

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, November 17, 2025
1:11 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

BILL: 250768

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COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Good afternoon, everyone. And
thank you so much for joining us.
I now note that the hour has come
and this hearing is called to
order. This is a public hearing of
the City Council Committee on the
Environment. The purpose of this
public hearing is to hear testimony
on Bill No. 250768.

Will the Clerk please
call the roll.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Ahmad.

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Driscoll.

COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Harrity.

COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

1 Present.

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember O'Rourke.

4 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

5 Present.

6 THE CLERK: Vice-Chair

7 Bass.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

9 Present.

10 THE CLERK: Chair

11 Gauthier.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

13 Present. Thank you. I now note
14 for the record that a quorum of
15 this committee is present and this
16 hearing is now called to order.

17 Good afternoon,
18 everyone. During our recent
19 municipal worker strike, Philly got
20 a stinky, dirty reminder that
21 breathing in trash harms both our
22 mental and physical health. Now,
23 imagine breathing all that in and
24 more every single day of your life.

1 As we will hear in
2 painful detail today, that is the
3 unjust reality endured by our
4 neighbors in the city of Chester,
5 Plymouth Township and other
6 communities flanked by the five
7 trash incinerators in Southeastern
8 Pennsylvania.

9 The Reworld Covanta
10 Incinerator in Chester City is the
11 largest and one of the oldest
12 trash-burning facilities in
13 America. The Chester incinerator
14 is Southeastern Pennsylvania's top
15 industrial polluter, burning 3500
16 tons of waste daily, and 37% of
17 that comes right here from Philly.

18 Chester and Delaware
19 County experience the worst of this
20 environmental and health disaster.
21 Chester has one of the highest
22 asthma and infant mortality rates
23 in America. But air does not stop
24 at the county line, so it is no

1 surprise that Philly suffers too. 1
2 in 5 of our young people have
3 asthma, earning us the unfortunate
4 designation as the 2025 asthma
5 capital.

6 The city's priority is
7 making Philadelphia safer, cleaner
8 and greener, but we cannot do that
9 at the expense of our neighbors who
10 are left sicker, dirtier and less
11 safe because of the trash we send
12 into their air. We need to stop
13 making ourselves, our kids and our
14 planet sick. And that's what the
15 Stop Trashing Our Air Act will do,
16 prohibit the City of Philadelphia
17 from contracting with waste
18 disposal partners that profit by
19 turning our trash into pollution
20 and sickness.

21 I want to thank everyone
22 here today, elected officials,
23 health and environmental experts,
24 Reworld and everyone from Chester,

1 Philly and beyond who took time out
2 of their day to be here with us.
3 The City of Philadelphia's waste
4 disposal contracts expire at the
5 end of the fiscal year and we ended
6 FY25 with more than \$1 billion in
7 our fund balance, the largest
8 balance in Philadelphia's history.

9 Right now is our chance
10 to chart a healthier, cleaner and
11 greener path. It has never been
12 more urgent and we have never been
13 better-equipped to do it. We don't
14 need another study to tell us what
15 we already know to be true, to give
16 the city an excuse to kick the can
17 down the road for another seven
18 years, condemning Chester and
19 Philly to years of preventable
20 sickness and fueling a climate
21 crisis that is already out of
22 control.

23 I urge this committee to
24 hear the cry of the people and do

1 what's right for our constituents,
2 neighbors and planet and stop
3 trashing our air. Thank you so
4 much.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

7 I note for the record the presence
8 of Vice-Chair Councilmember Cindy
9 Bass. And I also will ask if any
10 of my colleagues have opening
11 comments that they'd like to offer.

12 Councilmember Ahmad.

13 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

14 Thank you, Chair, and thank you to
15 my colleagues and the advocates and
16 everyone who's here who have been
17 sounding the alarm on this for
18 years. As a member of City
19 Council's Committee on the
20 Environment and the Chair of Public
21 Health and Human Services, I want
22 to be very clear: Burning trash is
23 not a solution to our waste
24 problem. It is a public health

1 problem and an environmental
2 justice issue.

3 Right now a significant
4 portion of Philadelphia's trash is
5 burned at the large incinerator in
6 Chester. It is one of the largest
7 trash incinerators in the country,
8 burning thousands of tons of
9 municipal and industrial waste
10 every single day and is a major
11 industrial air polluter in our
12 region. But the people who pay the
13 price are not the ones creating
14 most of the waste.

15 Only a small fraction of
16 the trash burned there comes from
17 Chester itself. The rest is
18 shipped in from Philadelphia and
19 other communities. Chester is a
20 predominantly Black working-class
21 city that has already been
22 overburdened with industrial
23 pollution for decades.

24 Children there

1 experience high rates of asthma and
2 residents face elevated risks of
3 cancer, heart disease and other
4 serious illnesses tied to air
5 pollution. Airborne hazards do not
6 respect municipal boundaries. What
7 we burn in Chester does not stay in
8 Chester. It travels on the wind
9 across Delaware County and back
10 into Philadelphia.

11 Incineration does not
12 make trash disappear. It turns it
13 into toxic air and ash that still
14 must be landfilled. Our
15 responsibility is two-fold: First,
16 we must move away from burning our
17 trash, supporting policies and
18 investments that reduce reliance on
19 incineration and prioritize public
20 health and environmental justice.

21 Second, we must generate
22 less trash. That's a cultural
23 issue. All of us need to
24 participate in that, investing in

1 reuse, composting, better recycling
2 and product design that doesn't
3 assume communities like Chester
4 will quietly absorb our waste.

5 Environmental justice is
6 a critical determinant of health.
7 Our neighbors in Chester have been
8 breathing the cost of our
9 convenience for far too long. It's
10 time we align our waste policies
11 with our values, protect the air we
12 all share and commit to solutions
13 that safeguard every community's
14 right to breathe. Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
17 Thank you so much, Councilmember
18 Ahmad.

19 Do any other members of
20 the committee have opening
21 comments?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
24 Will the Clerk now read the title

1 of the bill.

2 THE CLERK: Bill No.
3 250768, amending Title 17 of The
4 Philadelphia Code, entitled
5 "Contract and Procurement" to
6 prohibit contractors providing
7 solid waste recycling or composting
8 services to the City from
9 incinerating discarded matter,
10 under certain terms and conditions.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
12 The Clerk will please call the
13 first panel of witnesses to testify
14 on the bill.

15 THE CLERK: The first
16 panel includes the Honorable Mayor
17 Stefan Roots, the Mayor of the City
18 of Chester; Dr. Kristin Motley,
19 Health Commissioner, City of
20 Chester; Rebecca Yurkovich, County
21 Sustainability Officer, Delaware
22 County; Laura Werner, Director of
23 Delaware County Health Department.

24 (Witnesses approached

1 witness table.)

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 Good afternoon, Mayor Roots. Thank
4 you so much for joining us today.

5 Please state your name for the
6 record and proceed with your
7 testimony.

8 MAYOR ROOTS: My name is
9 Stefan Roots.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
11 Proceed.

12 MAYOR ROOTS: Thank you.
13 Before I proceed with my prepared
14 remarks, I'm just going to say that
15 your remarks, Councilwoman Gauthier
16 and Councilmember Ahmad, were so,
17 so heartfelt. We've been in this
18 battle for a long time and
19 sometimes we wonder is anyone
20 listening. And to know that it's
21 penetrating, particularly here in
22 the city of Philadelphia, is very
23 heartwarming.

24 Good afternoon,

1 Councilmember Gauthier and members
2 of the Committee on the
3 Environment. I am Stefan Roots,
4 Mayor of the city of Chester, your
5 neighbor just down the Delaware
6 River, just 20 minutes down I-95.

7 As Pennsylvania's oldest
8 city, Chester is rich with history
9 and home to an amazing community.
10 We also face some huge challenges.
11 One of those challenges is the
12 presence of the Reworld Covanta
13 Incinerator on our waterfront.

14 Decades ago, pressured
15 by bad politics, the leaders of
16 Chester opted to trade our public
17 health for table scraps by hosting
18 the largest trash incinerator in
19 the United States. It would have
20 been one thing just to burn Chester
21 trash. I wouldn't have been happy
22 to burn the entire Delaware
23 County's trash, but we're burning
24 trash from New York, Philadelphia

1 and beyond.

2 Since then, the trash
3 burned in Chester has caused us
4 misery, and the negative impacts
5 have compounded over time. Our
6 childhood asthma rate is the
7 highest in the United States. The
8 incinerator has devastated property
9 values and prevented the
10 development of new housing. We are
11 Delaware County's waterfront city,
12 yet our potential for economic
13 revitalization is held back by the
14 massive incinerator occupying 50
15 acres of that precious waterfront.

16 How much does prime
17 waterfront property sell for in
18 Philadelphia I ask? Converting
19 that 50 acres of wasteland into
20 something of value is my objective.
21 This incinerator, which is now also
22 one of the oldest in the country,
23 persists today because large
24 municipalities continue to send

1 their trash there to be burned.

2 One-third of the trash
3 comes from Delaware County,
4 one-third from New York City and
5 one-third from Philadelphia. Last
6 year, thankfully Delaware County
7 committed to weaning itself off of
8 incineration by directing its trash
9 to landfills over the next five
10 years.

11 (Applause.)

12 MAYOR ROOTS: You'll
13 hear from them soon. I immediately
14 sent a letter to Mayor Parker, my
15 very first communication with her
16 as we both came in at the same
17 time. I pleaded with her to lead
18 Philadelphia to do the same, to
19 divert Philadelphia's trash away
20 from the incinerator here in
21 Chester.

22 I didn't yet receive a
23 reply, but I was pleased that
24 Councilmember Gauthier later

1 reached out and visited Chester to
2 see firsthand the impact of
3 Philadelphia's trash being burned
4 in Chester. Thank you,
5 Councilmember Gauthier, and thank
6 you to the other Councilmembers and
7 staffers who'd visited Chester as
8 well, because you didn't come
9 alone. There was a van full of you
10 guys.

11 Those visits birthed the
12 bill that is now before you, the
13 Stop Trashing Our Air Act. As
14 Mayor of Chester, I'm here to ask
15 you to do exactly that, stop
16 trashing our air. I respectfully
17 request your participation in
18 addressing this longstanding
19 matter, which has profoundly
20 infected the health and the future
21 of Chester residents for
22 generations, and I urge you to join
23 us in this effort by passing the
24 Stop Trashing Our Air Act without

1 delay.

2 By doing so, the City of
3 Philadelphia has the opportunity to
4 demonstrate regional leadership,
5 uphold a shared commitment to
6 public health and help unlock new
7 opportunities for economic
8 revitalization along Chester's
9 waterfront. Your leadership is
10 this critical moment.

11 At this critical moment,
12 we'll help secure a healthier and
13 more sustainable future for our
14 residents, communities and entire
15 nation -- entire region. In
16 closing, I'm asking for your help
17 to correct this injustice which has
18 been going on for generations and
19 needs to end now. Be a good
20 neighbor, do the right thing and
21 stop burning Philadelphia's trash
22 in Chester. We don't want it.

23 Burning trash in Chester
24 is an impediment to our economic

1 and community development, but most
2 importantly, the health and
3 wellness of my citizens. You'd
4 certainly feel the same way if you
5 were in my situation. Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Thank you so much, Mayor Roots.

9 Dr. Motley, please state
10 your name for the record and
11 proceed with your testimony.

12 DR. MOTLEY: Good
13 morning, Kristin Motley, for the
14 record. Thank you. Thank you,
15 Councilmember Gauthier, for
16 introducing this act into the
17 entire committee, for having me
18 here today. I'm Dr. Kristin
19 Motley, the Health Commissioner for
20 the City of Chester, and I'm proud
21 to serve in that role because I was
22 born and raised there.

23 Unfortunately, Chester
24 has carried the environmental

1 burden of this entire region for
2 far too long. The nation's largest
3 trash incinerator is just down the
4 road from here. The disease-
5 causing emissions produced there do
6 not have a city limit. We are
7 breathing the same toxic air. We
8 also deal with emissions from other
9 sources, including highway traffic,
10 airplanes, manufacturing firms and
11 others.

12 We just cannot afford to
13 continue to burn trash. I do not
14 have any personal resentment
15 against Reworld. I am sure the
16 leadership are lovely people. The
17 issue is that Chester should have
18 never been home to a trash
19 incinerator. It's too densely
20 populated.

21 I get it. They are a
22 business. The problem is that they
23 are in the wrong business at the
24 wrong time. Reworld published this

1 report suggesting that their
2 operations do not contribute to the
3 poor health outcomes that show up
4 in Chester. I was beside myself
5 reading this report.

6 Nowhere in the history
7 of trash incineration will you find
8 a reputable analysis built on such
9 an unrealistic model. The report
10 references the health impacts of
11 farmers and fishermen in Chester.
12 There is no one in Chester farming
13 or producing fish that we eat. It
14 is not happening. It is not a
15 thing. However, this analysis is
16 based on that fact.

17 Please know that the
18 report also failed to disclose the
19 millions of pounds of toxic
20 emissions produced from burning
21 trash. These toxins are known to
22 increase rates of infant mortality,
23 heart disease, kidney disease,
24 cancers and asthma and other

1 preventable health conditions.

2 And just last week
3 alone, I spoke to four different
4 people from Chester who was
5 recently diagnosed with cancer.
6 These are people who I know
7 personally. Tiffany, 44-year-old
8 with breast cancer; David,
9 61-year-old with Stage IV lung
10 cancer; Ms. Barbara, 75-year-old
11 rectal cancer, Ms. Paula, 73-year-
12 old with ovarian cancer.

13 And by the time this
14 hearing is over today, Ms. Paula is
15 going to know if the cancer has
16 spread to anywhere else in her
17 body. Chester's infant mortality
18 rate is five times the national
19 average. The pediatric asthma rate
20 is four times the national average
21 and the health disparities go on.

22 Children with asthma
23 have more missed days of school.
24 They perform worse in math and

1 reading, and they have lower
2 standardized test scores than their
3 peers. These children live with
4 the impacts of having asthma for
5 the rest of their life. Chester
6 and Philadelphia have something
7 else in common.

8 We share in the dismal
9 rates of all these conditions. And
10 yes, Chester needs a hospital, but
11 we can have 10 hospitals and that
12 still won't address the health
13 disparities that we have. We have
14 to address the problem at its
15 sorts, and it's the toxic air
16 pollution.

17 Even with the state-of-
18 the-art healthcare facilities and
19 world-renowned academic research
20 centers, we lack adequate
21 resources. We're still feeling the
22 impact of the closing. And with
23 Crozer closing recently, people
24 from Chester are taking up seats in

1 your ERs and beds in your
2 hospitals, and cutbacks from
3 Jefferson put additional strain on
4 our healthcare infrastructure.

5 So the report's notion
6 that trash incinerator has minimal
7 impact on human health and the
8 failure to mention the multiplicity
9 of the environmental burdens in
10 Chester is a disgrace and it's an
11 insult to your intelligence.

12 Next, do not be fooled
13 by the propaganda. I'm sure you
14 have seen the videos of Reworld
15 giving back to the community. Yes,
16 they have dropped a couple of
17 checks and those checks were a drop
18 in the bucket for this multi-
19 billion dollar corporation. A
20 community that has been ignored for
21 so long would appreciate the
22 gesture.

23 I, however, am not
24 impressed. These givebacks have

1 not improved our cancer rates or
2 infant mortality rates or our
3 asthma rates. We do not need them
4 to give back in that way. We need
5 them to give back our air.

6 Lastly, as you'll hear
7 from Delaware County, there have
8 been studies proven for years that
9 diverting trash to landfills is far
10 better for the environment, is
11 better for human health and it
12 costs less money.

13 Here's the bottom line:
14 Traction. Generation is outdated.
15 I urge you to pass this act. The
16 country is watching your decision
17 on this and there won't be another
18 opportunity to do it any time soon.
19 So let's partner and let's work
20 together on advancing more
21 sustainable solutions to waste
22 disposal. Because if you continue
23 to burn trash in Chester, that
24 toxic air will continue to blow

1 right back here to burn you. Thank
2 you.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

5 Thank you, Dr. Motley. And I'm
6 very sorry to hear about the
7 significant health issues
8 experienced by your residents and
9 people that you know personally,
10 but thank you for sharing that
11 story and for being here today.

12 Please state your name
13 for the record and proceed with
14 your testimony.

15 MS. YURKOVICH: Thank
16 you. Rebecca Yurkovich. Good
17 afternoon. My name is Rebecca
18 Yurkovich. And I'm the Delaware
19 County Sustainability Officer. In
20 this role, I'm charged with making
21 Delaware County community and its
22 governmental organization
23 operations more sustainable and
24 resilient to climate change.

1 I come to this work with
2 experience in environmental
3 compliance, long-range community
4 planning and municipal management.
5 And on behalf of our 576,000
6 neighbors in Delaware County, I
7 would like to thank you for the
8 opportunity to speak here today.

9 Two weeks ago I had the
10 opportunity to visit my niece. And
11 upon my arrival, beneath pigtailed
12 and Bluey pajamas, I was met by a
13 lethargic, grumpy 3-year-old with a
14 heart-shattering cough. When I
15 asked what was wrong, I was met
16 with a meek, it's my asthma.
17 Weekend of fun turned into coughing
18 fits, gasping breaths and
19 treatments out of a ladybug
20 nebulizer.

21 This is the everyday
22 experience and reality for more
23 than 12,000 children in Delaware
24 County and 32,000 children in the

1 city of Philadelphia who suffer
2 from pediatric asthma, some of the
3 worst rates in the country. These
4 conditions are exacerbated by
5 polluting industries like that of
6 Reworld in the city of Chester,
7 where more than 15% of the
8 population, over four times the
9 national average, suffers from
10 asthma and other lung-related
11 conditions. These are the unspoken
12 casualties of systematic policy
13 failure and unchecked industry.

14 In 2021, Delaware County
15 commissioned Dr. Jeffrey Morris of
16 the Sound Resource Management
17 Group, Inc., with assistance from
18 the Zero Waste Associates, to
19 compare the comprehensive impacts
20 of incineration at Reworld with the
21 landfilling of ash versus that of
22 landfilling unburned waste directly
23 at the Delaware County Solid Waste
24 Authority-owned rolling hills

1 landfill in Berks County.

2 The study evaluated and
3 assigned environmental economic
4 values or costs to the
5 environmental and health impacts
6 associated with the waste process
7 to allow for dollar-for-dollar
8 comparisons between incineration
9 and landfilling.

10 The study evaluated nine
11 different health and environmental
12 impacts, including climate change,
13 cancer-causing and noncancer-
14 causing toxics, respiratory effects
15 from particulates such as stroke
16 and heart attacks, ground-level
17 smog formation as well as four
18 other environmental factors.

19 These environmental
20 economic values represent those
21 unspoken costs of the environmental
22 and health effects of the
23 communities that are burdened with
24 these polluting industries, such as

1 higher health care costs, premature
2 deaths, damages to our natural
3 environment and more.

4 Overall, the study found
5 that the current practices of
6 burning trash in the city of
7 Chester and then landfilling the
8 ash is 2.3 times more harmful for
9 the health, environment and climate
10 impacts than going directly to
11 landfill without burning first.

12 When separating out
13 health and environmental impacts,
14 the study found that it costs \$193
15 more per ton to incinerate the
16 landfill directly. Applying this
17 factor across Delaware County's
18 annual waste tonnage, health and
19 environmental impacts of
20 incineration are costing our
21 community an additional \$73.3
22 million in community impacts.

23 Transportation is also a
24 large consideration in this study,

1 as landfilling waste would require
2 an additional five times more
3 hauling miles. However, despite
4 misconceptions, it was found that
5 transportation only accounted for
6 1.1% of impacts of landfilling,
7 further highlighting the
8 detrimental impacts of incineration
9 over landfilling.

10 While this life-cycle
11 analysis utilized data from
12 Delaware County, these results are
13 not unique. The City of
14 Philadelphia is currently sending
15 approximately 400,000 tons of waste
16 into the Reworld incinerator each
17 year, further crippling the
18 community and the environmental and
19 health impacts of Chester.

20 The harmful pollutants
21 emitted in the air from these
22 facilities do not know our county
23 lines and are without a doubt
24 impacting your residents in the

1 city of Philadelphia as well.
2 Delaware County Council recently
3 enacted the county's first zero
4 waste plan this past August, which
5 seeks to phase out local trash
6 incineration, as they recognize the
7 serious threat that it causes to
8 our health, environment and economy
9 of Delaware County and the region.

10 On behalf of Delaware
11 County, I would like to applaud
12 this Committee for its leadership
13 in considering the alternatives to
14 incineration for the city's
15 upcoming solid waste management
16 contract. In conclusion, I would
17 like to thank you for the
18 opportunity to speak today and
19 express Delaware County's support
20 of Bill 250768 Stop Trashing Our
21 Air. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

24 Thank you. Thank you so much.

1 Please state your name
2 for the record and proceed with
3 your testimony.

4 MS. SIEGMANN WERNER:

5 Thank you. Lora Siegmann Werner.
6 Thank you again for the opportunity
7 to join my colleagues to reinforce
8 Delaware County's strong support
9 for the Stop Trashing Our Air Act.
10 I'm the Director of the Reworld
11 Delaware County Health Department.

