities. Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank

22 you so much for sharing that

23 perspective. Proceed.

24 MR. PITTS: Good afternoon.

1

2 My name is Shawmar Pitts. I'm a
3 lifelong resident of South
4 Philadelphia, co-managing director
5 of Philly Thrive and in coalition
6 with OnePA United and Renters
7 United, I would like to thank our
8 Councilman O'Rourke for bringing
9 these bills for the people.

10 And I would like to let the
11 people know we got to change the way
12 we do business because we have to
13 have an effect when we come to City
14 Council. And the only way we going
15 to have an effect is if we get more
16 people to come out with us. Because
17 there's no way in the world that you
18 can tell me a reason for these bills
19 not passing.

20 There's no way you can tell
21 me that these bills wasn't supposed
22 to pass out of committee today.
23 Because when we come down here for
24 things that are of no benefit to us,

1
2 that hurt us, they pass -- they
3 pass. But when we come down here
4 with this right here, nobody in this
5 room can tell me how you passed
6 legislation that says you have to do
7 good is going to affect people that
8 do good. Why would you be against
9 that if you do good? How's it going
10 to make it harder for you if
11 something break in your unit, you
12 fix it.

13 So this bill ain't going to
14 affect you because you don't have
15 things wrong in your units. So I
16 don't understand. I just know that
17 it's us. We are responsible for
18 what go on in here. We got to get
19 more people to vote so that they
20 understand they got to do the right
21 thing because we don't come in here
22 asking for things unreasonable and
23 wrong. We don't do that. You not
24 going to tell me these bills ain't

1

2 right. They're right.

3 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
4 you.

5 MR. PITTS: We got to make
6 them right. The only way we going
7 make them right, we got to get
8 people to come down here and vote
9 the people in that's going to pass
10 the legislation. Thank you so much.

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you so much for your comment.

13 MR. PITTS: Thank you.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:
16 Proceed.

17 MS. WEBB: Good evening.
18 My name is April Short. And I'm a
19 resident. And I would like to say
20 that July the 1st of 2024, I paid my
21 rent, on the 15th of July of 2024,
22 my landlord came and asked me why I
23 was still here. He went outside in
24 the backyard and cut my line to my

1

2 electricity, pulled my electricity
3 box out, and I thought it came from
4 the storm.

5 But when an electric
6 company got there, they informed me
7 that the line was cut and the box
8 was pulled out. So what I did was I
9 called Section 8, I called the
10 police and I called the Home of the
11 Aging because I'm over 65 and I'm on
12 oxygen, and he knew I was on oxygen.
13 I went in the hospital for three
14 days, I came home, my neighbor said,
15 let's run the line, you'll be in one
16 room, but let's run the line so you
17 can have air and your oxygen on.

18 I called Licensing and
19 Inspection, it took them three days
20 to come out. Now that the police
21 have gotten involved, they know his
22 name, they know his picture. He
23 lives in Florida. They can't get in
24 contact with him. They have a

1

2 warrant out for his arrest.

3 By me being on Section 8, I

4 went down to one of their open

5 houses or whatever, and I thought

6 that I was going to move in

7 apartment building. And I found out

8 it was for old people. I ain't old,

9 but nevertheless, the building is

10 nice but the only problem I have is

11 that the owners are in California

12 and they're passing a bill from

13 California to try to affect

14 Philadelphia. You can't do that.

15 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yeah.

16 MS. WEBB: They won't come

17 to Philadelphia to hear our

18 grievances, but they have office

19 managers that work one day out of a

20 week. They got these two little

21 thoughts. That's what you would

22 call them, two little thoughts that

23 work in the office that have no clue

24 what's going on. We can't barbecue

1

2 in the backyard --

3 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm
4 going to ask you to -- I'm going to
5 ask you to summarize.

6 MS. WEBB: -- unless
7 there's somebody from the office
8 there. How can you have a barbecue
9 with somebody from the office when
10 there's never nobody there?

11 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you so much for your comment, and I
13 concur you are young and spry. You
14 even know the lingo. Okay. Thank
15 you so much for being here.

16 MS. WEBB: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: May
18 the clerk please call the next set
19 of public commenters.

20 THE CLERK: Danielle
21 Campbell, Uriah Bussey, Angela
22 Woods.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: If your
24 name is called please come up.

1

2 Thank you. You can begin. State
3 your name for the record.

4 MS. BUSSEY: Okay. I'm
5 Uriah Bussey. Okay. I didn't
6 expect to get called, so thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Oh.
8 Proceed. Yeah.

9 MS. BUSSEY: So I'm a
10 Philly native. I've been here 31
11 years. I'm from Cobbs Creek. Ever
12 since the age of 10 years old, I've
13 had unstable housing. I've moved
14 every two to three years of my life.