12 Prior to serving the
13 county, I worked at the federal
14 level for regional offices of the
15 Agency for Toxic Substances and
16 Disease Registry, CDC and FEMA here
17 in Philadelphia. I have over 30
18 years of experience that includes
19 directing responses to chemical
20 exposure and environmental public
21 health concerns.

22 The incredibly impactful
23 proposal you're considering today
24 matters for health. It matters for

1 the health of communities here in
2 Philadelphia and it matters for the
3 health of your over half a million
4 neighbors in Delaware County, as
5 you heard from Dr. Motley and
6 Becca. It matters for the
7 sustainability of our region, as
8 you heard from Mayor Roots. It
9 matters to address longstanding
10 inequities in how we handle waste
11 in this region.

12 We're all navigating a
13 shifting landscape right now,
14 changing federal priorities,
15 uncertain funding, lack of support
16 for health equity efforts. These
17 realities make public health work
18 challenging, but they also make it
19 more important than ever.

20 In times of instability,
21 it's local partnerships that allow
22 us to continue to focus on what's
23 really, really important. This
24 proposal is an important step

1 forward that would advance our
2 mutual objectives to promote and
3 protect the health and well-being
4 of residents in both Philadelphia
5 and Delaware County, and it will
6 shine as a model for other
7 jurisdictions across the country.
8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 Thank you so much and I really
12 appreciate you being here.

13 Were you also going to
14 read --

15 MS. SIEGMANN WERNER:

16 Yes. I'll follow with a letter
17 written by our Delaware County
18 Council Chair, Dr. Monica Taylor.
19 She said, I'm writing to express my
20 support for Bill No. 250768, Stop
21 Trashing Our Air Act, introduced by
22 Councilmember Jamie Gaut --
23 Gauthier.

24 I urge you to enact this

1 legislation without delay.
2 Delaware County Council recently
3 enacted the county's first zero
4 waste plan, which seeks to phase
5 out local trash incineration. We
6 took this action in part because we
7 recognize that incineration poses a
8 threat to the health, environment
9 and economy of Delaware County, the
10 city of Philadelphia and the entire
11 Southeastern Pennsylvania region,
12 America's largest incinerators in
13 Delaware County.

14 Toxic ash produced by
15 this incinerator is more than twice
16 as harmful to our constituents and
17 the environment than if we had
18 landfilled the unburned trash
19 instead. The Chester incinerator
20 is the largest single source of
21 pollution in the region. It
22 contributes to Chester having the
23 highest asthma rate in the United
24 States. 1 in 5 Philadelphia

1 children also have asthma, leading
2 to the city being recently
3 designated as the asthma capital,
4 as you recognized.

5 One-third of everything
6 burned at the Reworld Covanta
7 incinerator in Chester comes from
8 Philadelphia. Delaware County is
9 doing its part, but we need the
10 City of Philadelphia's help to
11 chart a safer, cleaner and greener
12 path. If you do not act now, it
13 may be almost a decade before the
14 City of Philadelphia will have
15 another chance to phase out trash
16 incineration. Please help us keep
17 trash out of our air, lungs and
18 atmosphere by enacting the Stop
19 Trashing Our Air Act before the
20 City of Philadelphia renews its
21 waste disposal contracts.

22 Sincerely, Dr. Monica Taylor.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you so much. I have one
2 question and then I'll open it up
3 to members of the Committee.

4 My question is for
5 Ms. Yurkovich. In your testimony,
6 you mentioned that the study Delco
7 commissioned found that "The
8 current practice of burning trash
9 and then landfilling is 2.3 times
10 more harmful for the health,
11 environment and climate impact than
12 going directly to the landfill."
13 And from what I understand, the
14 study also found that if we only
15 look at the human health impact of
16 each option, without factoring in
17 global impacts of climate change,
18 incineration is 23 times worse.

19 And it sounds like the
20 direct health impacts are much more
21 concentrated than the climate
22 impacts mainly affecting people who
23 live nearby. Am I understanding
24 that correctly and can you

1 elaborate?

2 MS. YURKOVICH: Sure.

3 Thank you. So you are correct. It
4 was found in the study that when
5 you separate out the climate
6 impacts and only evaluate the human
7 health impacts, it is 23 times more
8 damaging to be using this
9 incinerator versus landfilling
10 directly.

11 When looking at the
12 dollars and cents, incineration is
13 \$193, more human health impacts per
14 ton than disposing at landfill
15 directly. This is incredibly
16 damaging to those that are living
17 in what's considered the fallout
18 zone, which is those communities
19 that are directly under the stacks.

20 And I think it's also
21 important to consider that when
22 hearing testimony of all of these
23 studies, especially from our
24 participants from Reworld later,

1 also consider the boots on the
2 ground. These are hundreds of
3 trucks that are sitting in local
4 communities every single day. And
5 while there may be certain studies
6 that show impacts from the stacks,
7 it's not expressing the lived
8 experience of those that are having
9 to sit there and breathe in the
10 trucks' emissions every single day.

11 I previously worked in a
12 municipality in Delaware County and
13 we would get calls from our trash
14 crew saying, hey, just so you know,
15 we're probably going to get
16 complaints that trash isn't getting
17 picked up because we're in a three-
18 hour-long line to drop off at
19 Covanta. So it's those emissions
20 that our children are breathing in
21 and our residents are breathing in.

22 And while we certainly
23 consider it important that we are
24 having climate impacts, it's those

1 health impacts of the people that
2 are having to live and breathe that
3 air every single day that we're
4 here fighting for today. Thank
5 you.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Thank you so much. Councilmember
9 Harrity.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

11 Thank you all, first off, for
12 taking time out of your busy
13 schedule to come down here. We
14 know what you have going on because
15 we have the same things going on,
16 so we appreciate your time.

17 Mr. Mayor, your county
18 just enacted the county's first
19 zero waste plan, which seeks to
20 phase out local trash incineration.
21 Can you walk us through how your
22 plan will be implemented? Where is
23 the landfill you will be using?
24 Will there be a financial impact by

1 this change? And if so, can you
2 tell us what that will look like
3 from a budget standpoint?

4 MAYOR ROOTS: Surely. I
5 can't speak to how the trash is
6 going to get to the landfill.
7 There's another organization that
8 manages that. But I think your
9 real question is the financial
10 impact of moving trash out of being
11 burned in Chester to somewhere
12 else.

13 We are in budget season
14 right now. I will tell you that
15 not a moment is being spent on the
16 impact of the impact that Reworld
17 Covanta has on our budget. We are
18 budgeting so that the host
19 agreement that we have and have had
20 over the years that has not moved,
21 has not escalated, is the same
22 amount that it was 25 years ago
23 that it is today, is not factored
24 in, you know, to our budget

1 decisions.

2 We also know that if it
3 were to shut down today, we have
4 many developers and many
5 opportunities for that 50 acres of
6 land to be profitable in ways that
7 can sustain us forever. So if we
8 could turn off the switch today, we
9 would have someone -- once we clean
10 up the environmental mess that's
11 been less left for the last 35
12 years -- to replace the revenue
13 that comes in from the host
14 agreement there. Does that answer
15 your question?

16 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Not
17 really. I get that point. What
18 I'm trying to get at is for our
19 budget asks too. I'm sure there's
20 a cost related to changing from the
21 incinerator, which is actually
22 right where you're at, to wherever
23 the landfill will be.

24 A, do you have a

1 landfill picked out already and
2 have you already stopped sending
3 your trash to the incinerator?

4 MAYOR ROOTS: Okay. I
5 understand what you're saying. So
6 what you have to understand first
7 is it's Delaware County's
8 incinerator. So the question
9 should be answered by either
10 Rebecca or --

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Oh,
12 I'm good with whoever. I'm just
13 trying --

14 MAYOR ROOTS: I just
15 wanted to understand --

16 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I'm
17 just trying to figure out how much
18 extra we're going to have to pay
19 also in order --

20 MAYOR ROOTS: Gotcha.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
22 Point of information. We know the
23 cost to be pretty much the same,
24 pretty much level with incineration

1 on average. And also, I wanted to
2 point out there's a difference
3 between sort of the stated
4 financial cost and the sort of
5 cumulative cost of impacts that
6 we're not considering in that
7 financial amount, which as stated
8 by the sustainability officer, is
9 23 times worse. But the cost is
10 the same virtually.

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

12 Yeah, I get it. What I'm trying to
13 get at is there's going to be a
14 cost to change over, right. And
15 what I'm trying to also get to a
16 point is do you already have a
17 place for it to go? Because have
18 you already stopped burning Delco's
19 trash at the incinerator?

20 MS. YURKOVICH: If I
21 may, so a couple questions to
22 address there. First, I don't have
23 dollar-for-dollar ton change for
24 you. The current process for waste

1 in Delaware County is that they'll
2 go to one of two transfer stations
3 owned by the Delaware County Solid
4 Waste Authority. From there, in
5 skipping the incinerator we will be
6 sending to the Rolling Hills
7 Landfill in Berks County, which is
8 owned by the Delaware County Solid
9 Waste Authority.

10 At this time, we are not
11 diverting our entire waste stream
12 due to a lack of infrastructure for
13 that hauling. Our two transfer
14 stations are actually defunct
15 incinerators from the 1950s. They
16 were never built in a way for us to
17 be hauling 476,000 tons of trash.
18 It's fine for the little puddle
19 jump that it's taking to Covanta.
20 However, most Delaware County
21 communities are also doing direct
22 drop-off.

23 At this time, our Solid
24 Waste Authority is going through

1 redesign of those transfer stations
2 to build them in a fortified way in
3 which we'll be able to have the
4 physical infrastructure in order to
5 ship the further distance. So
6 while we're not diverting our full
7 total currently, it's around 15%
8 going directly to the Rolling Hills
9 Landfill.

10 I will also implore you
11 to also consider what Councilwoman
12 said. And while you'll see
13 potentially different costs in
14 shifting away from landfill, the
15 City should also see reduced costs
16 in your health and human services
17 over time, as residents are no
18 longer going to be breathing in
19 this toxic air.

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
21 Yeah, I'm just trying to get to the
22 point of, you know, what the -- the
23 Councilwoman answered my question.
24 When it comes to the cost, it's

1 almost comparative. I'm good with
2 that.

3 All I'm trying to see
4 and make sure is that we're trying
5 to stop sending our trash to you
6 guys. I want to make sure that if
7 we're doing that, you guys are
8 doing that too, you know what I'm
9 saying, because it's got to be
10 equal. We're going to have to find
11 a new thing. We're going to have
12 to find a new way to go, but we
13 want you guys to be leading by
14 example too, you understand?

15 MS. YURKOVICH:
16 Unfortunately, we do have
17 infrastructure that needs to be
18 updated for us to be able to make
19 that choice and --

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
21 When do you think you would be able
22 to fully implement it? I get it,
23 yeah.

24 MS. YURKOVICH: Good

1 question. The initial cost for the
2 transfer station redesign was at
3 approximately 25 million per
4 station and that was about three
5 years ago. More recent updates are
6 now estimating at \$45 million per
7 transfer station. As you may be
8 aware, Delaware County underwent a
9 23% tax increase last year and is
10 slated for another 19% this year.

11 So while our operations
12 and upgrades may be delayed, we are
13 steadfast in this commitment, but
14 we also want to be aware that we're
15 not overburdening our residents
16 further to push this when the
17 finances are also not there. So it
18 is a full commitment. We're still
19 looking for additional
20 opportunities to fund the 45
21 million required for transfer
22 station updates at this time.

23 MAYOR ROOTS: If I may
24 add one piece, I would not be

1 sitting here today if the county
2 had not made that commitment to
3 move out of the incinerator in
4 Chester. It wouldn't be fair. If
5 we can't do it ourselves right in
6 Delaware County, I can't come to
7 Philadelphia and ask them to do the
8 same. I think we've learned a
9 little bit today --

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

11 You're getting to what I was --
12 exactly. But still I would like to
13 know that -- \$45 million, right,
14 that's a lot of money to come up
15 with to build your own transfer
16 stations. Just trying to get a
17 timeline on this. Because for us,
18 there's going to be a lot of
19 preparation that's going to have to
20 go into this.

21 Just like you spoke of,
22 we now have to figure out where
23 we're sending all that stuff, how
24 we're getting it there

1 logistically, where our transfer
2 stations are going to be. We're
3 pretty good set up like that,
4 but -- you know what I'm saying.

5 So I'm trying to find
6 out basically what kind of a
7 timeline do we have here that we're
8 working on because this stuff
9 doesn't happen overnight. Of
10 course, we have to figure that part
11 out once we pass this or whatever
12 it happens. Just trying to figure
13 out how much time we have
14 comparative to what you guys are
15 doing in that phase-out or however
16 it's going. You get what I'm
17 saying.

18 So we're not going to
19 send our trash to you guys, you
20 know what I mean. You guys are not
21 sending your trash there, right.
22 That's all I need to -- I want to
23 make sure that this is comparative.
24 It's not just like we're going to

1 stop sending our trash over there
2 and have to figure that all out.
3 Meanwhile, you guys will still be
4 using and implementing the
5 facility.

6 From what you're saying
7 is that you're trying to phase out
8 the money issue on the transfer
9 stations. So all I'm saying is
10 what do you think your timeline
11 looks like so we have an idea of
12 what our timeline kind of will look
13 like?

14 MS. YURKOVICH: Sure.
15 Well, I think Philadelphia is in a
16 different position in that you have
17 the necessary transfer
18 infrastructure. I will say I do
19 not feel comfortable stating a
20 direct time frame, as I'm not from
21 the Delaware County Solid Waste
22 Authority. It's a separate
23 municipal authority. However,
24 they --

1 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: But
2 you get what I'm getting at,
3 right --

4 MS. YURKOVICH: I
5 understand that.

6 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: You
7 guys have no time limit on when
8 you're going to stop sending your
9 trash there, but you want us to
10 stop sending our trash there now --

11 MS. YURKOVICH: Correct.

12 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: --
13 or right now.

14 MS. YURKOVICH: However,
15 you're also in a position with
16 infrastructure to make that change
17 today.

18 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: --
19 but that leaves us in a place where
20 we have to find out where we're
21 going to stick this stuff. And
22 from what it sounds like to me
23 right now, you don't actually have
24 a full working plan of how you're

1 going to phase out your own trash.

2 MS. YURKOVICH: We have
3 a plan. We need upgraded
4 infrastructure at our transfer
5 station --

6 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: The
7 plan has no timeline. That's what
8 I'm saying. Do you under --

9 MS. YURKOVICH: I
10 understand what you're saying. I
11 do.

12 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: And
13 I'll say I'm not for burning. All
14 I'm trying to figure out here is if
15 we stop sending our trash, we have
16 to do all this stuff over here, but
17 you're still burning your trash.
18 Why do we do this, you know what I
19 mean. It's got to be equal.

20 If we're going to do
21 this and this is actually really
22 about the environment, we should
23 have a plan that says, all right,
24 this is it, we're going to phase

1 this out Delco, Philadelphia
2 together because it involves both
3 of us. We're going to phase out by
4 this date. You get it, what I'm
5 trying to say?

6 MS. YURKOVICH: Yes.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: All
8 I'm trying to say is to get a time
9 frame. But from what you're saying
10 is your time frame requires -- it
11 depends on the money coming, and
12 you don't know if that money is
13 actually going to come. So you
14 don't have an actual time for your
15 phase-out.

16 You have a plan which is
17 great, but you don't know when
18 you're actually going to stop
19 sending your trash to Chester.

20 MS. YURKOVICH: Only
21 because I'm not from the
22 organization that makes those
23 decisions.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

1 Okay. That's good. So are they
2 testifying?

3 MS. YURKOVICH: The
4 Solid Waste Authority is not, but
5 we would be happy to put you in
6 contact with our Solid Waste
7 Authority that would be able to
8 speak further to the financials of
9 that transfer station redesign.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
11 I also believe that there was a
12 time given in the testimony. Has
13 she answered the question to your
14 satisfaction?

15 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
16 Councilwoman, I don't have a
17 timeline. I'm in favor of the
18 thing, but you know what I'm
19 saying. Things got to be fair
20 here.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
22 I'm just asking if you're done with
23 your line of questioning.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I

1 would let -- well, as long as
2 somebody is going to get back to me
3 with a timeline on when they're
4 going to phase out their trash.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

6 Great. I think there was a
7 timeline given in the testimony. I
8 also believe that some of the
9 questions around --

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I

11 asked for a timeline.

12 Councilwoman, if there was a
13 timeline given, I would have said
14 okay, I accept that timeline.
15 There wasn't -- they said they
16 don't have a timeline because they
17 do not have the money so they
18 cannot put a time on it until they
19 have the actual --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

21 I understand. I heard them say
22 they were developing a five-year
23 plan to phase out incineration.
24 Did I miss hear that or

1 misunderstand?

2 MS. YURKOVICH: That is
3 still the goal, yes.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
5 Thank you very much.

6 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: So
7 that will do for my -- so it's five
8 years you're saying that you guys
9 will stop burning your trash?

10 MS. YURKOVICH: Yes.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
12 Thank you, Councilmember. I think
13 that some of the questions asked
14 are actually more suited for
15 Sanitation in terms of what we will
16 do and how that will work out
17 logistically. But I appreciate
18 your line --

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I
20 know what we're -- I get what we're
21 going to do. My whole thing is
22 what they were going to do,
23 Councilwoman. You don't like my
24 line of questioning. I appreciate

1 that but --

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 As the Chair, I would like to
4 continue. I think that some of the
5 questions are very suited for
6 Sanitation and they'll be up. In
7 terms of some of the --

8 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: How
9 is Sanitation going to --

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 As the Chair, I would like to
12 continue running the hearing.
13 Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
15 Well, then you just lost me. Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
18 Well, I'm sorry to hear that. In
19 terms of some of your other
20 questions, right now we pay about
21 \$65 per ton for both landfilling
22 and incineration. And I just want
23 to make it clear to the members of
24 the Committee, we actually have two

1 waste management contracts.

2 So we already send
3 almost 60% of our trash to be
4 landfilled through a contract with
5 a landfilling company. And so,
6 there's the option to send more of
7 our trash that way, which is not an
8 ideal or perfect solution, but it
9 is better for health impacts than
10 incineration.

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I
12 wasn't concerned about our trash.
13 I know we'll do it once we
14 implement. My concern is we're
15 doing this as a partnership. When
16 are they going to do it.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
18 Thank you, Councilmember.

19 The other thing that I
20 wanted to note and I don't want
21 people to forget is that there's a
22 timing element here. We're in the
23 midst and we're coming up on the
24 end of our contract. So that's why

1 it's important from a timing
2 perspective to be considering this
3 action right now because our next
4 contract will last for a very long
5 time.

6 I'll move on to
7 additional committee questions.
8 Minority Whip Nicolas O'Rourke.

9 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
10 Thank you, Madam Chair.

11 Let me begin by saying
12 thank you all, Mr. Mayor and all,
13 for coming here and welcome to the
14 city of Philadelphia.

15 MAYOR ROOTS: Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
17 The City of Brotherly Love,
18 Sisterly Effectiveness and Sibling
19 Solidarity. It is emblazoned in
20 the seal of this city for some
21 time, a phrase. It's kind of like
22 broken Latin, Philadelphia Maneto.
23 It's actually a reference to a
24 letter that Paul wrote to one of

1 the churches I believe in Philippi,
2 Let brotherly love endure is
3 essentially the concept.

4 And I'm a Member
5 At-large. My name is Nicolas
6 O'Rourke. I'm a Member At-large
7 here for the body, and I have the
8 benefit and the honor of serving
9 the entirety of the city and it
10 makes me concerned about
11 everybody's well-being. And if we
12 are going to live, I believe in the
13 model that we emblazon and we
14 really market. I believe it calls
15 us to be concerned about the well-
16 being and the health of our sibling
17 municipalities. Certainly, the
18 oldest one in the Commonwealth.
19 And so, I thank you for being here
20 and hearing our questions. And
21 please, I know that you may have
22 not heard a response back when you
23 reached out, Mr. Mayor, but we do
24 welcome you and are grateful that

1 you are all here to come provide
2 testimony as it relates to concerns
3 that are important to your
4 citizenry as well as yourselves.

5 You did mention in your
6 testimony, Mr. Mayor, as well as I
7 think I read it in Dr. Taylor's
8 commentary as well in that fourth
9 paragraph, that Philadelphia's
10 trash is only a portion of the
11 trash that's being processed at the
12 incinerator, and that the rest of
13 the trash comes from Delaware
14 County and New York. I think you
15 said is like one-third Philly,
16 one-third Delco, one-third New
17 York.

18 Quick question, are you
19 also in touch with officials from
20 those municipalities and other
21 areas as well about their contacts
22 with Reworld?

23 MAYOR ROOTS: So you
24 only mentioned the three

1 municipalities. We're talking to
2 Philadelphia today. We have
3 Delaware County with us, flanked on
4 the end. New York is the other.
5 That contract is a very long-term
6 contract. I'm not sure how long
7 that contract is. But I think it
8 was a -- let me get some help from
9 the gallery in the back. 20-year
10 contract?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
12 (Inaudible).

13 MAYOR ROOTS: Yeah, 20-,
14 30-year contract.

15 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
16 But are you in touch with the
17 actual officials from New York and
18 Delco -- obviously, you're here as
19 well -- as it relates to their
20 contracts with Reworld?

21 MAYOR ROOTS: Yes. And
22 we would be in contact with anybody
23 who would even be considered for
24 replacement if Delco or

1 Philadelphia went out.

2 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: Do
3 you know what their positions are
4 on this matter?

5 MAYOR ROOTS: Who, New
6 York?

7 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
8 New York.

9 MAYOR ROOTS: Their
10 position is they're very happy it
11 was approved to come down to
12 Chester.

13 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
14 What is the racial demographic of
15 Chester, if I may ask?

16 MAYOR ROOTS: It's 75%
17 Black, maybe 15% to 20% Hispanic
18 and it's interesting to say other
19 as White, but that's about the
20 difference.

21 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
22 One of the panelists mentioned that
23 there was 576,000 neighbors in
24 Delco. How many are actually in

1 Chester proper?

2 MAYOR ROOTS: Chester
3 has 35,000.

4 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
5 35,000. But 35,000 and 75% that
6 are Black folk?

7 MAYOR ROOTS: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
9 Okay. Thank you. I'm really
10 shocked -- I was extended the
11 opportunity to come, but then
12 another obligation came up and it
13 kept me from being able to tour
14 with you all recently. But the
15 reports that I got back from
16 colleagues that were there as well
17 as the testimony that you looked up
18 today really, really concerns me.

19 One of my colleagues
20 mentioned that upon going, it
21 activated her asthma immediately
22 that she was dealing with. And she
23 came to visit myself. It was a
24 cold day. I think it was Veteran's

1 Day. She came by the house to meet
2 my son and she was coughing. I'm
3 like, what's going on? And she
4 mentioned that she picked up the
5 cough after having done the tour at
6 the incinerator in Chester.

7 And I'm just thinking
8 about the reality that the
9 immediate impact, right, to have
10 someone, a grown adult woman, to be
11 so immediately impacted by that,
12 the long-term effects that it would
13 have on anybody else in the fall-
14 out areas or wherever else,
15 including that many Black children
16 that are growing up with that and
17 what it causes.

18 And I think about all of
19 the conversations that we've had
20 about environmental justice across
21 this country, thinking about Flint,
22 Michigan and what they were doing
23 with water and other places as well
24 down in Mississippi and issues

1 around these sorts of things. And
2 how if it was a couple of years
3 ago, a few years ago, there would
4 be much more of an uproar about the
5 reality of this.

6 But I think the
7 political winds have changed so
8 things are quieter. Obviously,
9 money is being pulled back to focus
10 on these sorts of things. But I do
11 think that it's really important
12 and I'm really grateful that you
13 shared this, and I hope that others
14 will watch back this particular
15 hearing and to learn more about the
16 reality of this.

17 Apparently, you guys are
18 one of the biggest incinerators or
19 I guess the --

20 MAYOR ROOTS: The
21 largest.

22 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: --
23 the largest one on the Eastern
24 Seaboard; is that true?

1 MAYOR ROOTS: No, in the
2 country.

3 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

4 Well, excuse me. So not just on
5 the Eastern Seaboard. We're
6 talking about the whole U.S. of A.
7 Well, thank you again. It's really
8 particularly important. I do hope
9 that we all can hear beyond the
10 facts and figures and numbers the
11 moral challenge that is before us
12 to care about our siblings if we're
13 going to be the City of
14 Philadelphia letting brotherly love
15 or sibling solidarity endure, that
16 I think it calls us to be
17 genuinely, genuinely concerned
18 about the health concerns of our
19 neighbors just to the south.

20 Thank you so much, Madam
21 Chair.

22 (Applause.)

23 MAYOR ROOTS: If I could
24 add one thing --

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

2 Majority Whip Councilmember Bass.

3 MAYOR ROOTS: When you
4 mentioned --

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

6 I'm so sorry.

7 MAYOR ROOTS: -- the
8 adult who was aggravated with her
9 asthma during her visit -- my
10 Health Commissioner's here, she can
11 correct me if I'm wrong -- but in
12 the city of Chester, the incidence
13 of adults getting asthma as adults
14 occurs in Chester at a much higher
15 rate than it does just about
16 anywhere else. Asthma is usually
17 contracted in childhood, in those
18 teen years. But in Chester, you
19 find adults at very mature ages
20 getting asthma for the first time.
21 She's not correcting me, so I'm not
22 wrong.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

24 Majority Deputy Whip Councilmember

1 Bass.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 So good afternoon.

5 Thank you for being here this
6 afternoon. And I just had a few
7 questions for you. And so, the
8 first thing I just wanted to state
9 is that a few weeks ago I was here
10 in Council on the floor and I got a
11 call from a neighbor. And whenever
12 you're at work and you get a call
13 from one of your nearby neighbors,
14 you pick up because you're like,
15 something's going on.

16 And what was going on is
17 that water was running brown in all
18 the houses, you know, in the
19 neighborhood, and there was some
20 work being done by the Water
21 Department, and it kicked up
22 sediment and whatnot. And so,
23 people were worried, and rightfully
24 so, because their water was now

1 brown.

2 And so, when just
3 thinking about what the citizens of
4 Chester are going through,
5 obviously we don't like it when
6 things are going wrong where we
7 live so we don't want to push that
8 off on someone else where they
9 live. And so, we certainly do
10 understand exactly where you're
11 coming from and what your thought
12 process is there.

13 I wanted to also make
14 mention that as long as I can
15 remember, the City of Philadelphia
16 has been talking about where do we
17 put our trash. And I forget which
18 mayor, I don't remember if it was
19 Goode or Rendell, I don't know, as
20 they talked about trash to steam.
21 And like that was something that
22 was being discussed many moons ago
23 here in the city of Philadelphia.

24 But we've been talking

1 about and trying to figure out
2 where to put our trash for a very
3 long time. And I think that now
4 we're at that moment. I think that
5 my colleague's question about how
6 long, what's your timeline makes a
7 lot of sense, because assuming that
8 we are going to really seriously
9 begin looking at what are we going
10 to do about this situation, that
11 we'll have to come up with some
12 concrete resolutions and do that
13 now. The moment is now to begin
14 thinking about that.

15 I wanted to know,
16 Mr. Mayor, if you could talk a
17 little bit about what you
18 mentioned -- and I was unaware that
19 the plant is sort of like
20 waterfront. And we've got our
21 fantastic waterfront Walmart here.
22 So I don't know who makes these
23 decisions about what to put along
24 the waterfront, but it just makes

1 absolutely no sense whatsoever.
2 Some of the most valuable real
3 estate that a city or a town or
4 places like Chester that you have
5 is occupied by something like this.
6 And I have no doubt that there's
7 some residual effect on the water
8 that's in the area.

9 So can you talk to us
10 about Chester's possibilities,
11 their economic opportunities that
12 would exist minus this plant being
13 where it is? Because we all know
14 that Chester has been a good
15 neighbor, a neighbor that many of
16 us have been to. We have family
17 and friends there. We certainly
18 are familiar with Chester.

19 But what are the
20 opportunities that exist that could
21 really propel Chester from what we
22 know today and the struggles and
23 challenges that it faces, just like
24 any other municipality, the

1 challenges that you face today
2 versus what the opportunities could
3 be in having that waterfront
4 stretch available for development
5 and growth and tax revenue for the
6 city of Chester?

7 MAYOR ROOTS: That's a
8 layup question there.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm
10 trying to give it to you.

11 MAYOR ROOTS: But
12 historically, you know Chester
13 being the oldest city and on a
14 river, industry loves water, so
15 industry is set up across the
16 entire waterfront in Chester.
17 There is very little public access
18 to our waterfront. Very little,
19 very little. Interestingly though,
20 where the Reworld Covanta plant
21 sits, it's right next door to our
22 partner, the Philadelphia Union
23 Stadium and Complex.

24 Now, over the last year,

1 year and a half, they've taken what
2 used to be a parking lot and turned
3 it into a youth sports mecca, and
4 they just cut the ribbon just three
5 months ago on a \$100 million
6 sportsplex on their property.

7 So the Philadelphia
8 Union franchise believes in the
9 waterfront property, so much so
10 that they've invested over \$100
11 million in expansion in the last
12 year, year and a half. They're
13 looking to acquire more space.
14 Because as soon as they opened it
15 up for youth sports activity, they
16 ran out of space almost
17 immediately. So they're still
18 acquiring the small parcels that
19 are left to expand that operation
20 to have 50 acres right next door to
21 them. They may not need all that
22 for sports, but it would open it up
23 to what we know as just this
24 absolutely beautiful waterfront

1 community that could be both
2 commercial and residentially
3 utilized with condos and shopping.

4 That was the original
5 plan for the stadium. The stadium
6 was to go here. There's a wharf
7 building that's Class A office
8 space there, right in the middle.
9 It was supposed to be the
10 residential commercial space, but
11 the building took place in 2008,
12 right, when the banks tanked so
13 they had to take every dollar that
14 they could muster just to put the
15 stadium up.

16 The financial situation
17 in America right now is far
18 different than it was in 2008.
19 People are ready to invest in
20 Chester. There is no waterfront
21 for them to invest in. This would
22 be a prime location directly next
23 door to where the biggest
24 investment in this whole region has

1 occurred.

2 So I can just tell you
3 the tax revenue that will come as a
4 result of people building there, if
5 nothing else, a four-star hotel
6 right there on that place would be
7 a very strong investment, and we've
8 had people interested in doing
9 that. People fly into the city to
10 play sports in the city of Chester
11 right now.

12 The World Cup or the
13 Club World Cup that happened last
14 summer, the team that was here
15 actually stayed at the DuPont Hotel
16 in Wilmington. That's got to make
17 you upset. You didn't even get any
18 of that money. And the hotels that
19 are in Chester are also considered
20 airport hotels because of their
21 proximity.

22 So hotel space, condos,
23 retail, when we get hundreds of
24 young people playing down there

1 every day and thousands on the
2 weekend, their parents are dropping
3 them off for the soccer tournament,
4 soccer camps with nothing to do,
5 nothing to do. They're just
6 hanging out. So in order to have
7 room for the restaurants, for the
8 bars, for the entertainment space
9 that is super prime, probably the
10 most prime space on our waterfront
11 in the city.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I
13 think that, you know, having that
14 information about what has already
15 happened there just recently and to
16 know that there has been this 100
17 million dollar sports complex
18 that's been just recently opened,
19 you know, the Philadelphia Union's
20 involved they want more space.

21 When you think about
22 that -- my daughter plays lacrosse.
23 And I just know when you travel
24 around to these different places,

1 you need hotels, you need
2 restaurants, you want shopping.
3 There's a whole economic engine
4 that goes with what has already
5 been produced there.

6 And so, I don't know if
7 it's been formalized in terms of
8 what an economic redevelopment plan
9 looks like for that waterfront, but
10 I would strongly encourage, if it's
11 not already done, to do that as
12 soon as possible to put it on the
13 table that there are other things
14 that are desirable for Chester
15 besides trash and incinerators.

16 MAYOR ROOTS: I will
17 send you and all of you here on the
18 committee the plans that were done
19 by the Riverfront Alliance. It's a
20 group of the biggest businesses in
21 Chester whose concern basically is
22 the waterfront from end to end.
23 The plan is there. We'll be happy
24 to send it to you.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And
2 I just have one other quick
3 question for you, because I'm
4 certain that there's considerable
5 economic profit from the operators
6 of the incinerator right now. And
7 so, I'd like to know what kind of
8 economic compensation has Chester
9 received from these operators?

10 MAYOR ROOTS: Yeah. You
11 talked two things there. We
12 believe that the Chester plant
13 that's owned by Reworld Covanta is
14 their biggest, biggest profit
15 center of all the places that they
16 have. Why, because it's the oldest
17 and it operates at a very, very
18 high level. It pretty much
19 operates at 99% of capacity every
20 day.

21 I think it's a fabulous
22 business model where people pay you
23 to send you their fuel and then you
24 get paid from the electricity

1 that's made from it and then
2 somebody buys the ash. There
3 couldn't be a better business model
4 that will give you straight profit.
5 We know on the back of a napkin how
6 much we believe that they're
7 bringing in in terms of profit, but
8 that's neither here nor there.

9 Your second question is
10 how much does it benefit the city.
11 There's a host agreement that
12 brings the city about \$5 million a
13 year. And that's not just
14 (inaudible), but it's something
15 that hasn't escalated at all. It's
16 been locked in for, like I said,
17 20, 25 years. There's been no
18 escalator. There's been no
19 formula.

20 As the profit increases,
21 the city receives additional
22 benefit. As the Health
23 Commissioner mentioned earlier,
24 they do contribute mightily in the

1 community. When I make the call
2 and say some organization would
3 love for you to fund snacks or
4 goodies or trinkets for the events,
5 they never say no, but it's --

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

7 Well, they shouldn't if you're
8 asking for snack money, you know.
9 They shouldn't.

10 MAYOR ROOTS: Well,
11 that's my point. That's my point.
12 It's really quite outrageous. If
13 you ask for peanuts, you're just a
14 monkey. So that's where we are --

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

16 Okay. I'm not even going to touch
17 that one, you know, because we can
18 really go deep on that. But I just
19 think for the amount of damage that
20 they're doing and the response in
21 terms of there being a giveback
22 that they do this for the
23 community, they do that.

24 And when we talk about a

1 \$5 million contribution to the
2 operation of the city of Chester
3 that has been that same \$5 million
4 forever, I'm outraged. It's just
5 really speaking to the fact that
6 this is all about profit --

7 MAYOR ROOTS: We also
8 generate electricity, but not
9 a kilowatt.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So
11 thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
13 Thank you so much, Councilmember
14 Bass.

15 Councilmember Ahmad.
16 And then we're going to wrap up
17 this panel and move on to our
18 second panel.

19 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
20 Thank you, Madam Chair.

21 And thank you all for
22 the excellent testimony to frame
23 this for us to really look at those
24 hidden costs that are hard to

1 quantify, right, with dollars and
2 cents. This is a moral question.
3 I know people want every last
4 detail of how exactly we're going
5 to put this here, there and
6 everywhere that's going to come,
7 but we do not answer the moral
8 question which is how have we
9 allowed this to go on for this
10 long. That's the first step.
11 That's the first step.

12 So I appreciate
13 everybody trying to be, you know,
14 specific about things. Every time
15 we have change in our country, in
16 our world, any time there's a
17 disruption there's a pushback.
18 That's expected, right, especially
19 those who are in the business of
20 giving those services that you're
21 trying to change.

22 So I think having the
23 mayor here speaks to that. He's
24 the elected representative of your

1 citizens in Chester. Your word
2 carries a lot of weight because you
3 have taken and you understand that
4 there's going to be a cost for
5 making this transition, but the
6 cost to not doing it is greater.

7 The cost to not doing it
8 is going to cause harm for
9 generations to come. So I applaud
10 all of you. It's more of a
11 statement. I have a lot of
12 questions, but the questions are
13 all sort of, you know, can be
14 answered.

15 I just want to piggyback
16 on what my colleague Councilmember
17 O'Rourke said about the other
18 municipality which has a -- other
19 state that has a long investment or
20 a long contract, so they might not
21 be thinking about this. And I
22 think Councilmember Gauthier kind
23 of pointed at it. There's been a
24 change in who is going to lead that

1 city, and I think this is an
2 opportune moment to get in there
3 and to have a conversation and to
4 see how that can be moved.

5 Because if we have all
6 the people who are utilizing your
7 city for dumping our trash, then
8 you have a stronger position. And
9 there's also some remuneration that
10 should come from all of us doing
11 this for this long. I don't want
12 to put a crimp on our budget, but I
13 think we owe you something for
14 continuing to do that. And New
15 York can also -- they have a
16 massive, more, bigger budget. They
17 owe you something as well.

18 So I think there's a way
19 to configure this so that the
20 actual cost to you is going to be
21 minimized. And then of course, you
22 gave us the offset from the
23 economic development. So more
24 power to you. Keep doing this.

1 Your people have spoken
2 through you and all of you. I
3 appreciate that. And we're here,
4 at least I am here as the Public
5 Health Chair to work with you to
6 see if we need to refine some
7 things and we need to get more
8 details for people to wrap their
9 heads around, I am happy to do that
10 with you.

11 So thank you, Madam
12 Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
14 Thank you, Councilmember Ahmad.

15 I also wanted to take a
16 moment to acknowledge the presence
17 of Council President Kenyatta
18 Johnson, who I know cares deeply
19 about these issues.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
22 Okay. And with that, I just want
23 to thank you for your time. Thank
24 you for sharing your story. Thank

1 you for being here to stand up for
2 your people. It's very inspiring.
3 Thank you so much.

4 Will the Clerk please
5 call the next panel of witnesses to
6 testify.

7 THE CLERK: The second
8 panel includes Carlton Williams,
9 Director of Clean and Green, City
10 of Philadelphia; and Crystal Jacobs
11 Shipman, Sanitation Commissioner
12 for the City of Philadelphia.

13 (Witnesses approached
14 witness table.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
16 Good afternoon, Director Williams,
17 Commissioner Jacobs, to the whole
18 team. Thank you so much for being
19 here today.

20 Director Williams,
21 please state your name for the
22 record and proceed with your
23 testimony.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Good

1 afternoon, Chairperson Gauthier and
2 members of the Committee on the
3 Environment. My name is Carlton
4 Williams. I'm the Director of
5 Clean and Green Initiatives for the
6 city of Philadelphia. Joining me
7 today is Sanitation Commissioner
8 Crystal Jacobs Shipman. And we are
9 here to testify regarding Bill No.
10 250768, a bill that seeks to
11 prohibit the City of Philadelphia
12 from sending waste or recyclable
13 materials to a waste energy
14 facility.

15 The City's Sanitation
16 Division collects approximately
17 600,000 tons of municipal solid
18 waste material each year and
19 approximately 85,000 tons of
20 recyclable material. The City of
21 Philadelphia contracts with private
22 waste companies to haul and dispose
23 of municipal solid waste material.

24 The city does not

1 collect from large scale commercial
2 establishments or private
3 businesses that are not within the
4 sanitation regulations. These
5 entities contract directly with
6 waste companies outside the city's
7 contract and dispose of
8 approximately 1 million tons of
9 material annually.

10 The Sanitation
11 Department utilizes private waste
12 companies that provide transfer
13 stations and disposal facilities to
14 manage waste from approximately
15 550,000 households. The city also
16 owns one transfer station in
17 Northwest Philadelphia. Transfer
18 stations allow city trash
19 compactors to unload material to
20 locations around the city
21 officially, where the material is
22 then reloaded into larger vehicles
23 to transport to its final
24 destination at a disposal facility.

1 The Sanitation

2 Department uses four transfer
3 stations across the city. Three of
4 these stations are privately-owned
5 and one is owned by the city. The
6 solid waste material is transferred
7 from the transfer station to long-
8 term disposable cities that are
9 located outside the city.

10 There are two companies
11 that manage and dispose of the city
12 solid waste. These companies are
13 WM, formerly known as Waste
14 Management, Inc. and Reworld,
15 previously known as Covanta. The
16 city entered into the contracts
17 with these companies on July 1,
18 2018. The term of the municipal
19 solid waste contract was a four
20 year plus three 1-year renewable
21 options for seven years.

22 The city is currently in
23 the final year of the contract term
24 and a new request for proposal is

1 scheduled to be released this fall,
2 with the new contract agreement
3 scheduled to be in place by July 1,
4 2026. The present contract
5 (inaudible) attracted companies
6 primarily used to waste disposal
7 practices to dispose of the city's
8 waste, which include landfill and
9 waste to energy.

10 WM owns landfills in
11 Tullytown and Fairless Hills, both
12 are located in Bucks County, to
13 dispose of approximately 430,000 or
14 roughly 70% of the city's municipal
15 waste. Reworld owns a waste to
16 energy facility in Chester and
17 disposes of approximately 180,000
18 to 200,000 tons of waste, which
19 represents about 30%.

20 There is a longstanding
21 debate on the impact these
22 facilities have on both health and
23 the environment. Some advocates
24 believe that waste to energy

1 facilities negatively impact air
2 quality and cause adverse health
3 effects, while others contend that
4 landfills produce harmful methane
5 gas and leachate that negatively
6 impact the environment.

7 Bill No. 250768 seeks to
8 end the city's practice of
9 utilizing waste to energy
10 facilities. It also contends that
11 they are far more hazardous than
12 landfills when it comes down to the
13 health of those who live near these
14 facilities, especially in the case
15 of the residents in Chester, Pa.

16 The administration
17 applauds the bill's efforts to
18 improve air quality and
19 environmental justice concerns for
20 the residents of Chester. However,
21 there's a need for more objective
22 data to support the claims of this
23 bill in its entirety. There are
24 both pros and cons to both waste

1 disposal facility processes.