15 I'm looking to relocate
16 because of the instability of
17 negligent landlords. Thankful for
18 my mother and Boyer, rest in peace
19 to her. But she's taught me to
20 advocate for myself, she's taught me
21 to fight against landlords who are
22 negligent. I've become basically a
23 unpaid inspector, like, when I'm
24 dealing with my homes.

1
2 We have realtors who are
3 lying to our faces to move us into
4 these homes quickly. And then you
5 are -- they're also building on top
6 of poor foundations. So you have
7 these new builds on top of very poor
8 foundations where mold is creeping
9 up from the basement into my very
10 brand new renovated unit who my --
11 my landlord is a developer.

12 I've snuffed out gas leaks
13 on top three floors, I've snuffed
14 out mold, I've snuffed out sewage
15 leaks. I've become a cat in the
16 ways that I detect problems. I'm
17 severely disabled and my homes are
18 continuously disabling me. It is
19 not fair.

20 And -- one second. Yeah,
21 as a tenant, it's evident that many
22 properties are even equipped with,
23 like, very old HVAC units that have
24 decades of, like, no maintenance,

1
2 build up of mold, debris, dust,
3 allergens. Like a filter change is
4 not going to fix that. Like between
5 -- I -- I'm -- I really hope that
6 tenants also have mold protection
7 rights because every home in
8 Philadelphia most likely has mold.
9 And we are building on top of a
10 rotting -- a rotting city. Between
11 the sinkholes -- because we are
12 built on a dam or a creek or
13 whatever, it's affecting all of our
14 properties. None of our bones are
15 good anymore.

16 And so I'm really intrigued
17 on what is going to really also
18 protect tenants to relocate safely
19 into actual safe homes and to be
20 able to -- yeah just to -- to be
21 able to have a better, longer life.

22 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
23 you.

24 MS. BUSSEY: Yeah. Thank

1

2 you. Can I say one more thing? Or
3 summarize?

4 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER:

5 Summarize, yes.

6 MS. BUSSEY: Yes. But for
7 example, the notorious William Ross
8 III who owns properties all over
9 Manayunk, Roxborough, Germantown,
10 and furthermore, abusive, neglectful
11 and racist landlords should have
12 their licenses revoked. It should
13 -- like tenants should be able --
14 tenants should be able to have
15 options to have co-op ownership of
16 their buildings and ethical ways of
17 managing their property.

18 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
19 you so much for being here today and
20 for sharing your comment. Proceed.

21 MS. CAMPBELL: This one
22 works? Okay. Good evening. My
23 name is Danielle Campbell. I live
24 in a Logan section of the city.

1
2 I've been a tenant of Drew DeMarco
3 for over 20 years. I remember my
4 first apartment, it was a three
5 bedroom in Lindley Court, a building
6 that eventually got shut down by L&I
7 and boarded up because the elevators
8 were not the only things always
9 broken in those buildings. It was
10 drug infested and often the scene of
11 unreported crimes and illegal
12 activities.

13 We had 30 days to get out,
14 so it was by the grace of God I was
15 able to borrow the money to get into
16 the house that I'm in now.

17 The house I live in now is
18 a constant infestation battle, and
19 we can only get an exterminator once
20 a year, and anything more comes out
21 of pocket. There was no basement
22 floor when I first viewed the house,
23 and they've had to dig up the floor
24 twice more over the years since I've

1

2 been there.

3 I have wall to wall carpet

4 and the wood underneath is so old

5 that it's ashing. There are cracks

6 in many of my walls, crumbling holes

7 and others, and the winters are

8 really harsh because lack of

9 insulation makes it feel like there

10 are no walls between us and the park

11 across the street.

12 However, I still consider

13 myself fortunate in the shadow of

14 some of the testimonies that I've

15 heard from fellow renters who are

16 living in really deplorable

17 conditions. It's infuriating and

18 it's unfair. I support the Safe and

19 Healthy Homes Act because it may not

20 only save lives, but provide people

21 with the right to live in healthy

22 non-toxic environments. Thank you.

23 Thank you to all of the

24 like-minded individuals here today

1

2 who have come together to create
3 change, because together is how we
4 make change happen. Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank
6 you so much. Please proceed with
7 your testimony.

8 MS. WOODS: Thank you.

9 Thank you. My name is Angela -- My
10 name is Angela Woods. This is the
11 first time I've ever been in City
12 Hall, so this is going to tell you
13 some years. Councilman O'Rourke, as
14 a NICU born, I know what you're
15 going through. My son is now 28
16 with autism. He's been in NICU and
17 he's thriving, same for your son.
18 To the Councilmen and women, I think
19 you'll have me to speak.