2 Wasted energy reduces
3 waste volume about 90%, produces
4 energy and can reduce greenhouse
5 gases compared to landfills.

6 However, waste to energy facilities
7 can be a source of air pollution
8 and generate ash that needs proper
9 disposal. Landfills take up
10 significant land, increase harmful
11 methane gas and have a risk of
12 groundwater contamination.

13 According to the US
14 Environmental Protection Agency,
15 Sustainable Material Management
16 Hierarchy of 2016, waste to energy
17 is viewed as a more sustainable
18 practice than traditional
19 landfills. The hierarchy ranks
20 various waste management practices
21 from the most to least
22 environmentally preferred.

23 The hierarchy places
24 emphasis on reducing, reusing and

1 recycling and composting as key to
2 the materials management. The city
3 is seeking to award a new contract
4 that is both fiscally responsible
5 and environmentally sustainable in
6 managing the city's municipal solid
7 waste.

8 We need additional data
9 to ensure that we are awarding the
10 best viable option to manage the
11 city's waste. Additional data is
12 needed to ensure that we consider
13 all impacts of both waste to energy
14 and landfills have on the
15 environment, specifically as it
16 relates to Philadelphia and our
17 surrounding communities.

18 We need to look beyond
19 traditional solid waste disposal
20 practices and develop new
21 strategies that are both
22 environmental, sustainable and
23 cost-effective. For example, the
24 city of Chicago uses an anaerobic

1 digester system to produce energy
2 and nutrient-rich soil compost.
3 This type of system increases the
4 diversion rate tremendously and is
5 more environmentally sustainable
6 than both landfills and WTE.

7 The City of Philadelphia
8 is utilizing a new process to
9 review all bidders and responses to
10 the RFP, including environmental
11 sustainability, capacity and cost,
12 all of which are part of the
13 negotiation process. The RFP
14 includes a provision that allows
15 for an objective analysis and
16 evaluation of the various waste
17 strategies. This will allow for an
18 effective and efficient
19 determination of the environmental
20 impacts of each option submitted.

21 We are hoping that this
22 RFP will encourage multiple waste
23 companies to offer solutions that
24 provide environmentally sustainable

1 and fiscally responsible proposals
2 for the city to consider that meet
3 the vision for a safer, cleaner,
4 greener Philadelphia.

5 Therefore, we
6 respectfully request that Bill No.
7 250768 be held in committee until
8 the results of the RFP are
9 completed and more data is
10 available to consider all options
11 to manage and dispose of the city's
12 municipal waste. Thank you for
13 your commitment to public health
14 and the environment.

15 And I would like to give
16 Commissioner Shipman the
17 opportunity to offer further
18 testimony on Bill No. 250768, and
19 we'll respond to any more questions
20 after she delivers her testimony.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
22 Thank you.

23 Commissioner, thank you
24 so much for being here today.

1 Please state your name for the
2 record and proceed with your
3 testimony.

4 COMMISSIONER JACOBS

5 SHIPMAN: I'm Crystal Jacobs
6 Shipman, Sanitation Commissioner
7 for the City of Philadelphia. Good
8 afternoon, members of the Committee
9 on the Environment. And thank you,
10 Madam Chair, for this opportunity
11 to share a bit about sanitation
12 obligations to ensure solid waste
13 and recycling are collected and
14 processed efficiently and
15 responsibly.

16 The Department of
17 Sanitation supports the City of
18 Philadelphia's efforts for a
19 cleaner, greener, safer city
20 through the management and disposal
21 of waste and the provision of
22 cleaning, beautification,
23 educational programming and
24 enforcement of the sanitation code.

1 The Department of Sanitation is
2 responsible for a number of
3 programs and direct services,
4 including recycling, education, a
5 robust, mechanical street cleaning
6 program, bulk collection services,
7 operation of six sanitation
8 convenience centers, illegal
9 dumping surveillance camera
10 monitoring and remediation,
11 management of the Big Belly Solar
12 Trash Can system, the Sweep Unit,
13 Philadelphia More Beautiful Block
14 Captain Network, 10 Council
15 District residential base cleaning
16 teams and direct support of the
17 13-week citywide cleaning, PHL TCB
18 and Future Track programs.

19 One of our greatest
20 charges is the management of the
21 city's waste disposal contracts.
22 The City of Philadelphia is
23 required to have a municipal waste
24 management plan that is developed

1 and approved under Pennsylvania
2 State Act 101.

3 Act 101 requires that we
4 use a fair, open and competitive
5 process for selecting among
6 alternative waste management
7 programs or facilities. Act 101
8 requirements apply to our basic
9 planning decisions, including the
10 types of programs and facilities
11 used to promote waste reduction and
12 recycling.

13 We are required to
14 assure the Department of
15 Environmental Protection that we
16 follow the law when selecting among
17 alternatives presented during our
18 request for a proposal process. As
19 a part of this procurement process,
20 respondents to the RFP may submit
21 proposals for alternative
22 processing technologies. We are
23 interested in technology that
24 offers the opportunity to recover

1 organics, textiles and other
2 potentially recyclable materials
3 from the waste stream to be managed
4 for recovery, energy recovery or
5 reuse.

6 We are also responsible
7 for ensuring that disposal capacity
8 is available for private and
9 municipal collections for a 10-year
10 period. Pennsylvania has 46 active
11 landfills and six resource recovery
12 or waste to energy facilities that
13 manage over 20 million tons per
14 year of municipal waste.

15 The challenge for us is
16 the city has limited options for
17 disposal. And although we are
18 exploring a variety of future
19 disposal options, what we currently
20 do have at our disposal as
21 alternatives to WTE is expected to
22 reach capacity in less than 10
23 years. The budget for our
24 municipal waste contracts is \$52.7

1 million for solid waste and 10
2 million for recycling.

3 Due to variable pricing,
4 we paid roughly \$77 per ton in FY25
5 and \$80 per ton in FY26 for solid
6 waste and \$100 per ton for
7 recycling, down from \$110 this past
8 summer. Eliminating a disposal
9 option would have adverse effects
10 in several ways, potentially
11 yielding an estimated 12% increase
12 in cost. It would also present
13 additional challenges for
14 collecting trash on time, adding to
15 the carbon footprint by placing
16 more trucks on roadways for longer
17 periods of time, plus the effects
18 of increased methane gas and
19 groundwater pollutants for any
20 additional material placed in the
21 landfill.

22 An objective study is
23 being conducted by a private
24 consulting firm to measure the

1 environmental impacts and other
2 considerations and respondents to
3 the RFP for waste to energy and
4 landfill disposal facilities with
5 current solid municipal waste
6 contracts with the city.

7 At present, the city
8 sends roughly 60% of trash to
9 landfills and 40% is processed via
10 waste to energy. Two of the four
11 landfills available to us at
12 present have limited capacity to
13 handle any significant quantities
14 from the city.

15 The primary competition
16 for city tonnage in this market is
17 the WM Fairless Hills landfill and
18 the Reworld WTE facility in terms
19 of having a significant amount of
20 capacity. Both have transfer
21 stations in the city. Republic,
22 which operates the Conestoga
23 landfill, also has a transfer
24 facility in the city.

1 The city currently uses
2 about 30% of WM capacity that was
3 accepted in 2025. If all city
4 tonnage was sent to Fairless Hills,
5 this would increase to 56%. To
6 mitigate the issue, WM would need
7 to move tonnage from New York and
8 New Jersey to other landfills or
9 utilize more design capacity.

10 The challenge for WM is
11 New York and New Jersey pay a
12 significant premium for the
13 capacity at \$110 to \$150 per ton.
14 If more design capacity is used,
15 the life of the landfill is
16 reduced. Fairless Hills landfill
17 has an expected 7 to 10 years of
18 capacity remaining. Sending all of
19 the city's tonnage would have an
20 impact on pricing.

21 As the options for
22 disposal become limited, pricing is
23 expected to increase. Less
24 competition or alternative options

1 equals higher premiums. The Grays
2 Ferry Transfer Station does not
3 have the capacity to handle added
4 city tonnage due to the truck count
5 associated with their permit for
6 the facility.

7 Any additional tonnage
8 will either need to be delivered to
9 the WM site or to use the Northwest
10 transfer station. Limiting tonnage
11 to one company would be very
12 difficult and potentially costly.
13 Our hope is that this RFP will
14 encourage multiple waste reduction
15 companies to offer sound solutions
16 that provide environmentally
17 sustainable and fiscally
18 responsible proposals for the city
19 to consider.

20 Having a multitude of
21 options allows the city to
22 negotiate rates and get the best
23 value or bang for our buck.
24 Therefore, we respectfully request

1 that Bill No. 250768 be held in
2 committee while the city undergoes
3 the RFP process and until
4 additional data is available for
5 options to manage and dispose of
6 the city's municipal waste. We are
7 happy to respond to questions at
8 this time.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

10 Thank you so much. I have a couple
11 questions and then I'll pass it off
12 to committee members.

13 First, I want to talk
14 about the timing of the objective
15 sort of study that you asked for.
16 Mayor Roots stated that he sent a
17 letter to the administration asking
18 Philadelphia to stop sending our
19 trash to the incinerator in Chester
20 a year ago.

21 And then, Director
22 Williams, during a budget hearing
23 you told this body on the record
24 that the city was interested in

1 phasing out incineration. And so,
2 I want to understand more about
3 when we officially contracted with
4 the firm that's looking into
5 alternatives to incineration. Was
6 it a year ago when we received the
7 letter from Chester leadership and
8 Mayor Roots and when you first
9 expressed support on record or was
10 it after the Stop Trashing our Air
11 Act was introduced?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: So,
13 Councilwoman, thank you for your
14 question. We contract with MSW
15 Consultants on a number of issues
16 related to waste issues in the city
17 of Philadelphia. More
18 specifically, we look at waste
19 composition studies. We certainly
20 look at volumes of material and
21 we're always looking for ways to
22 improve our current system.

23 For this specific
24 recommendation for the Stop

1 Trashing Our Air Act, as per our
2 meetings together we discussed
3 having them a part of this RFP
4 process to make this a new
5 provision so that we can consider
6 environmental impacts as a real
7 reason for where we send our trash
8 and waste and not a side item.

9 So specifically, it was
10 a result of a constant means
11 previous to the announcement of the
12 bill and most recently reaffirmed
13 in the RFP when we are releasing it
14 this fall.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

16 So we asked them to do this
17 objective study prior to the
18 introduction of the legislation,
19 just so I'm correct?

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, that
21 is what we discussed together in
22 terms of making that a part of this
23 RFP. That is correct.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you. We just heard from
2 Chester City and County's
3 leadership basically begging us to
4 stop incinerating trash in Chester,
5 talking at great length about the
6 disparate health impacts that
7 Chester experiences because of the
8 incinerator and other toxic uses.

9 Can you please let me
10 know if you think they're being
11 subjective in their data or is that
12 not enough data to help us make
13 this decision?

14 MR. WILLIAMS: No, I
15 think they're very passionate and
16 very serious about the impacts that
17 it has. As from the City of
18 Philadelphia's perspective, I think
19 that we need to look at all options
20 where we're making this very
21 critical decision about how we
22 manage our waste in the future.
23 And I agree that there is some
24 health concerns. There's health

1 concerns with landfills as well.

2 We should be looking at
3 all options and using this process
4 as a way to be able to direct our
5 waste accordingly. There's ways
6 for us to benefit if we manage our
7 trash correctly. And I mentioned,
8 I know you were with me in the city
9 of Chicago at the GPLEX Summit this
10 year. I was very impressed to see
11 an anaerobic digestive system,
12 something that I've been pushing
13 for the past 10 years.

14 We put a provision in
15 our previous contract that allows
16 us to actually pilot that material.
17 We want to do the same things here.
18 So I think it's important that we
19 look at all options. We certainly
20 need to consider the health effects
21 on Chester, but we also need to
22 look at what the total amount of
23 our waste stream is doing to all
24 impacts of our environment.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

2 This is a pretty long term
3 contract, correct? So if we enter
4 into this contract again at the end
5 of the fiscal year, we would not
6 have an opportunity to take this up
7 again until after the Parker
8 administration; is that correct?

9 MR. WILLIAMS: So the
10 previous contracts are four years
11 plus three 1-year renewable
12 options. To say that we can do a
13 one year and then evaluate it again
14 may be very challenging. Not to
15 say it can't be done, but
16 administratively it may be
17 challenging and very costly,
18 because waste companies look for
19 fixed rates for long-term
20 stability.

21 Ultimately, the longer
22 the term of the contract, the more
23 stable and the more valuable --
24 lower the rate is. If we do a one

1 year, ultimately we would have to
2 repeat that entire process again.
3 So traditionally, Councilmember, to
4 answer your question I was just
5 trying to explain kind of the
6 background. It could be a longer
7 term, it could be a shorter term,
8 but there are costs that go into
9 each.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 The likely scenario based on what
12 we've kind of done for some time,
13 is that this would be a long-term
14 contract that would not come up
15 again until after the Parker
16 administration; am I correct in
17 that?

18 MR. WILLIAMS: We could
19 revisit it after four years if we
20 do the traditional in our current
21 term. So four years are
22 guaranteed. Then you have three
23 1-year renewable option years. And
24 at that point, you could open it up

1 again for review, which will be
2 within the Parker's administration.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

4 I'm not sure how we're counting,
5 but thank you for that answer. Do
6 you push back on the data that came
7 out of the Delaware County Health
8 Study that not only talked about
9 the environmental impacts, which
10 you discuss in your testimony, but
11 it talked about the health impacts,
12 which are pretty severe.

13 And it said that if you
14 isolate incineration just in terms
15 of health impacts, that it's
16 actually 23 times worse,
17 particularly for people living
18 near, to and around the
19 incinerator. Do you debate that
20 data?

21 MR. WILLIAMS: No, I
22 don't debate it. But when you have
23 conflicting information, when you
24 hear the United States

1 Environmental Protection Agency say
2 that waste to energy is preferred
3 more than landfills, then you have
4 a conflict between what is being
5 reported versus what you're reading
6 in other areas. And then you hear
7 from where our data that we have,
8 we have to go on the emissions
9 report from the EPA that says
10 Chester's waste to energy facility
11 Reworld violating these emission
12 standards, are they above or
13 exceeded, do they put controls in
14 place to ensure. So we have a
15 conflict of information.

16 I think that we all
17 deserve to be able to look at and
18 evaluate and it needs to take time
19 to say this is where we are, this
20 is the best decision for both
21 residents of the city of
22 Philadelphia, the environment and
23 so forth and give us the viable
24 options we need to make those

1 decisions.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 Thank you. I understand and
4 definitely heard in your testimony
5 the conflicting arguments about the
6 environmental impacts of
7 landfilling and incineration, even
8 though I also understand that the
9 EPA is revisiting that guidance.
10 I'm asking about the health
11 impacts. Do you have information
12 that disputes what we've heard
13 about the health impacts between
14 incineration and landfill?

15 MR. WILLIAMS: I do not,
16 Councilmember. I do not have any
17 information or data that disputes
18 that. I do know that again it is
19 an environmental health issue why
20 we agree that we need to be looking
21 at this practice as well as other
22 practices as well. So we do agree
23 with that situation as well.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you.

2 Councilmember Ahmad.

3 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

4 Thank you, Madam Chair.

5 Thank you to all of you
6 for being here and for your
7 testimony. I wanted to find out --
8 I saw somewhere and I can't
9 remember where -- 10% off our waste
10 is handled through recycling. Was
11 that a number somebody gave in
12 testimony?

13 MR. WILLIAMS: It's
14 about 14%. But that's very close,
15 Councilmember.

16 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
17 there's a lot of anecdotal evidence
18 that recycling does not happen in
19 Philadelphia, I am told. And so, I
20 faithfully separate my trash every
21 Thursday when I put it out. And I
22 want to know, because people keep
23 asking me this, do we actually
24 recycle?

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes,
2 Philadelphia recycles. And that is
3 not just a comment. That is our
4 focus, our campaign. We want
5 people to know that recycling is
6 definitely a practice that we
7 support 100%. We need to do more
8 of it. And I'm going to turn it
9 over to the Commissioner to talk
10 about what she has done to help
11 promote it. When you talk about
12 the hierarchy of waste and what
13 practices are more preferable, we
14 need to reduce, reuse and recycle
15 more. And that's how we get to
16 zero waste as opposed to either of
17 the practices that we're talking
18 about. But I'm going to let
19 Commissioner Shipman also comment
20 on the programs that we run here in
21 the city.

22 COMMISSIONER JACOBS

23 SHIPMAN: So, Dr. Ahmad, your
24 question is spot on in that

1 nationally that is the thinking
2 that the municipalities just are
3 not recycling. In the city of
4 Philadelphia, we are trying to
5 dispel those myths and that
6 thinking. A lot of that branched
7 out or expanded over COVID where
8 you had municipalities that
9 completely stopped recycling
10 because they just didn't have the
11 capacity to do so.

12 Philadelphia, we kept
13 going, even though we were
14 struggling to get things up on
15 time, but we never shut down our
16 recycling program. And so, what
17 we're doing is rebuilding that. We
18 did launch a new campaign that
19 starts, you know, it's getting us
20 back to the basics. It was just
21 answering that question of, yes,
22 Philadelphia recycles.

23 And then the next phase
24 of that is getting the messaging

1 back into homes of what we do to
2 recycle your plastics 215, your
3 newspapers, your cardboard, your
4 aluminum cans. We just had a
5 presentation by some students at
6 Shawmont School when we opened our
7 North -- we did the ribbon-cutting
8 by Northwest Transfer Station that
9 talked about the significance of
10 just recycling one aluminum can and
11 what that does in terms of energy
12 at a home. And so, yes, we are on
13 pace and I encourage you to keep on
14 recycling and those of you up there
15 keep recycling.

16 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
17 Well, thank you for that because I
18 can definitely message that out. I
19 do think that we do need a
20 campaign, along with all that has
21 been mentioned of ways to dispose
22 our waste. One is to reduce our
23 waste, to reduce packaged products.

24 And just the way that

1 the country actually has adopted
2 recycling, it has dipped a little,
3 but it can come back up, we know we
4 can change hearts and minds in
5 terms of doing that. So I would
6 love our city to actually start the
7 campaign about making us look at
8 our habits and what we are doing
9 and have projections as to if we
10 really are doing a good job there,
11 how much can we reduce off our
12 solid waste, which would alleviate
13 all the problems we're talking
14 about.

15 I know that's not going
16 to be 100%, but we need to --

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: We
19 need to make that a priority and
20 make our city, our residents in
21 Philadelphia, be aware of it,
22 right. The second question I have
23 is, in terms of how you're looking
24 at putting -- how we're going to

1 get rid of our solid waste, with
2 what the data, the conflicting data
3 that you saw, the question I have
4 for the human health risk and
5 mobile source quality assessment
6 that was given to us by Reworld, is
7 the question did they do
8 longitudinal studies -- and I'll
9 ask them this as well but you've
10 been looking at these conflicting
11 reports -- longitudinal studies,
12 because they've been there a while
13 now, they've been doing this for a
14 while, to look at the health
15 outcomes based on the variables
16 we're looking at that give us a
17 poor outcome? I just wondered if
18 you guys are looking specifically
19 at that when you said they're
20 conflicting reports. That doesn't
21 mean one is right. Just
22 conflict --

23 MR. WILLIAMS: That is
24 correct.

1 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: You
2 say something. I say something
3 else. That doesn't mean -- I can
4 be talking out of my behind when I
5 say that, right. So I just want to
6 be understood clearly that actual
7 data gathering of real people in
8 Chester city over a period of time
9 to look at before and after or over
10 a time period, has that been done
11 in order to be able to say that
12 there are negligible health
13 outcomes?

14 MR. WILLIAMS: That's a
15 great question. And not to my
16 knowledge, Councilmember. I have
17 not seen that data or report or
18 information presented to me in the
19 City of Philadelphia in our
20 capacity in overseeing sanitation
21 and operations. I did not.

22 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
23 just wanted to put that on the
24 record in case I have to step out.

1 MR. WILLIAMS:

2 Absolutely.

3 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I

4 want to thank both of you. You're

5 doing a yeoman's job to do what

6 you're doing in Philadelphia.

7 You're up against a lot, and this

8 includes the illegal dumpers and

9 all of them who are all

10 contributing to this solid waste.

11 And we need to make sure every

12 perpetrator of illegal dumping is

13 held accountable because that is

14 causing problems in our total solid

15 waste process.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: But

18 I do urge you to take this

19 seriously, not just because my

20 colleague has put out this bill,

21 but because it's the right thing to

22 do, and she did the right thing

23 also, that we deeply look at

24 alternatives. We actually take it

1 seriously, including we use things
2 like goats to clear up, you know,
3 places of overvegetation so we
4 don't have to use electric or other
5 methods to clean certain places.
6 So that can be minus there and the
7 plus that goes into the actual
8 solid waste and we can even out
9 better.

10 So I want you to use
11 every available method that you
12 have at your disposal to make it a
13 cleaner environment and give our
14 communities environmental justice.
15 Thank you very much.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: You have
17 our commitment, Councilmember.
18 Thank you for your kind words.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
21 Thank you so much.

22 Councilmember Driscoll
23 and then Councilmember Nicolas
24 O'Rourke. And I want to

1 acknowledge the presence of
2 Councilmember Mark Squilla. Thanks
3 for joining us.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

7 Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 Thank you, Director
9 Williams. Thank you, Commissioner.

10 This is a very important topic that
11 really needs to be heard by
12 everybody, the administration
13 Council, our citizens, but I do
14 have concerns about time frames and
15 contracting and impacts.

16 Commissioner, you said
17 12%. What's that in real dollars?

18 COMMISSIONER JACOBS

19 SHIPMAN: 6.5 million a year.

20 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

21 6.5. And what is the impact of Act
22 101, our procurement process, in
23 general and specifically?

24 COMMISSIONER JACOBS

1 SHIPMAN: So Act 101 lays out what
2 we're required to do as a
3 municipality with regards to those
4 waste contracts. And the parts
5 that's specific to the contracts
6 are just making sure that the
7 process that we lay out is both
8 fair, is open and it's competitive,
9 so that's the primary portion of
10 it. But then also guaranteeing
11 that both the municipality and then
12 the other entities around the city
13 that utilize the different disposal
14 mechanisms that we can guarantee
15 there's a 10-year period for those
16 uses.

17 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
18 And last question, Madam Chair, is
19 weighing the environmental issues,
20 in your opinion, either of you can
21 answer this or both if you'd like,
22 is the RFP timeline delay prudent?

23 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm
24 sorry. Could you repeat that,

1 Councilmember? I apologize. I
2 didn't hear --

3 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

4 Weighing the environmental impacts
5 and issues, in your opinion, is the
6 delay in the procurement is it
7 prudent?

8 MR. WILLIAMS: I think
9 there is significant time for us to
10 capture the data and provide a
11 recommendation. I think the
12 proposals that we submit have to be
13 reviewed by City Council in the
14 end. So I do think that there is
15 enough time in this contract for us
16 to gather critical data and
17 information to come up with a
18 proposal that we can present to
19 have a contract in place by July 1,
20 2026. That is our goal.

21 If it extends beyond
22 that, then we would have to try to
23 extend the existing contract if
24 we're looking for more data and

1 information, and that will come at
2 a cost and a premium like the
3 Commissioner just mentioned as
4 well.

5 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

6 You feel the same way,
7 Commissioner?

8 COMMISSIONER JACOBS

9 SHIPMAN: Exactly. The Director
10 stated it very well.

11 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

12 Thank you.

13 Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

15 Thank you, Councilmember.

16 Minority Whip Nicolas
17 O'Rourke.

18 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

19 Thank you, Madam Chair.

20 Director, Commissioner,
21 blessings to y'all. Thank y'all
22 for being here. I was listening to
23 my colleague Dr. Ahmad get us
24 together about how much trash we're

1 putting out. I'm feeling kind of
2 convicted about how much trash my
3 little household puts out every
4 single week. We got a new baby
5 though, so we got some, you know,
6 an upkick in it.

7 But it really does have
8 me thinking about what we need to
9 be doing, not just as a government
10 but as a city as it relates to this
11 matter and trying to resolve this
12 issue. There's a little gospel
13 song that says, Sweep around your
14 own front door before you try to
15 sweep around mine. And I know
16 there's a lot that could be said
17 about what other cities,
18 municipalities are doing, but I do
19 think it matters about what we're
20 doing.

21 I'm going to be quick.
22 I did have a couple of questions,
23 but I want to be tight in the
24 interest of time. Commissioner

1 Shipman, you shared that -- and I
2 want to acknowledge that you
3 mentioned what the actual challenge
4 for you was and the city has
5 limited -- the challenge for us is
6 the city has limited options for
7 disposal. And although we're
8 exploring a variety of future
9 disposal options, what we currently
10 do have at our disposal as
11 alternatives to WTE is expected to
12 reach its capacity in less than 10
13 years. So I just want to
14 acknowledge that I hear that and
15 that it sounds like a genuine
16 concern.

17 You shared that
18 eliminating a disposable option
19 would potentially yield an
20 estimated 12% increase in costs,
21 right. Do you have an estimated
22 total cost increase per year or per
23 ton?

24 COMMISSIONER JACOBS

1 SHIPMAN: No, we would not be able
2 to tell you per ton because that
3 would be a part of the process that
4 is offered during the RFP where
5 they would, you know, tell it -- we
6 go back and forth. We negotiate
7 the tonnage. But that 6.5 million
8 is based off of what the cost would
9 be to put additional trucks out,
10 factors in a bit of also the
11 additional cost if we were
12 utilizing one process over the
13 other as well. So it's an
14 estimate, and we estimate that to
15 be about 12% higher than what we're
16 currently paying.

17 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
18 Okay. Let me get this other one
19 and I'll give up my time, Madam
20 Chair.

21 You said that also --
22 this stuck out to me -- that
23 eliminating incineration would add
24 to the carbon footprint by placing

1 more trucks on roadways for longer
2 periods of time. Another thing
3 that stood out to me, because I
4 think that's something certainly to
5 be considered, I know I'm concerned
6 about just cars on the road in
7 general and adding more to that,
8 which is the reason why we fight so
9 hard for SEPTA and transit, but my
10 understanding, as verified by the
11 Delaware County's Lifecycle
12 Assessment and other studies, is
13 that incineration itself is far
14 more harmful for health and climate
15 than trucking actually would be.
16 Could you further explain or
17 clarify or just speak more to that
18 statement?

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.
20 I'm going to ask, Councilmember,
21 Scott McGrath is our Director of
22 Environmental Services. He
23 supports the evaluation effort of
24 the amount of trucks that we use to

1 take it from transfer stations to
2 location and distance travel. I
3 think that's where it goes in
4 comparison. But Scott has more
5 details as it relates to how longer
6 it takes us to collect trash from a
7 given area in the city of
8 Philadelphia to its final
9 destination.

10 MR. McGRATH: Scott
11 McGrath, Environmental Planning
12 Director of Sanitation Department.
13 What we would be doing is
14 evaluating both equally in terms of
15 the options, looking at the
16 transportation and operational
17 costs associated with all the
18 alternatives as well as the impacts
19 at the disposal sites.

20 So we would be adding
21 both pieces together to see what
22 the cumulative impact of both would
23 be. So we're not saying that
24 transportation costs are greater

1 impact than, say, waste energy
2 costs, but we're looking at the
3 cumulative effect of both options
4 on both landfill disposal options
5 as well as the waste disposal
6 options. So we'd be looking at the
7 whole system as a whole.

8 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

9 Well, thank you for that
10 clarification. I don't want to eat
11 up all the time. I would engage
12 with you a little bit more around
13 that point if we did have the time.
14 But I do think it's important that
15 we consider exactly what you said,
16 exactly the whole total impact.
17 And I know that we are, you know,
18 the idea that we need to be
19 shifting over this to try to figure
20 out what's the best balance, but I
21 think we do need to take seriously
22 what Delaware County authorities
23 are telling us as it relates to the
24 actual impact that we will be

1 having by making certain shifts.

2 That having been said, again thank
3 you all for your time. Appreciate
4 your service to the city.

5 Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

7 Thank you, Councilmember. Thank
8 you so much.

9 Thank you to all of you
10 for being here today, for your
11 testimony and for your work.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank
13 you, Councilmember. Thank you for
14 an opportunity to testify. Thank
15 you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
17 Oh, sorry. Councilmember Squilla.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
19 Thank you so much. And I just have
20 a quick question, because a lot of
21 it has been said but I wanted to
22 piggyback off of Councilmember
23 Ahmad. And what we do -- as we
24 look at this challenge as an

1 opportunity, nobody supports
2 polluting our air, poisoning our
3 air or poisoning our land, right.
4 It's like choosing which one you
5 want to do more than the other.

6 We know that it's a
7 challenge, right, incinerating.
8 We're never going to incinerate our
9 way out of waste. Landfills, we
10 know are getting fully met, with
11 Conrail looking at transfer
12 stations because we might have to
13 transfer this trash further and
14 further away. And yes, there's
15 cost associated.

16 But the opportunity
17 comes in as what do we do and look
18 at what other municipalities are
19 doing around the country in
20 recycling waste, not only plastic
21 bottles, cardboards, but food,
22 right. We talk about food
23 insecurities and how --

24 (Applause.)

1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

2 Thank you. How do we look at that?

3 We have businesses and I think it's

4 California, somewhere in California

5 has SB, I forget the number of it,

6 1383 or whatever, where restaurants

7 and places that get rid of food are

8 not allowed to dump it, right.

9 They have to then reuse the food,

10 send it to a processing plant, use

11 it for cooked materials, whether

12 it's for animals or for shelters or

13 for school children. These are

14 good quality foods that we end up

15 throwing out.

16 So by reducing the

17 waste, we can then eliminate the

18 need for these incineration

19 stations for our landfills.

20 Chicago has a plan of using waste

21 for energy, right. This

22 opportunity I think that's here

23 today brings us a different

24 opportunity on reducing those

1 levels, looking outside the box at
2 other ways to send our waste or to
3 reuse our waste in a way so it
4 doesn't go to a landfill, it
5 doesn't go to an incinerator.

6 And I want to thank
7 Councilmember Gauthier for bringing
8 this up, because I think we need to
9 really look at all these things.
10 And right now we don't have a good
11 solution. And what solution is
12 best, land or air. But I think
13 it'll help us and guide us to bring
14 us to those alternatives that we
15 could do as far as recycling,
16 reuses of food, and we're talking
17 about the food insecurities out
18 there. We need to be able to look
19 at things that we have where we
20 really waste a lot of stuff that
21 can be reused.

22 And I think just look at
23 other municipalities and using our
24 city government to have -- and I

1 know you do some of these things,
2 but how do we then project this
3 into the future to become bigger
4 and therefore having this
5 conversation say, well, we're not
6 going to send our materials to be
7 incinerated in Chester, we're not
8 going to send it to a landfill
9 that's being filled and then we
10 would have to worry about five
11 years from now, we're going to send
12 it out to another state and another
13 area to pollute that area. So are
14 there ways that you're looking at
15 now and what we can do in the
16 future --

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Yeah. In
18 my testimony, I stated one of the
19 ways that we are looking very
20 seriously at is anaerobic
21 digestion. I think that is the key
22 for us to talk exactly what you
23 just mentioned, Councilmember, and
24 thank you for bringing that up.

1 30% of our waste stream
2 right now is material that we can
3 compost and turn into that energy
4 in a safe manner that doesn't
5 impact our surrounding communities.
6 And we need to look at ways in
7 which we can continue to invest in
8 that. That is the only true way to
9 get to zero waste. We can increase
10 recycling and we can look at
11 repackaging and how material is
12 ultimately produced and how
13 products and the life expectancy
14 getting rid of single-use plastics,
15 so many other ways in which we can
16 here in the city of Philadelphia
17 eliminate the need to rely on
18 either wasted energy facilities or
19 landfills for a safer environment.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
21 Well, I think some of that may have
22 to be legislated. I mean, there's
23 ways to do it through a carrot to
24 incentivize it, maybe it's a tax

1 incentive for businesses who
2 participate, right. There's a cost
3 associated with -- people pay to
4 get trash disposed of, right.

5 Really they could reduce their
6 trash, their disposing and pay for
7 us to reuse their food and other
8 things.

9 So I think legislation-
10 wise, whether it's a carrot or a
11 stick or both, I think we need to
12 look at whatever those
13 recommendations are. And I know we
14 have plenty of colleagues on
15 Council to be able to do that. And
16 sometimes carrots don't always work
17 and you may need a stick to say,
18 you can no longer get rid of your
19 food waste, you can't throw your
20 food waste out, right, we can reuse
21 this, what you're considering food
22 waste, not stuff people eat on a
23 platter, but stuff that's left over
24 that we just dispose of.

1 So I'd be happy to work
2 with you, and I know we have
3 colleagues who will be happy to
4 work with you to do that. And I
5 think the true opportunity here is
6 to really look at how do we get the
7 zero waste in a way that's
8 meaningful, but also that we could
9 then have data showing the
10 reduction of our waste and not
11 spending money on just sending it
12 different places.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. WILLIAMS: Agree.
15 Thank you, sir. And thank you,
16 Councilmember Gauthier. Really
17 appreciate it. Look forward to
18 working with you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
20 Thank you. Likewise.

21 Will the Clerk please
22 call the next panel of witnesses.

23 THE CLERK: Third panel
24 includes Kim Bradford, Reworld

1 Environmental Affairs; and Brian
2 Stormwind, AECOM, AVP of
3 Environmental Affairs.

4 (Witnesses approached
5 witness table.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

7 Good afternoon and thank you for
8 joining us today. Please state
9 your name for the record and
10 proceed with your testimony.

11 MS. BRADFORD: Good
12 afternoon. My name is Kim
13 Bradford. Good afternoon, Madam
14 Chairwoman Gauthier and the
15 Environmental Committee. My name
16 is Kim Bradford and I'm a proud
17 resident of the City of
18 Philadelphia, District 4 for eight
19 years, residing in the Wynnewood
20 neighborhood.

21 I am a Pennsylvania
22 environmental manager for Reworld.
23 The Chester facility is a
24 sustainable waste solution facility

1 that helps a wide range of
2 municipal, commercial and
3 industrial clients recover, recycle
4 and reimagine waste.

5 Reworld also operates
6 sustainable waste management
7 facilities throughout the United
8 States and Canada, co-located in
9 urban, suburban and rural areas,
10 converting waste into renewable
11 energy. In fact, countries such as
12 Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden
13 have enacted legislation to
14 minimize the use of landfills as a
15 waste management option. These
16 countries, the United Nations and
17 the US EPA all recognize waste to
18 energy as a superior to landfills,
19 which is the third largest source
20 of methane, the climate-damaging
21 greenhouse gas.

22 Like nearly all waste
23 management processes, the Chester
24 facility does have air emissions.

1 I work with them on a daily basis.
2 Unlike landfills, these emissions
3 are strictly regulated in
4 accordance with permits issued by
5 PADEP.

6 It is my job to work
7 closely with the facility to ensure
8 that the facility complies with
9 these requirements. Our emissions
10 are up to 99% below permitted
11 levels and we're proud of that.
12 Our share of emissions within the
13 County's air shed is very small.
14 We represent just 1% of the fine
15 particulate emissions in the county
16 and one-tenth of 1% of the VOC
17 emissions. The primary sources of
18 pollutions are mobile, such as cars
19 and trucks.

20 A human risk assessment
21 completed by an independent study
22 this year in accordance with EPA
23 protocols demonstrate that the
24 operations of our facility is

1 protective of human health.
2 Consistent with our environmental
3 justice policy, Reworld seeks to
4 engage in meaningful, two-way
5 communication with the communities
6 in which we operate.

7 As a result of this
8 commitment, we embarked on four
9 major projects to enhance our
10 operations. We have provided
11 access to our realtime emissions
12 monitoring data. I'm pleased to
13 share with you that the emission
14 data for the Chester facility is
15 available online as we speak.

16 In 2021, we launched a
17 voluntary testing program to reduce
18 our NOx emissions. During this
19 testing period, the project
20 transitioned from voluntary to
21 required in order to comply with
22 the PADEP RACT III rule. The
23 permanent system has been
24 operational since December 30, 2024

1 and has achieved a 21% NOx
2 reduction in our emissions.

3 In 2024, Reworld began
4 replacing our steam vent mufflers
5 with advanced noise silencers
6 designed to significantly reduce
7 noise impact beyond the facility's
8 fence line. This project is
9 scheduled for completion in 2026.

10 This year, we conducted
11 a carbon injection trial test to
12 explore the potential for further
13 reducing our mercury emissions.

14 The testing program was very
15 successful, demonstrating that the
16 facility could achieve a 99%
17 reduction in mercury emissions.

18 Next year we will initiate
19 regulatory permitting process for
20 this project, with construction and
21 system commissioning scheduled to
22 begin in 2027. And I'm proud to
23 say that I've worked on three of
24 these projects and I'm very proud

1 of the accomplishments of these
2 projects.

3 We continue to welcome
4 constructive two-way communication
5 with community stakeholders. We
6 use this feedback to improve our
7 outreach efforts and environmental
8 performance. This is not just a
9 commitment for today. It is a
10 commitment for the future. Thank
11 you for scheduling this hearing on
12 today and for giving us an
13 opportunity to present our
14 accomplishments to the committee.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
16 Thank you for being here today and
17 for your testimony.

18 Please state your name
19 for the record and proceed with
20 your testimony.

21 MR. STORMWIND: My name
22 is Brian Stormwind and I work with
23 AECOM. So I'm here to speak about
24 the studies that have been

1 mentioned. AECOM conducted a
2 health risk assessment, a multi-
3 pathway health risk assessment and
4 air quality modeling studies to
5 assess the potential health impacts
6 to the residents of Chester and
7 surrounding areas.

8 The studies were
9 conducted with EPA Environmental
10 Protection Agency models and
11 methods. The health risk
12 assessment is a comprehensive
13 analysis designed to evaluate
14 facilities, air emissions and
15 exposure to residents. The studies
16 are based on actual emissions of
17 metals like arsenic, mercury,
18 chromium and organic compounds like
19 dioxins and PAHs, based on recent
20 years of stack-testing data.

21 The health risk
22 assessment is a multi-pathway
23 assessment, which means that there
24 are various exposure routes. We

1 have direct through inhalation and
2 also -- by the way, the inhalation
3 is based on the maximum modeled air
4 concentrations. We also assess
5 ingestion, which is an indirect
6 pathway of the compounds that enter
7 the food chain through deposition
8 onto soils, plant, water bodies and
9 associated watersheds.

10 The deposition comes
11 from a model and the metals and the
12 contaminants on the surface of
13 particles get into the soil, onto
14 water bodies, and water shed is
15 kind of funneled into water bodies.
16 Then the analysis also includes the
17 ingestion of fish and residential
18 backyard gardens where you have
19 some produce, but we also -- so
20 that's for residential exposure.

21 We also looked at a
22 subsistence farm, which turns out
23 to be kind of like a hypothetical
24 location because there's no real

1 close beef and dairy farm, but the
2 farm was assumed to have produce,
3 beef and dairy. And all of these
4 analyses focused where the maximum
5 air concentrations and deposition
6 rates were modeled.

7 There was a number of
8 conservative assumptions that were
9 incorporated, as required by EPA in
10 these analyses, including assumed
11 ingestion rates of locally-caught
12 fish and consumption of produce and
13 animal products. And that aspect
14 of the model is meant to be
15 comprehensive. We're not just
16 looking at the air that you
17 breathe. But what if you had a
18 backyard garden or what if you did
19 a lot of fishing and you ate a lot
20 of fish. And the ingestion rates
21 of those things are prescribed by
22 EPA.

23 Ultimately, the results
24 of the analysis were evaluated

1 relative to EPA thresholds that
2 they deem acceptable for facilities
3 such as this, the air emissions
4 associated with facilities like
5 these for cancer and noncancer
6 effects.

7 We also did an
8 additional analysis for fine
9 particulate matter, where we looked
10 at the air emissions from trucks
11 associated with the operation of
12 the facility as well as the
13 facility stack. So the cancer and
14 the noncancer thresholds, they're a
15 little bit different than what we
16 did with the particulate emissions.
17 The EPA also provides national
18 ambient air quality standards. The
19 particulate standards are -- well,
20 the NACS were developed by EPA to
21 be protective of the most sensitive
22 populations, including children,
23 the elderly and individuals with
24 respiratory conditions like asthma.

1 So the results of the
2 health risk assessment show that
3 the facility, as you can see in the
4 report, were below the thresholds
5 for cancer, acceptable cancer rate,
6 as well as noncancer. And the
7 truck emissions analysis, and again
8 the focus was particulate matter,
9 and the stack results were well
10 below the national ambient air
11 quality standards, which were again
12 designed to be protective of public
13 health. And that concludes my
14 testimony.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

16 Thank you so much. I have a couple
17 questions and then I'll pass it off
18 to the Committee members.

19 The Department of
20 Environmental Protection issued
21 Reworld a violation for not
22 monitoring radioactive waste at
23 your incinerator. Why were you not
24 monitoring? And what assurances do

1 we have that you will operate in
2 good faith moving forward since
3 you've proven in the past that you
4 would ignore important safety
5 measures like this one?

6 And then as a follow-up,
7 the EPA reports that your
8 incinerator operates in violation
9 of the Clean Air Act. Please
10 explain specifically why you
11 received this violation and what
12 steps you're taking to correct it.

13 MS. BRADFORD: Okay. So
14 first, as it pertains to the
15 radioactive waste, that was
16 associated with -- actually we
17 monitor every single truck across
18 our scales. They go through our
19 radiation detectors. The radiation
20 detector will alarm and it will
21 then activate our radiation
22 protocol.

23 The truck was put into
24 isolation where we were in the

1 process of identifying the isotope
2 and also to get -- to get a permit
3 for it to go off site. The truck
4 calling company trespassed on the
5 premises in the middle of the night
6 and they obtained the truck
7 without -- without our prior
8 authorization, because we would
9 never, one, process radioactive
10 waste above our thresholds and,
11 two, we would never allow for
12 someone to then active -- once the
13 truck is -- once our protocol is
14 activated, it's our duty to then,
15 you know, figure out the correct
16 deposition for it.