20 I come from 61 West -- 6160
21 West Oxford Street, Monte Vista
22 Apartment Complex. Wingate
23 Apartments is the management -- is
24 the landlord, but we've been

1

2 mismanaged with different management
3 teams.

4 I'm here to make a

5 statement that we are -- I live --

6 been living at -- but mismanaged

7 multiple times. Repairs have been

8 band -- band-aid jobs, not fully

9 completed. The last landlord --

10 last management that we had, she

11 kind of like scared our contractors

12 away. I have -- I'm on the third

13 floor, I'm disabled, my son's

14 disabled. We have an elevator in my

15 building, but it's not working.

16 So three flights of steps

17 up, three flights of steps down.

18 Laundry, we had a fire in our

19 laundry room last April, this past

20 April. So we had to use the --

21 either the other building. We have

22 seven buildings in the complex, I

23 have to use, the other buildings

24 apartment thing, but they're broken

1

2 sometimes. So I go to the
3 laundromat with my shopping card,
4 which is around the corner about
5 three blocks.

6 And the -- it took a -- it
7 took them six years to make a repair
8 on my leak in my bathroom from the
9 fourth floor that no one looked at
10 inside of the wall because there's
11 mold and mildew inside the walls
12 where the water was coming down,
13 flowing down from like a waterfall.

14 So we're living in mold and
15 mildew as we speak right now. We
16 lived it for 25 years. I am their
17 cash cow. I stayed here before -- I
18 sit here before you rather, falling
19 half asleep, but I'm here because
20 I'm tired of not being heard. I was
21 taking care of my son with his
22 autism in school, but not taking
23 care of my home because I didn't
24 know who to talk to.

1

2

I've been hearing other

3

stories about, Say something that

4

might put you out. I have nowhere

5

to go. It's me and my son. I've

6

been a single mom for 28 years and I

7

don't know where else to go. So I'm

8

here with One Philly -- the

9

Elections plus One Philly Renters.

10

I'm here for a reason to get myself

11

situated, to help other people out

12

in my complex and all over the

13

world. I want my voice to be heard

14

too. Please vote for the Act.

15

VICE CHAIR LANDAU: Thank

16

you so much. I appreciate your

17

time. Can the clerk please call the

18

next names.

19

THE CLERK: It is Sean

20

Fleming.

21

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Say

22

again.

23

THE CLERK: Sean Fleming.

24

CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Any

1

2 other names? That brings us to the
3 end of --

4 VICE CHAIR LANDAU: I think
5 we got Sean.

6 THE CLERK: One more.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Oh,
8 sorry. I'm so sorry. Say the name
9 again.

10 THE CLERK: Sean Fleming.
11 Is that you, sir? Okay.

12 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
13 evening. Thank you for joining us.
14 Please state your name for the
15 record and proceed with your
16 comment.

17 MR. FLEMING: My name is
18 Sean Fleming. I'm representing
19 Renters' Rights and OnePA. I'm in
20 favor for the Safe and Healthy Homes
21 Act because I used to be a tenant
22 from a slumlord named Brian Freeman,
23 who works for SEPTA driving a 12
24 bus. He was the worst slumlord I've

1
2 ever been with. He was also a
3 peeping Tom for the record. And all
4 I want to know -- I just want to let
5 it be known that I'm in favor of --
6 in support of this bill. It's
7 imperative that everyone takes part
8 of it because it is crucial, not
9 only for me, but for everybody. I
10 wish it would -- 10 years ago when I
11 was a tenant, I wish this was in
12 favor back then, but like I said, it
13 wasn't.

14 So that's why I'm here to
15 support and support of it right now.
16 So, for the record, I'm in favor of
17 it. I hope you Council people are
18 in favor of it too.

19 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you.

21 MR. FLEMING: God bless
22 you, Mr. O'Rourke. I'm so sorry for
23 what you've been through and I hope
24 everything works out in your favor.

1

2 Like I said --

3 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
4 you so much.

5 MR. FLEMING: -- take care.
6 God bless.

7 CHAIRWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
8 you so much for being here today.
9 That brings us to the end of our
10 public comment list and also that
11 concludes the business of the
12 Committee on Housing, Neighborhood
13 Development and the Homeless. I
14 want to thank everybody for coming
15 today.

16 I want to congratulate the
17 bill sponsor and the entire
18 coalition, as well as Councilmember
19 O'Rourke's team for getting the
20 relocation fund pass out of
21 committee. And for all of the hard
22 work that you've done, you have our
23 committee's commitment to continue
24 this work over the summer and you

1

2

have our commitment that we support

3

your budget request. Thank you so

4

much everybody for coming today.

5

The work continues. Have a good

6

evening.

7

(COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND THE

8

HOMELESS CONCLUDED at 5:30 p.m.)

9

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings and
evidence are contained fully and accurately in the
notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a
correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda J. Rios
Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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