17 So they came onto the
18 facility in the middle of the
19 night, apprehended the truck
20 without our knowledge. We actually
21 self-reported it in accordance with
22 our plan. Our plan requires that
23 in the event, if such thing
24 happens, that we have to self-

1 report and that is what we did.
2 And as a result of self-reporting,
3 the truck driver coming --
4 trespassing our facility in the
5 middle of the night, we were issued
6 the notice of violation for that
7 event.

8 So the waste was not --
9 the waste was identi -- the truck
10 was identified as having
11 radioactive waste in it. We were
12 in the process of identifying what
13 it was and they apprehended their
14 truck without it. That's what
15 happened.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
17 I understand that you self-
18 reported. But what are you
19 doing -- I mean, it's your job to
20 monitor what's happening on your
21 property. What are you doing to
22 ensure that that doesn't happen
23 again?

24 MS. BRADFORD:

1 Basically, our security guard has
2 been notified that he needs to make
3 sure that they're letting us know
4 when activities like that happens,
5 ensuring that all of our security
6 policies and procedures are in
7 place to ensure that no one can
8 trespass on our facility after
9 hours as well.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 I see. Can you talk about the
12 Clean Air Act violation from the
13 EPA? What did you receive the
14 violation for? And what steps are
15 you taking to correct it?

16 MS. BRADFORD: Well, the
17 EPA ECHO facts database is renewed
18 every single quarter. So even when
19 we submit our quarterly emissions
20 report -- for example, if we miss
21 one hour of monitoring for CO or
22 opacity, a downtime hour because of
23 doing a calibration on the
24 instruments, that will give us an

1 HPV status.

2 So sometimes the
3 database is a little misleading in
4 terms of the way that it reports
5 out our statuses, but then that is
6 also seen as a violation because we
7 are held to a higher standard than
8 most industries for emissions
9 requiring. But at times,
10 unfortunately with an opacity
11 monitor or with our carbon monoxide
12 monitors, you may result in losing
13 one hour of data in a quarter, and
14 then that toggles you into HPV
15 status.

16 We did have a situation
17 where we did have a loss of power
18 even at the facility, where we once
19 again self-reported and we received
20 a notice of violation for that. Any
21 time we have an event like that, we
22 will do corrective action. We do
23 RCA or root cause analysis, where
24 we then develop corrective actions.

1 One of the corrective actions that
2 we have for that is to review our
3 logic for our electrical
4 distribution systems to ensure that
5 those types of events would never
6 happen again.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Thank you. And then lastly, do you
9 know what materials are burned in
10 your incinerator? Do you, for
11 example, sort out toxic materials
12 like heavy metals, plastic and
13 rubber?

14 What percentage of
15 trucks do you inspect given sort of
16 the earlier violation we talked
17 about? Do you do open bag
18 inspections? And do you monitor in
19 realtime for heavy metals like
20 lead, mercury and cadmium?

21 MS. BRADFORD: Okay. So
22 a couple of questions there. So we
23 do have inspectors on our floor
24 that are inspecting our waste. So

1 we do, do about roughly 5% to 10%
2 of inspections on a daily basis.
3 We also have floor attendants that
4 are reviewing and looking at the
5 waste and seeing if there's
6 anything that should not be
7 processed. They are trained on
8 what type of waste should be
9 processed versus not pulling out
10 what we call nonprocessables. And
11 that's their job and
12 responsibility, to pull those
13 things out, heavy tree stumps,
14 white goods, etc, that could make
15 their way, electronic goods that
16 can make it into the waste stream.

17 So we do have floor
18 attendants who are visually
19 surveilling. We have people in
20 front-end loaders who are pushing
21 the waste that can visually surveil
22 the waste as well. We only burn
23 municipal solid waste and also a
24 few nonhazardous residual waste

1 codes per the Pennsylvania solid
2 waste regulations. So we do not
3 burn any hazardous waste. We are
4 not permitted to burn hazardous
5 waste. We would never burn -- we
6 would never even want to permit to
7 burn hazardous waste.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

9 One last question for clarity. So
10 I was at the incinerator. They're
11 literally mounds and heaps of
12 garbage there. Are you saying that
13 it's an eyeball inspection and that
14 you inspect between 5 to 10% of
15 what's come in or are you saying
16 something different?

17 MS. BRADFORD: Well, we
18 write down approximately 5 to 10%
19 of the loads coming through the
20 day. But then you also have people
21 who, like I said, are floor
22 attendants who are working the
23 floor that they can also visually
24 see and detect. We do not tear

1 open bags because we also have an
2 anti-scavenging policy and then we
3 don't want people to come in
4 contact with the waste in that
5 manner. But if they do, they have
6 been trained to see if there is
7 something that should not be, that
8 we should be processing, that they
9 are trained to pull those things
10 out.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Thank you.

13 Councilmember Ahmad.

14 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

15 Thank you, Madam Chair.

16 Quick question about the
17 radioactive waste that was found.
18 Was that part of your solid waste,
19 you're collecting radioactive
20 waste?

21 MS. BRADFORD: No,
22 ma'am. Most radioactive waste that
23 we -- the isotopes that we get hit
24 for our medical isotopes, lutetium

1 177, iodine, iodine 131 and
2 technetium. It is a medical
3 isotope that is used to treat
4 thyroid cancer.

5 So people are -- it is
6 communicated to people when they're
7 going through treatment that you
8 need to isolate your ways. But as
9 someone who also gets involved in
10 the radiation isolate, I tend to
11 empathize with them in the fact
12 that sometimes even though they may
13 get those instructions at the
14 hospital or at the point of
15 treatment, maybe they don't -- it's
16 just like I'm concerned about my
17 cancer, you know, I'm throwing this
18 away.

19 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

20 Yes, I hear you.

21 MS. BRADFORD: So we do
22 have detectors at our scale house
23 to detect for that. And then we
24 isolate those trucks and we have

1 personnel who will then, you know,
2 go out there, confirm what the
3 isotope is and we will then get,
4 you know, we have to contact the
5 DEP to get a request to ship to
6 then ship that truck to the
7 landfill.

8 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
9 you don't decontaminate on your
10 premises. You just ship out any
11 radioisotopic waste to someplace
12 else, right?

13 MS. BRADFORD: Yes -- we
14 can also pull it out. So if we
15 need to -- because maybe we have a
16 customer that does not have a
17 contract to go to the landfill,
18 then we'll bring in our health
19 physicist to then, you know,
20 basically it's a very meticulous
21 process. I've been out there and
22 I've seen it. And you follow the
23 isotope and then you pilfer through
24 it, identify it, and then we put it

1 in our radiation holding area until
2 it drops to the appropriate
3 threshold where it can be
4 processed.

5 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So,
6 you know, those half lives are very
7 long. It takes a long time for
8 these isotopes to decay. So I just
9 wondered how much safety is used to
10 make sure these are segregated,
11 these are properly protected so
12 personnel who work there are not
13 exposed to this? And it was very
14 worrisome to hear that a truck
15 came. You were not able to fully
16 decontaminate and they left.

17 And it seems to me very
18 lax procedures, even if you're
19 getting a tiny amount of
20 radioisotopes coming in with
21 regular waste. I think you need to
22 have much better protocol for this
23 to happen. This cannot happen.
24 This cannot happen.

1 (Applause.)

2 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

3 Second question is for you, sir.

4 You mentioned the health impacts.

5 Help me understand, is this done on

6 actual data from real people or is

7 this a modeling done based on the

8 EPA report of what is acceptable or

9 not?

10 MR. STORMWIND: This is

11 a modeling study using actual

12 facility operational data. The

13 assessment itself is a hypothetical

14 conservative screening analysis

15 that is based on the results of the

16 model that tells us what the air

17 concentrations are at the maximum

18 location within the residential

19 area, and the deposition rates that

20 again contribute to compounds in

21 produce.

22 And so, it's that aspect

23 of it. It's hypothetical and there

24 are ingestion rates that are

1 assumed. For example --

2 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Let
3 me stop you. I understand what
4 you're going to tell me. I just
5 wanted you to say it, this is
6 hypothetical and we actually don't
7 have real data from real people
8 around us because the EPA takes
9 data from all over. I am really
10 concerned because you've been in
11 this facility, has had this
12 contract for a long time and over
13 all these years, we have not been
14 able to do an actual assessment of
15 a health impact on actual people
16 living in Chester city who have
17 been exposed to this.

18 So this hypothetical
19 model, the data you give to me is
20 not very useful because it is not
21 on actual people --

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. STORMWIND: Yes,
24 this study was following EPA

1 guidelines to determine what is the
2 potential impacts to the residents
3 in the area.

4 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
5 understand what you're saying.

6 MR. STORMWIND: I mean,
7 it's designed to be very
8 conservative.

9 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
10 Yeah, I understand what you're
11 saying. I'm saying it's not
12 acceptable because you have perfect
13 opportunity with all the profits
14 you're making to have a really
15 detailed study of a real impact on
16 the real people in the real city of
17 Chester, so that we don't have to
18 depend on simulations.

19 So, yeah, I mean what
20 you're doing, but to me these
21 numbers mean nothing. It just
22 means that you were able to get a
23 model that did this and said that.
24 And yet we don't know what's

1 happening in realtime with real
2 people. So whether you get a
3 contract here or not, you're going
4 to have contracts elsewhere. I
5 behoove you to use all these
6 profits you're making to actually
7 invest in longitudinal studies of
8 real human beings who are around
9 your facilities so that we can have
10 real data and you can present that.
11 Hopefully, it will show what you're
12 showing. But I am highly
13 suspicious it would match this
14 data.

15 MR. STORMWIND: Well, I
16 do want to add that this assessment
17 is meant to be very conservative.
18 It assumes some is exposed to the
19 air concentrations and deposition
20 rates for a lifetime of 70 years,
21 whether they live in Chester their
22 whole lifetime or not. There's a
23 lot of conservative assumptions.
24 But no, it's not an epidemiological

1 analysis.

2 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And
3 that's exactly what we need to do,
4 for Reworld to do a real
5 epidemiological study, a
6 longitudinal one to be able to then
7 say without any doubt that you are
8 not impacting negatively the health
9 of people surrounding your
10 facility.

11 MR. STORMWIND: I do
12 want to add also that it is the
13 objective following -- EPA designed
14 these studies to evaluate
15 facilities that have not been built
16 yet, right, so that they can
17 determine whether or not the air
18 pollution control design on the
19 facility is enough to protect the
20 public health. We applied that
21 here, and it shows very --

22 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
23 think EPA is correct in prospective
24 when something has not been built.

1 But you've been built and you've
2 been operating for many years so
3 there is no --

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: --
6 excuse not to have real data. I'll
7 just tell you that.

8 MR. STORMWIND: I'm just
9 saying that the analysis and the
10 methodologies were designed so that
11 facilities would be built
12 protective of human health and we
13 applied that model to a facility
14 that's an actual operation. We
15 have actual data that we put into
16 that analysis and it does indeed
17 show that the cancer risk
18 associated with this facility is
19 below the acceptable range that EPA
20 has said.

21 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I'm
22 sorry. All based on a simulation,
23 not on real data. So I don't think
24 you can give us this data and tell

1 us definitively that this is what
2 is actually happening in the
3 community, because you did not do
4 that study. So that's what I would
5 recommend, you actually do
6 longitudinal studies which you have
7 the time and the resources to do
8 and not tell us to swallow this,
9 because this is something done by
10 EPA prospectively overall taking
11 averages. That doesn't work here.
12 This is not real data for us to
13 consider. Thank you very much.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. STORMWIND: Did use
16 actual operational data for the
17 facility. Did use that -- we did
18 do actual emissions from the
19 facility for this analysis too.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
21 Thank you. Thank you,
22 Dr. Councilmember Nina Ahmad. And
23 we thank you all for your testimony
24 today. Thanks for being here.

1 Will the Clerk please
2 call -- well, first I'd like to
3 make an announcement. We're going
4 to have to, for the sake of time so
5 that we don't lose quorum, we're
6 going to have to make up some time.
7 So I'm going to switch up the last
8 panel and then we're going to
9 recess for a bit and then we'll
10 come back to public comment.

11 THE CLERK: The fourth
12 and final panel will consist of
13 Ms. Zulene Mayfield, Founder of
14 Chester Residents Concerned for
15 Quality Living; Dr. Cheryl
16 Bettigole, Professor of Clinical of
17 Family Medicine and Community
18 Health; and Mike Ewall, Founder of
19 Energy Justice Network.

20 (Witnesses approached
21 witness table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
23 Please state your name for the
24 record and proceed with your

1 testimony.

2 MR. EWALL: Good
3 afternoon, Chair Gauthier, Vice-
4 Chair Bass, who is not here at the
5 moment, and members of the
6 Committee. My name is Mike Ewall,
7 and I'm the founder and executive
8 director of a national organization
9 called Energy Justice Network based
10 here in Philadelphia.

11 I've been working on
12 waste and energy issues for 35
13 years now, and I've put more years
14 in working for environmental
15 justice in Chester than anyone out
16 there and counting over 30 years at
17 this point. Communities across the
18 country seek me out to stop dirty
19 energy and waste facilities planned
20 for their communities and to
21 transition away from such
22 facilities toward clean energy and
23 zero waste solutions.

24 I've developed the zero

1 waste hierarchy, which is used as
2 an international standard, and am a
3 resident of Northeast Philadelphia
4 and have been leading the work on
5 this bill since four years ago.

6 This is an initiative that's been
7 entirely generated by Philadelphia
8 residents.

9 I'm going to skip over
10 most of my testimony because I know
11 you're running tight on time and
12 just jump to some other key points.
13 One of them is that alternatives
14 already exist. We are not in the
15 situation that Delaware County is
16 in where they have financial and
17 infrastructure barriers to moving
18 away as quickly as they would like
19 to.

20 We can do this in the
21 time that we have, which is about
22 seven months. We already have a
23 major waste company with adequate
24 transfer station capacity and

1 landfill capacity with two transfer
2 stations in the city already and
3 enough capacity at them as well as
4 two landfills with enough capacity
5 to take that one-third of the waste
6 that is currently going to an
7 incinerator contract.

8 We're talking about 37%
9 of our trash going to incineration,
10 so that's not everything. It's not
11 even half. And we know that longer
12 term, not even just a few years
13 even and we could do this if we
14 wanted to, that adopting two of the
15 main building blocks of the zero
16 waste system can quickly and easily
17 reduce the city's waste stream by
18 more than that 37%, enabling us to
19 dial back the waste that we do have
20 to landfill by more than we
21 currently burn and saving money in
22 the process.

23 Now, we're sympathetic
24 to the administration's concerns

1 about timing and cost. We
2 understand their desire to have
3 this bill held in committee.
4 However, we would suggest that this
5 committee move the bill forward to
6 show its sincerity on this issue,
7 but that the bill doesn't
8 necessarily have to be voted on by
9 the full Council until all the bids
10 come in for the RFP. So you
11 understand how that could be
12 challenging, if it happens that
13 way.

14 And finally, while we
15 support these concerns, I must say
16 I'm disappointed to see some of the
17 same arguments put forward by
18 Carlton Williams today as he did in
19 this chamber in 2019, when this was
20 last a controversy before you,
21 citing EPA waste hierarchy to
22 justify placing incineration above
23 landfilling, even though the
24 science-based zero waste hierarchy

1 does the opposite.

2 Having written the most
3 extensive response to the
4 Sanitation Department's waste
5 management request for information
6 this past summer, among my 54 pages
7 of comments, I pointed out to this
8 department that EPA admitted to us
9 almost four years ago that the
10 agency has zero documentation to
11 back up the placement of
12 incineration above landfilling in
13 its hierarchy.

14 They told us this high
15 level staff at EPA who work in this
16 field, who are the waste division
17 told us they have zero
18 documentation. So for the city to
19 be resting on that and saying, oh,
20 well, EPA says so because they know
21 best when they can't back it up,
22 and that's why since July 2022,
23 because I asked them, the EPA, the
24 federal agency, put a disclaimer

1 under the hierarchy everywhere it
2 shows up saying they are revisiting
3 it, and it's a slow process, and
4 maybe on hiatus for four years, but
5 this is something that they're
6 working to revise because they
7 recognize that is not backed up by
8 science as it should be. Thank
9 you.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Thank you so much.

13 Dr. Bettigole, thank you
14 for all of your service to the
15 city. Thank you for being here
16 today. Please state your name for
17 the record and proceed with your
18 testimony.

19 DR. BETTIGOLE: So my
20 name is Dr. Cheryl Bettigole. Good
21 afternoon, Chair Gauthier and
22 members of the Committee on the
23 Environment, and thank you for the
24 opportunity to give testimony on

1 Bill 250768. As you know, I'm
2 Dr. Cheryl Bettigole, Professor of
3 Clinical Family Medicine and
4 Community Health at the University
5 of Pennsylvania, Perelman School of
6 Medicine.

7 The opinions that I
8 express in this testimony are my
9 own and don't necessarily represent
10 those of Penn. As we've heard
11 today, more than 1 child in 5 in
12 the city of Philadelphia has been
13 diagnosed with asthma. That's
14 nearly three times the national
15 rate. Asthma is one of the top
16 reasons for missed days of school
17 in our city and that makes it
18 harder for our kids to learn and
19 for parents to go to work and
20 support their families.

21 So as we're thinking
22 about the economics of this, that
23 really has to play a part. The
24 burden of asthma falls unequally on

1 our children, with the
2 hospitalization rate for Black
3 children in the city nearly six
4 times as high as that for White
5 children, and the last available
6 data that high rate of asthma,
7 along with the other impacts that
8 we've heard about today on the
9 health of city residents from air
10 pollution, it's not the result of
11 any single source children who grow
12 up in our city, particularly those
13 whose families do not make a living
14 wage, which is more than half of
15 our city, face the combined impact
16 of multiple exposures.

17 Many live in lower-
18 quality housing or indoor air
19 pollutants may trigger their asthma
20 as well as impacting the breathing
21 of older adults. Tobacco use tends
22 to be higher in these same
23 neighborhoods, although the city
24 has made welcome strides in

1 decreasing its use in recent years
2 thanks to the actions of this City
3 Council.

4 And sadly, too many of
5 our children face barriers
6 increasing in the current
7 environment to accessing the health
8 care and medications they need to
9 control their asthma and to prevent
10 exacerbations. As City Council
11 considers this bill, it may seem
12 like a decision to support its
13 passage is solely a vote to protect
14 the residents, especially the
15 children of Chester city and
16 county, which we absolutely should
17 do. But when we send our trash to
18 Chester for incineration, we are
19 also putting our own residents at
20 risk in the warmer months of the
21 year.

22 In the warmer months of
23 the year, winds in Philadelphia
24 generally shift to blow from the

1 southwest rather than from the
2 northwest, bringing toxins from
3 trash incinerated in Chester to the
4 air we breathe in Philadelphia.
5 And I think we saw over the last
6 few years just how far air
7 pollution can go when the wildfires
8 in Canada made our air orange in
9 2022.

10 At a public meeting of
11 the Air Pollution Control Board,
12 members of the public pointed out
13 that in Philadelphia facilities
14 that emit large amounts of toxic
15 pollution tend to be built in the
16 same neighborhoods. They asked why
17 the board could not require
18 consideration of the air pollution
19 and cancer risk in the specific
20 neighborhood of a facility applying
21 for a permit. Rather than just
22 considering the facility's risk on
23 its own, the board agreed,
24 ultimately passing a regulation

1 that requires consideration of
2 cumulative cancer and noncancer
3 risk in the neighborhoods of
4 proposed facilities for large
5 emitters before their permits can
6 be approved.

7 They made that decision
8 because they recognized the need to
9 address the disproportionate health
10 risks in some city neighborhoods
11 created by a historical legacy of
12 injustice. Council has an
13 opportunity to take another step
14 down that road today, passing this
15 bill and saying no to the
16 incineration of Philadelphia's
17 trash in the largest incineration
18 facility in the country that is
19 more than 30 years old and to the
20 toxic air pollutants it produces.

21 Council has the chance
22 to move our city and our neighbors
23 in Chester toward environmental
24 justice and the healthier future we

1 all want for our city's residents
2 and our neighbors. Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

5 Thank you so much. Thank you to
6 both of you for your work and for
7 being here today. Thank you.

8 THE CLERK: Ms. Zulene
9 Mayfield, Founder of Chester
10 Residents Concerned for Quality
11 Living.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
13 Last, but certainly not least,
14 thank you so much for being here,
15 Ms. Zulene. Thank you for all
16 of --

17 MS. MAYFIELD: It's a
18 long day.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
20 -- your work. It really is.

21 MS. MAYFIELD: It's a
22 long day. Hello, my neighbors. I
23 am going to -- I provided written
24 testimony. I just want to get

1 through this and we're going to go
2 over a couple of things.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

4 Sorry. Can you state your name for
5 the record and speak into the mic.

6 MS. MAYFIELD: My name
7 is Zulene Mayfield. I'm the
8 Chairperson and a Founding member
9 of Chester Residents Concerned for
10 Quality Living or CRCQL. CRCQL was
11 formed in 1992. We were formed
12 after the incinerator went live and
13 began burning. Initially, we
14 formed on everything that you could
15 see, hear and smell. We were not
16 knowledgeable about the pollution
17 and/or the disruption and disease
18 and cancers that they would bring
19 to our community.

20 You've heard from other
21 panelists on their perspective
22 about Covanta Reworld Incinerator.
23 We have experienced firsthand the
24 immediate impact of this

1 incinerator that it has had on our
2 community. As people that live in
3 Chester, we are environmentally
4 assaulted every day, from the
5 thousands of pounds of pollutants
6 being emitted by Covanta Reworld.

7 We've had to become
8 scientists, engineers, enforcers,
9 health advocates and regulatory
10 agents, all while trying to live.
11 Only we can tell our story. Only
12 us. Covanta recently commissioned
13 a report on the health of residents
14 of Chester. They have referenced
15 that so-called report today. AECOM
16 authored this report, and it should
17 be noted that this company has a
18 dubious history. They've been a
19 source of fraudulent billing,
20 racial discrimination, hiring
21 discrimination, lawsuits and
22 settlements resulting in millions
23 of dollars being paid out. Covanta
24 Reworld should be ashamed to even

1 tout that as a report.

2 In 1995, the
3 Environmental Protection Agency at
4 the behest of this organization,
5 commissioned an environmental risk
6 assessment study. They have all of
7 the data. They showed the cancer
8 rates for our community. They gave
9 us the projections. It was a
10 trailblazing report that had never
11 been done before.

12 Every report after that
13 has mirrored their conclusions at
14 that time. Basically, our
15 community is sick, our children
16 have asthma and we are burying
17 members of our community, burying
18 them every day, as Dr. Motley said.
19 We are getting that phone call that
20 somebody else is sick or they need
21 transportation, they need food.

22 Covanta Reworld emits
23 cadmium, chromium, mercury,
24 dioxins, arsenic, all known cancer-

1 causing carcinogens. Yet Covanta
2 Reworld wants this committee to
3 believe that the cancer rates in
4 Chester are not significant,
5 although data shows Chester
6 residents suffer from rates of
7 liver and bio cancer, 91% more than
8 the national average.

9 Laryngeal cancer, 84%
10 the national rate. Hodgkin's
11 lymphoma, 78%, greater than the
12 national rate. Pancreatic cancer,
13 50% greater than the national rate.
14 The list goes on and on and on.
15 Asthma rates for our children are
16 alarming, as are the rates for the
17 children of Philadelphia.

18 For some reason, people
19 think that when the pollution hits
20 the fence line, it stops. It don't
21 stop there. What is done to us in
22 Chester, what is contributing to
23 environmental genocide, what is
24 allowed to happen to us, you do

1 also unto yourself. It don't stop
2 there. There's no Wakanda shield.

3 The city of Chester also
4 falls within the 90 percentile for
5 ozone. Meaning, it is in the top
6 10% for the state of Pennsylvania
7 for ground level ozone exposures
8 known to cause respiratory
9 distress, among other health
10 issues.

11 Delaware County Solid
12 Waste and Delaware County Council
13 just approved the Zero Waste Plan.
14 If you are looking for a model on
15 how to do the financial assessment,
16 a lifecycle analysis and a
17 comparative study, that is a great
18 start, an absolute fantastic start.
19 I think it is a trailblazing study.
20 And what they have determined,
21 incineration is far more polluting
22 than landfilling. It's apples and
23 oranges.

24 And I would pose a

1 question to the people in this
2 committee today, everybody's
3 looking financially and what does
4 this do and how do you do that. I
5 would just say the logic is, if
6 Delaware County hasn't done
7 anything, why should we do the
8 right thing.

9 There's never -- well,
10 I'm not going to do it because they
11 haven't done it. There's always a
12 time to do the right thing.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. MAYFIELD: Always.
15 And it should not be dependent upon
16 somebody else. You are
17 Philadelphia, Philadelphia. We are
18 the oldest city in Pennsylvania,
19 but you are the oldest government.
20 And what can Philadelphia not do?
21 Come on now. Y'all home of the
22 Eagles. Come on. You know, that
23 alarmed me a little bit.

24 So Covanta Reworld will

1 tell this committee that they're
2 good community partners. They gave
3 out food to 250 families. Well, we
4 have 12,000 households in Chester,
5 so it's minimal, a crumb of a crumb
6 of a crumb. They give out \$25,000
7 in scholarships. They give \$2,000
8 to this organization, blah, blah,
9 blah. They gave an AED to a
10 church, blah, blah, blah.

11 They will not talk about
12 the poisoning of an entire
13 community. They don't want to talk
14 about that. They do not want to
15 talk about the people in our
16 community that we are losing. They
17 won't say who pays the cost when a
18 child has an asthma attack and the
19 parent is at work and has to leave
20 work to get their child medical
21 attention for that child.

22 Covanta will also tell
23 you that their burning of trash
24 falls within the allowable limits

1 of their permit. The facility is
2 33 years old. Old technology,
3 outdated. There's no way to make
4 it safe. By their very nature,
5 they will never be safe. That's
6 why they have to be issued a permit
7 to pollute all of us. They are
8 issued a permit to pollute, not to
9 be good neighbors.

10 WTE, I'm so glad that
11 everybody today has called them the
12 incinerator because that's what
13 they are. It's nothing magical
14 about what they do. As a byproduct
15 of what they do, which is burn,
16 they generate electricity.

17 Now, the logic would be
18 since you have a city that's in a
19 poor community, well, hell, let's
20 give the electricity to the
21 community. That might actually
22 lift people out of poverty. That
23 would be a good community partner.

24 No. When they initially

1 started -- I don't know where the
2 electricity goes at now because I
3 don't have time to track it, but
4 they used to send it over to grid
5 Atlantic City and it serviced the
6 casinos there. So you see
7 everybody profits off of the
8 suffering of the community of
9 Chester.

10 You talked about
11 finances. I heard a person up here
12 say that you all pay \$78 a ton to
13 have trash disposed. Well, the
14 city of Chester receives \$2 per
15 ton, \$2. It was 2.50, but, you
16 know, our former mayor had some
17 type of secret deal with Covanta
18 and it was lowered from \$2.50 to
19 \$2. Nobody knows why, but the deal
20 was done in secrecy and away from
21 the residents. That's primarily
22 and particularly one of the reasons
23 why he's no longer the mayor.

24 You've heard about, you

1 know, we have 35,000 people. We
2 don't have one doctor in our city,
3 but people are telling us that we
4 should be grateful to have Reworld
5 in our community pumping out poison
6 because they have jobs. Well, I
7 don't know if it's 6, 13 or 20 now,
8 but those are the number of people
9 from Chester that work in Reworld
10 Covanta in the city of Chester.
11 They have 115 or so employees. So
12 it's not a good point.

13 All right. So I'm going
14 to hurry up so we can get out of
15 here. In July of this year, we
16 lost a member of CRCQL. His name
17 was Joshua Shockley. He was newly
18 married, had a pregnant wife. He
19 called me up and he told me he had
20 cancer. The day that his son was
21 born was the first day of his chemo
22 treatment. He died two weeks
23 before his one-year anniversary and
24 when his son was 5 months old.

1 Josh was 38 years of age.

2 We are not statistics.

3 We will not live in a kill zone for
4 other people's comfort. We matter
5 to us. Our children matter. Our
6 community matters. Because of
7 Josh's son and all the children,
8 Chester, Philadelphia, CRCQL will
9 continue to fight. Okay.

10 When Philly went through
11 the trash strike, one side of me I
12 felt very sad, but the dark side of
13 me is like, yes, now they can see
14 the crap that they send to my city
15 every single day. It manifested
16 itself in the smells, the odors,
17 the stinkiness that just ugh. But
18 that's what they send to us every
19 day. It was a real representation
20 of what we have to do, you know,
21 people make garbage, it goes out
22 and nobody thinks anything else
23 about it.

24 Oh, my God, get it out

1 of our house, it smells. There's
2 no cost associated, not real cost.
3 They don't see the suffering. We
4 buried a 38-year-old man and his
5 doctors determined because he had a
6 rare form of cancer -- I can't
7 pronounce it right now -- that it
8 was due to environmental factors.

9 In the year prior to
10 that, a year and three months prior
11 to that, his mother died from
12 cancer. I've lost my mother, my
13 brother, my 15-year-old sister,
14 cousins, and it's a situation of,
15 you know, I've testified at
16 hundreds of hearings like this
17 throughout the years, always with
18 the mindset what facts do I need to
19 cite.

20 What can I say that will
21 stick in their brains and what
22 story will pierce their hearts and
23 make them understand. This is more
24 than a financial decision. It's a

1 health and it's a moral decision
2 that needs to be made. Will you
3 commit and continue to become
4 complicit in environmental racism
5 because it's not environmental
6 justice?

7 There is no justice
8 right now. When we shut it down,
9 that will be justice. And we will
10 shut it down. We will shut it
11 down --

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
13 Thank you so much.

14 MS. MAYFIELD: -- they
15 asked earlier whether or not there
16 have been any conversations with
17 the trash from New York. Actually,
18 it comes from Queens and Manhattan.
19 We are in monthly conversations
20 with their advisory solid waste
21 advisory boards. I've already
22 given testimony. They have a
23 longer -- every contract is not set
24 in stone forever. You can break a

1 dang contract.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 Thank you so much. I'm going to
4 have to recess the hearing for a
5 few minutes.

6 Is there any last
7 comment that you would like to
8 give?

9 MS. MAYFIELD: Yes.

10 Just a couple. The city of --

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 I would ask that you summarize.

13 MS. MAYFIELD: Yeah.

14 The City of Philadelphia has the
15 ability to do whatever they want to
16 do. Okay. You have a product that
17 they want. You're not in a
18 position of weakness. You're in a
19 position of strength. I'm good.
20 I'm done.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

23 Thank you so much for everything.

24 MS. MAYFIELD: Thank you

1 all for having us. Remember your
2 morality and your heart and to do
3 the right thing. It's not
4 dependent upon money. Money is
5 gonna send a whole lot of people to
6 hell. Okay. Thank you so much.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 And to everyone here, we're going
9 to take a brief recess. 10 minutes
10 or so. Don't go anywhere. We'll
11 be back.

12 (Brief recess.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

14 Thank you so much everyone for your
15 patience. So this is what we're
16 going to do. We're going to vote.
17 We're going to close out -- well,
18 we're going to close out the
19 hearing. We're going to vote and
20 then we're going to go back to
21 public comment, because otherwise
22 I'm not going to be able to keep a
23 quorum. So thank you for your
24 patience and flexibility.

1 Seeing no one else here
2 to testify on this bill, this
3 concludes the public hearing. We
4 will now go into a public meeting
5 to consider the action to be taken
6 on the bill heard today.

7 Can the Clerk please
8 call the roll.

9 THE CLERK:
10 Councilmember Ahmad.

11 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
12 Present.

13 THE CLERK:
14 Councilmember Driscoll.

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
16 Present.

17 THE CLERK:
18 Councilmember Harrity.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
20 Present.

21 THE CLERK:
22 Councilmember O'Rourke.

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
24 Present.

1 THE CLERK: Vice-Chair

2 Bass.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

4 Present.

5 THE CLERK: Chair

6 Gauthier.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Present. All righty. The Chair
9 recognizes Vice-Chair Bass for a
10 motion on Bill No. 250768.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

12 Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 I move that Bill No.
14 250768 be reported from this
15 committee with a favorable
16 recommendation and further move
17 that the rules of Council be
18 suspended to permit first reading
19 of this bill at the next session of
20 Council.

21 (Duly seconded.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

23 It has been moved and properly
24 seconded that Bill No. 250768 be

1 reported from this committee with a
2 favorable recommendation and
3 further move that the rules of
4 Council be suspended to permit
5 first reading of this bill at the
6 next session of Council.

7 All those in favor of
8 the motion will signify by saying
9 aye.

10 (Aye.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Those opposed?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

15 The ayes have it and the motion
16 carries. Bill No. 250768 will be
17 reported from this committee with a
18 favorable recommendation with the
19 request that the rules of Council
20 be suspended to permit first
21 reading at the next session of
22 Council.

23 This concludes the
24 business of the Committee on the

1 Environment today. Thank you all
2 very much for your attendance. And
3 remember, we're going back to
4 public comment.

5 All righty. This is how
6 we're going to do public comment.
7 We have a few people that we had to
8 push into public comment. We're
9 going to give those folks two to
10 three minutes to give their
11 testimony. We're going to ask that
12 everyone else because there's a
13 very long list, give their comment
14 in a minute and a half, and we're
15 going to do our best to time it and
16 keep it moving along or we will be
17 here for many, many hours.

18 Okay. Will the Clerk
19 please call the first person for
20 public comment -- the first several
21 people, rather.

22 THE CLERK: B.P. Lyles,
23 Russell Zerbo, Dr. Lloyd Batson.

24 (Witnesses approached

1 witness table.)

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 State your name for the record and
4 proceed with your comment.

5 DR. BATSON: Lloyd

6 Batson. And good afternoon and
7 thank you for the opportunity to
8 testify. I'm Lloyd Batson and a
9 resident of the Francisville area
10 of Philadelphia and a professor of
11 Chemistry and Sustainability at
12 Widener University in Chester and I
13 am in strong support of the Stop
14 Trashing Our Air bill.

15 So thank you for your
16 support of the bill and moving it
17 on. Reworld Chester is the largest
18 and one of the oldest trash
19 incinerators in the country and
20 operates in high priority violation
21 of the Clean Air Act with frequent
22 citations from the Pennsylvania
23 DEP. Chester is a well-known
24 example of environmental racism

1 that is used as a case study at
2 colleges and universities across
3 the country.

4 This is because Chester
5 is littered with polluting
6 facilities, including a trash
7 incinerator, a sewage incinerator
8 and five chemical facilities along
9 the waterfront. Additionally,
10 Chester suffers from the pollution
11 of nearby oil refineries and power
12 plants. These cumulative and
13 additive impacts create serious air
14 quality issues in Chester.

15 The risk assessment that
16 we heard about and talked about
17 today by AECOM fails to account for
18 these multiple additive, cumulative
19 and synergistic impacts of multiple
20 pollutants from multiple
21 facilities. The study also emits
22 key emissions from a number of
23 pollutants that I won't list here
24 for sake of time.

1 Additionally, the risk
2 assessment utilizes emission data
3 from annual testing under optimal
4 operating conditions, and there are
5 numerous studies indicating that
6 annual emission measurements
7 significantly underestimate
8 chemical exposure to the
9 surrounding community.

10 We've heard from a
11 number of people that air
12 pollution, particularly ozone and
13 nitrogen oxides, are strongly
14 linked to asthma. I want to talk
15 about NOx a little bit. So nitrous
16 oxide, NOx, contributes to lung
17 tissue damage by reacting with
18 water and producing nitric acid,
19 nitrogen dioxide reacts with
20 sunlight to initiate a series of
21 chemical reactions that creates
22 ozone, which has been linked to
23 lung damage and asthma.

24 According to Reworld's

1 own stats, they produce 14% of
2 Delaware County's NOx emissions.
3 That's from one facility. 14% of
4 the total NOx in the county.
5 Chester's asthma rates we have
6 heard about, so I will not restate
7 those. And we've also heard the
8 pollution that is in Chester
9 affects the entire region.
10 Philadelphia is downwind from
11 Chester. So I'm also not going to
12 repeat all of that data. But we
13 must improve the air quality in
14 Chester and the Philadelphia region
15 and reduce the amount of NOx, ozone
16 and other pollutants in our ground
17 level air.

18 Philadelphia can do its
19 part by stopping the incineration
20 of our trash, and I certainly
21 prefer that Philadelphia work and
22 get to zero waste and there are
23 lots of ways to do that. And
24 incineration is not the answer to

1 the problem. Incineration, as
2 we've heard, is much more harmful
3 than landfilling, and that's
4 largely because, as was admitted,
5 they inspect 5% of the trash that
6 goes into the facility.

7 So we do not know what
8 is being burned. And because
9 Reworld lacks continuous monitoring
10 of many of their air pollution of
11 the chemicals of concern, we don't
12 know what's going into Chester's
13 air. Hence, we do not know what is
14 in Philadelphia's air.

15 We just do not know
16 that -- so I am very thankful for
17 you moving the bill on to City
18 Council. And I really hope that
19 City Council will stop sending
20 Philadelphia's trash to Chester.
21 Thank you very much.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
23 Thank you so much.

24 Will the Clerk call the

1 next several names. And when your
2 name is called, if you could come
3 up and sit at the table and in the
4 chairs adjacent to the table, we
5 can move this along.

6 THE CLERK: Nolan
7 Fontaine, Ms. Margaret Brown and BP
8 Lyles.

9 (Witnesses approached
10 witness table.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
12 Good afternoon to all of you or
13 evening maybe almost. Please state
14 your name for the record and
15 proceed with your comment.

16 DR. FONTAINE: Good
17 afternoon. My name is Dr. Nolan L.
18 Fontaine. Well, first off, I'd
19 like to thank you, Chair Gauthier.
20 I am a lifelong resident of
21 Chester, Pennsylvania. I'm a
22 veteran. And Chester, Pa of course
23 is the traditional land of the
24 Lenape and Okehaake.

1 I serve as the President
2 of Urban Indian Heritage Society,
3 but I am here today as a Chester
4 Resident Concerned for Quality of
5 Living member, a CRCQL member, to
6 advocate on how this pollutant
7 industry and the amount of trash
8 sent to 19013 has an often mortal
9 effect on our lungs and livelihood.

10 I currently serve as the
11 Youth Coordinator for Choices,
12 which is our youth environmental
13 leadership group, and unfortunately
14 working with those students, more
15 than half of my students have
16 either asthma or a COPD-related
17 element. However, our students are
18 resilient. They are academics,
19 artists, athletes, AI designers,
20 and full of alacrity. They also
21 have spearheaded a musical
22 resurgence around the issue of
23 trash and the ability to breathe
24 clean air in Chester.

1 Now, you have probably
2 seen the consultant reports that
3 Reworld has provided today from
4 multiple sources. I can assure
5 you, though, our students along
6 with the amount of Algebra
7 homework, a shoestring budget and
8 Tiktok accounts have single-
9 handedly taken back over the
10 narrative of green washing that has
11 been perpetuated by our nation's
12 largest trash incinerator.

13 Now, I do want to let
14 folks know I am absolutely
15 pro-worker. And I come from a
16 working class family, but let's
17 talk about why the working class in
18 our specific areas always get some
19 kind of weird, toxic roll-up-your-
20 sleeve jobs.

21 I'm tired of our people
22 getting the short end of the stick.
23 Philly, you're a very good
24 neighbor. You can change this with

1 this act. Resolution 250769, in
2 regards to our other neighbor,
3 Covanta Reworld Trash Incinerator,
4 who has went through more name
5 changes than the Kardashians
6 combined in the past myriad of
7 years. But believe me, Covanta
8 Reworld is much more odious in how
9 they exploit employees and our air
10 in our community.

11 Now, Chair, you brought
12 up a good point about the Clean Air
13 Act and it was only last month when
14 we were at the Delco Solid Waste
15 Authority where Covanta Reworld
16 touted that the average mercury
17 concentration was 2.3 milligrams
18 without activated carbon. They
19 plan on putting an active charcoal
20 filter on within the next 12
21 months. Yet, have they even
22 completed the procurement
23 paperwork. I don't know. Where's
24 the urgency? Where's the empathy?

1 I know where I can find it, but
2 (inaudible), you find it, let me
3 know.

4 Now, ask yourself is
5 that neighborly. Years ago, I
6 could recall when thermometer with
7 mercury could shut down a whole
8 school and prompt the top story
9 slot at 6ABC or Fox29 News. But
10 now, am I to believe that the
11 pollution propaganda of 2.3
12 milligrams of over 9 square miles
13 in Chester is okay. Please stop
14 playing in our face.

15 I'm here today to remind
16 Covanta Reworld that this is not a
17 corporatocracy. This is a
18 constitutional republic. You have
19 no power here to the committee, to
20 chair Gauthier, to Vice-Chair Bass,
21 to Council, to your constituents.
22 I applaud you for your efforts in
23 moving the Stop trashing Our Air
24 Act forward, for the livelihood of

1 our families and our next seven
2 generations.

3 In the spirit of
4 American Indian heritage month, I
5 asked the Council to remember the
6 Treaty of Shackamaxon extended by
7 one of my many tribes, the Lenape,
8 where we agreed we would live in
9 peace. But unfortunately, the
10 trash sector from Philly feeds the
11 environmental polluting war machine
12 and aids the lungs of the people of
13 Chester and Delaware County to
14 continue to be polluted.

15 In the words of
16 Ms. Zulene Mayfield, there is no
17 Wakanda shield over Chester that
18 prevents this particulate matter
19 from dissipating to every nook and
20 cranny of our region. We have no
21 (inaudible). We only have
22 vitality.

23 In closing -- I'll
24 shorten it. This is not a Roberta

1 Flack or Fugees (inaudible).
2 Please stop killing us softly. I
3 would like to thank this committee,
4 Vice-chair, Chair Gauthier,
5 Councilman O'Rourke, appreciate you
6 staying and hearing my testimony.
7 I look forward to seeing this
8 resolution come to the floor for
9 first reading.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Thank you so much. Please state
13 your name for the record and
14 proceed with your testimony.

15 MS. BROWN: My name is
16 Margaret Brown and I'm here on
17 behalf of Chester and the Chester
18 incinerator. This would be a great
19 day for all of us to be alive,
20 breathing clean, healthy, fresh
21 air. Chester residents want to do
22 this, to do just that, be alive, be
23 healthy.

24 I'm skipping so many

1 parts because it was already said
2 you have been to Chester and you
3 viewed our incinerator and the
4 neighborhood that it stands in.
5 The neighborhood did not used to
6 look like that. I lived there all
7 my life. We desperately want
8 Philadelphia not to renew the
9 contract.

10 Chester is a polluted
11 city of 35,000-plus citizens being
12 challenged in a war of economics,
13 fear, crime, greed, power and
14 systemic racism. We don't ask nor
15 do we want it to continue to be
16 this way. We don't merely want the
17 trash to go away. We want the
18 incinerator to go away.

19 Environmental justice
20 for good quality air is at its
21 worst. The atmosphere has caused
22 so many problems to the citizens
23 and those beyond. We deal with
24 cancer, our children, lung and

1 heart disease as adults, they have
2 the poorest asthma in the city and
3 the state of Pennsylvania.

4 It not only causes the
5 health issues, but it causes
6 learning disabilities. I live on a
7 street three blocks from the
8 incinerator. On a daily basis -- I
9 don't watch all the time -- I can
10 come out at 2:00 in the morning and
11 see trucks lined up from the
12 Commodore Barry Bridge all the way
13 down to the incinerator at times
14 when people get up for work and
15 things, they don't let traffic on
16 the side streets out. And this can
17 go on until 2 o'clock in the
18 afternoon.

19 On my block there are
20 only 14 livable homes, and that
21 means there's people in them.
22 People have died and homes stay
23 vacant and they just go away. Of
24 those 14 homes, 12 people have died

1 of cancer within the last seven to
2 eight years. My mother died of
3 cancer. I have an that aunt died
4 of cancer. I just had a cousin.
5 Today is the month that we
6 funeralized her. She went to the
7 doctor in March, find out she had
8 cancer and she's gone already. It
9 took her away. She had multiple
10 cancers with really no signs of it
11 until the end.

12 Chester truly deserves
13 better. Its future partially
14 depends on Philadelphia's decision
15 to say no to renewing your contact.
16 Breathing cancer-causing particles
17 can and does kill. I had my
18 phone -- a sound of the furnace
19 that burns the trash at night.
20 Time you lose sleep, because it's
21 that loud and it blinked off. But
22 you can hear, like I said, I'm just
23 three blocks away, the sound coming
24 through a closed window that I

1 thought for a long time there was
2 airplanes driving over my house.
3 That's how loud it is.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
5 Do you want some time to find it
6 and play it for us or was that not
7 what you were suggesting?

8 MS. BROWN: I'd have to
9 get it, which one it was.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
11 Once you wrap up your testimony, if
12 you would like to play that for us.

13 MS. BROWN: I can come
14 back and play it for you. The
15 asthma with children in school, I
16 worked in the Chester School
17 District for 38 years. We didn't
18 have nurses every day for children.
19 I myself had two children that grew
20 up with asthma. I know what it is.
21 The girl went to girls school and
22 the boy went to the boys school.
23 But I know what it is from
24 elementary school on to get a call

1 from a teacher or the principal
2 saying you have to bring their
3 medicine up.

4 It got to the point that
5 I found another alternative, both
6 schools were next to hospitals, one
7 Sacred Heart and one up in Darby.
8 The hospital up there next to the
9 schools, it was arranged that
10 instead of me running the medicine
11 there twice a week, they were
12 walked by another student with
13 their parents permission to take my
14 boy and my girl to the hospital to
15 get a shot or get a treatment for
16 asthma, because at times they would
17 forget there were inhalers.

18 Two grandchildren
19 attended the school I worked in.
20 They didn't know what it was for a
21 long time to go out to lunch
22 because they had to come and sit by
23 my desk and take nebulizer
24 treatments. My great-niece had a

1 baby last year. It was born. They
2 rushed it to ICU. Wasn't breathing
3 properly. They only did a 24-hour
4 watch to keep the baby. The baby
5 was sent home. She died seven days
6 later, lung problems.

7 So I'm begging, I know
8 the effects, what asthma does to
9 children, does to adults. So if
10 there's any way possible, I am
11 asking as part of a community to
12 stop the trash from coming to
13 Chester. I myself, I speak very
14 low because gradually my esophagus
15 is closing up on me. I have no
16 disease, but I've had all kinds of
17 tests, undetermined diagnosis. But
18 it's closing up and they can't find
19 why.

20 I had surgery last year,
21 abdominals, my hernia is shrinking,
22 while the intestines is shrinking,
23 which caused them to remove four
24 hernias in my body. And during all

1 the tests I had, they only found
2 two, until they opened me up and
3 saw two more.

4 So like I said, it
5 doesn't just hit lungs, liver,
6 pancreas. It will hit every single
7 organ in your body and not have a
8 cause. All right. Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 Thank you for being here and for
12 sharing your story. And you said
13 that you spoke softly, but I think
14 you spoke very loudly. Thank you.

15 Next, can you please
16 state your name for the record and
17 proceed with your testimony. And
18 before you go, B.P., I just want to
19 also thank you for being here.
20 Thank you for all of your work and
21 advocacy. We would not be here
22 without you. Please state your
23 name for the record and proceed.

24 MR. LYLES: Thank you.

1 I am B.P. Lyles. It's a pleasure
2 to be here before you, Chair
3 Gauthier. For those who have left,
4 the Vice-Chair, and especially good
5 to see you as well, Councilmember
6 O'Rourke, we thank you. I am
7 nearly a 50-year resident of the
8 city of Philadelphia. I have six
9 generations, at least, that is
10 either currently or formerly
11 connected to or residing in this
12 city.

13 I'm going to abbreviate
14 my testimony. So since you all
15 have moved this result, this act
16 forward, I just want to highlight a
17 couple of things that I think are
18 important to think about and to
19 understand. One thing is,
20 regardless of the name that's used
21 for an incinerator, it at the end
22 of the day and at the beginning of
23 the day is still an incinerator.
24 So whether the name that is used is

1 energy technology or thermo-
2 mechanical treatment facilities,
3 it's still an incinerator. Waste
4 to energy is still an incinerator.

5 What happens is that
6 it's confusing at times to
7 understand where some of the
8 pro-incinerator testimonies are
9 coming from. In fact, the
10 positions almost always come from
11 entities that take money from the
12 incinerator industry. That's
13 important for the City of
14 Philadelphia to know.

15 Well, this obviously is
16 the case for the industry itself,
17 especially Reworld. It is true for
18 scientists like Dr. Marco Castaldi
19 from the City College of New York.
20 He's long been a leading voice in
21 waste to energy technology. And as
22 a matter of fact, he's been a part
23 of the Waste to Energy Research and
24 Technology Council. This council

1 is a council that involves
2 academics and waste to energy
3 professionals, and their intention
4 is to further advance their own
5 calls. Their interest is in
6 promoting waste to energy processes
7 and technologies to assist
8 governments and industries and
9 universities and colleges in
10 implementing such technologies in
11 their specific environments. What
12 does that mean? What that means is
13 that we need to follow the money
14 and not just think about a name.

15 The other thing that I
16 want to share with you is that
17 AECOM was hired by Reworld to
18 conduct the study. And I am very
19 pleased with Dr. Ahmad and I'm very
20 grateful for her calling a spade a
21 spade and calling them on the fact
22 that what they said was nonsense.
23 I would call it foolishness.
24 There's another term. I am from

1 North Philly. There's another term
2 we would use, but I won't say that
3 here. Calling it what it is.

4 AECOM is an engineering company.

5 It is a construction company.

6 Their focus is building buildings.

7 Their focus is in promoting their
8 company. They are, as you heard
9 earlier, flimsy on scientific
10 research at best.

11 And it is imperative
12 that Philadelphia and that the
13 Councilmembers who will make this
14 large decision moving forward
15 understand that if we rely upon
16 industry that promotes itself and
17 that promotion is about tearing
18 down communities, then the
19 conversation on environmental
20 justice becomes moot. And so,
21 Philadelphia is a city that is one
22 currently, we're a mixed bag.

23 We have some -- we have
24 a lot of good. We have some bad.

1 We have some injustices here, but
2 we have a lot of great things going
3 on in the city. And I believe that
4 what we have an opportunity to do
5 here moving forward is to continue
6 educating the public, letting
7 Philadelphians know and understand
8 how important it is to develop very
9 healthy, very sound, proven ways
10 that are technologically reasonable
11 and ethically sound as it relates
12 to human life and health.

13 So I will never believe
14 that that includes incineration. I
15 will never believe that the
16 toxicity that's emitted from
17 incinerations are ever acceptable.
18 And I will never believe that we,
19 being a big brother or big sister
20 to our neighboring Chester, will
21 have a right or should be involved
22 in the continuation of health
23 disparity. I will also never
24 believe that Philadelphia should

1 continue its really unethical
2 practice of causing other people to
3 suffer harm, along with its own
4 citizens.

5 We are, as Councilman
6 Gauthier said, we are very high on
7 the list of asthma capital and
8 cancer capital in the country.
9 We're number four right now, and
10 the reality is we need to do
11 something in order for that to
12 change. So I'm grateful for that,
13 that you all have decided to move
14 this forward.

15 But in moving it even
16 further, it is imperative that we
17 know who we're listening to and why
18 they're speaking. And it is also
19 important for us to understand that
20 we have an obligation, not only to
21 this city but to the entire region.
22 Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you so much. Thanks to all
2 of you very much. Will the Clerk
3 please call the next several public
4 commenters. Please come up when
5 you hear your name called.

6 THE CLERK: Linnea Bond,
7 Mitch Cannon, Patty Smith.

8 (Witnesses approached
9 witness table.)

10 MS. BOND: I'm Linnea
11 Bond. I had a lot of things to say
12 today. I spent a lot of time
13 crafting it, but I think we all
14 want to go home and I just want to
15 tell you how much I really -- I
16 just want to tell you all how much
17 I really, really appreciate this
18 work, and we're going to stay with
19 you, pushing to move this all the
20 way through and the longer term
21 issues that we have around our
22 single stream and with our energy
23 and combustion as well.

24 (Applause.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

2 Thank you so much. We appreciate
3 Physicians for Social
4 Responsibility. Thank you very
5 much.

6 MR. CHANIN: I'll keep
7 it quick too. My name is Mitch
8 Chanin. I am the Chair of the
9 Climate Justice Caucus in Reclaim
10 Philly. I also wanted to speak on
11 behalf of another group that I work
12 with in Northeast Philly where I
13 live, which is 215 People's
14 Alliance. It's doing a lot of
15 organizing and around short-dumping
16 in the Lawncrest neighborhood in
17 the Northeast.

18 As Linnea said,
19 extremely excited that the bill has
20 advanced out of committee. I've
21 been paying attention to these
22 issues around incineration since I
23 was a kid.

24 When Councilmember Bass

1 was reminiscing about the 1980s, I
2 remember really well the very long
3 debate about whether or not to
4 build a so-called trash-to-steam
5 plant, which is an incinerator at
6 the Navy Yard. And really glad
7 that City Council led the way in
8 saying no to that proposal for a
9 polluting facility.

10 I remember that we had
11 incinerators here in Philly. We
12 had I think five or six of them.
13 One of our members at 215 People's
14 Alliance who was here earlier, he
15 had to leave Dallas. Herbert
16 worked as an operating engineer at
17 the incinerator at Spring Garden
18 and Delaware Avenue. So that was
19 an incinerator.

20 The Northwest Transfer
21 Station that was referenced several
22 times in Roxborough was an
23 incinerator. That was an
24 incinerator that led to a notorious

1 international incident when a barge
2 was sailing all over the world
3 trying to find a place to dump
4 thousands of tons of toxic ash from
5 a Philly incinerator, they dumped
6 it on Haiti. Then they had to go
7 back and retrieve it because it was
8 illegal to dump it there.

9 It led to an
10 international convention on the --
11 (Applause.)

12 MR. CHANIN: Yeah.
13 Anyway, this is just one more step
14 in a long, long, long, multi-decade
15 process of phasing out an extremely
16 toxic and damaging industry. And
17 one of the things I wanted to say
18 before the bill advanced out of
19 committee was, you know, we decided
20 not to burn trash in Philadelphia
21 because we didn't want the toxic
22 air pollution in our city. So why
23 would it be okay to send it to
24 Chester or somewhere else to be

1 burned when we decided not to do
2 it.

3 We had incinerators
4 here. They're gone. We decided
5 not to build them here. And just
6 the last thing I'll add, you know,
7 really hope this bill will be
8 approved by the full Council. I
9 was really disappointed,
10 underwhelmed, frustrated by the
11 testimony from the administration
12 earlier.

13 I don't understand why
14 another study is being conducted.
15 And I don't have any idea how they
16 expect to be making the decision
17 about what contracts to sign.
18 There was zero clarity about how
19 they would weigh different
20 criteria, how they're evaluating
21 evidence about the health risks,
22 the harm caused by incineration.

23 It just really brought
24 home to me hearing the testimonies

1 why it is so critical for City
2 Council to take leadership in this.
3 I just have no faith that absent
4 Council's leadership, the
5 administration will make the right
6 decision.

7 So I've never seen in
8 the decades I think since the '80s
9 when we decided not to build the
10 incinerator at the Navy Yard, this
11 kind of leadership from City
12 Council on this really critical
13 issue. And I'm just really
14 thrilled, really grateful, really
15 honored to be here today to see
16 this step taking place. So thank
17 you so much.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
20 Thank you so much.

21 Will the Clerk please
22 call the next several public
23 commenters.

24 THE CLERK: David Golic.

1 Alisa Shargorodsky, David Evans.

2 (Witnesses approached
3 witness table.)

4 MS. SHARGORODSKY: Thank
5 you. Thank you to this Council for
6 hearing these comments today. I'll
7 also try to keep this very brief.
8 My name is Alisa Shargorodsky, the
9 Director of ECHO Systems. We are a
10 local nonprofit that focuses on
11 waste reduction, specifically reuse
12 and circular economy movements here
13 in Philadelphia.

14 I would like to just
15 bring up the fact that our city
16 here in Philadelphia, there were
17 some comments brought up by
18 Councilmember Harrity about cost
19 and expense. And I just wanted to
20 touch on something, that our city
21 has no line item budgets that
22 contribute towards solid waste,
23 prevention strategies, unlike other
24 cities like San Francisco, New York

1 City that has done its due
2 diligence to ensure that the reuse
3 economy is bolstered so that we can
4 keep the volume out of our waste
5 stream. Philadelphia does not have
6 that focus.

7 So 40% of the waste that
8 we're generating is food packaging.
9 Our food sector is flooded with
10 toxic food packaging that is full
11 of PFAs and chemicals that also
12 cause cancer here amongst our
13 residents. So I would implore the
14 city to focus more on how we can
15 spend our dollars and cents to
16 prevent this waste, to lower the
17 volume of trash that we're
18 generating here in our city.

19 Our organization is
20 specifically focused on doing that.
21 We have an initiative called Philly
22 Unwrapped that is looking to
23 educate our local businesses. So
24 these types of things are really

1 critical, educating our businesses,
2 educating our residents on how we
3 can do solid waste prevention is
4 key. And I also have severe asthma
5 and have suffocated here.

6 Living here, being a
7 Philadelphia native, I depend on my
8 inhalers and my medications. And I
9 can tell you that this is no joke.
10 Not being able to breathe is no
11 joke. So I just hope that we can
12 move our city towards regenerative
13 and accountable, just systems.

14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

17 Thank you so much for your
18 testimony, your comment, but also
19 everything you contributed to this
20 project. We appreciate you.

21 Please state your name
22 for the record and proceed with
23 your comment.

24 MR. GOLIC: Dave Golic.

1 Thanks for the opportunity to
2 speak. I am the coordinator of a
3 diverse Chester-based community
4 group focused on addressing the
5 pollution from a filthy crematory
6 in our neighborhood, which is
7 another pollutant thing besides the
8 incinerator. We are a member group
9 of Delco Environmental Justice and
10 Energy Justice Network, and work
11 closely with B.P. and Mike for
12 those support groups.

13 I also serve as
14 President of the Chester Historical
15 Preservation Committee. When
16 learning about the utterly,
17 unregulated crematories are in our
18 state with no real pollution
19 monitoring requirements or
20 controls, it was eyeopening to find
21 how much large trash incinerators
22 are also poorly regulated.

23 Reworld talks about how
24 they have continuous monitoring of

1 their emissions, but chooses to
2 leave out the fact that this is
3 true only for four of the many
4 pollutants that they release into
5 our air. One of the pollutants
6 they release is large amounts of
7 hydrochloric acid.

8 This is one of the four
9 that they continuously monitor, and
10 their continuous monitoring data
11 shows that the actual emissions are
12 62% higher than what once per year.
13 Stack testing shows they get their
14 stack tested once a year. So it's
15 like I have a whole thing here, but
16 I'm not going to take the time, but
17 if you know they're going to test
18 your stack, then you're going to
19 make sure the stack, the stuff that
20 comes out, is within the limits,
21 and that's what Reworld does.

22 And they have charts
23 about the emissions, and they
24 include every single thing in

1 Delaware County, you know, the car
2 that drove down the street, the
3 whatever it is. They have all
4 that. So then they can say, well,
5 we only have 14% of the emissions,
6 which --

7 THE CLERK: Thank you so
8 much. Just wanted to give a quick
9 time note if you can. Thank you so
10 much for your testimony.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
12 Thank you to both of you.

13 Will the Clerk please
14 call the next several people for
15 public comment.

16 THE CLERK: Shari
17 Hirsch, Lois Williams, Tia Tynes.

18 (Witnesses approached
19 witness table.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
21 Good afternoon. It's so good to
22 hear from you today.

23 MS. HIRSCH: Hi.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Good afternoon. Good to see the
2 team. Please state your name for
3 the record and proceed with your
4 comment.

5 MS. HIRSCH: I'm Shari
6 Hirsch. I live in Philadelphia.
7 I'm a member of Trash Academy and a
8 participant in the Clean
9 Philadelphia Now Coalition. We
10 have a citywide campaign to end
11 illegal dumping in Philadelphia by
12 2028.

13 So thank you, everybody.
14 Thanks for staying. We feel that
15 if Philadelphia is serious about
16 becoming the cleanest and greenest
17 big city in America, we must end
18 incineration and ultimately
19 landfilling too and ensure that our
20 sanitation contracts include robust
21 waste diversion requirements. We
22 can't make one community clean by
23 trashing another.

24 The 4000 tires removed

1 from Tacony Creek Park were sent to
2 Covanta. Tires in a landfill is
3 not acceptable either, so we just
4 want to say that our current
5 recycling rate is at 13%. That's
6 far below the 22% we achieved
7 before COVID. Sanitation contracts
8 should include composting to divert
9 food waste, curbside textile
10 collection, programs that recover
11 construction and demolition
12 materials. That's 17% of our solid
13 waste in Philly. It's all being
14 incinerated or landfilled.

15 These measures will help
16 Philadelphia build a sustainable,
17 equitable approach to waste
18 management that makes all
19 communities healthier and stronger.
20 Cities like San Francisco and
21 Seattle have waste diversion rates
22 of 53% showing that it's possible.
23 So for clean and green to be
24 enduring, we urge you to actually

1 go beyond this Act which we're
2 thrilled about, and we have 100%
3 support.

4 We think there needs to
5 be an advisory group that develops
6 a policy on solid waste. So those
7 things that someone just so
8 beautifully articulated, Mitch or
9 someone did about what is the
10 quantity, what are they looking for
11 in those contracts. There is
12 Remark Glass, there is Rabbit
13 Recycling, there's Bennett Compost.
14 We have all kinds of amazing waste
15 diversion programs in Philadelphia.
16 We need to have small contracts to
17 not just giant contracts. We need
18 to be more progressive.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

21 Thank you. Thank you so much. And
22 I love that recommendation. I
23 would love to be a part of
24 establishing that committee and

1 moving that conversation forward.

2 Thank you for being here.

3 MS. HIRSCH: That's
4 fantastic.

5 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi. I'm
6 Lois Williams and I'm a concerned
7 citizen of Philadelphia and I'm
8 also a member of Trash Academy,
9 hence the vest. All of the
10 incinerators are in Black and Brown
11 neighborhoods. The people there
12 are sick with breathing problems
13 and are dying from the same. We
14 need the contractors to divert the
15 waste so we have a lot less waste.

16 And, yes, I have mine
17 right here. So of course, I want
18 this here to end. Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
20 Please state your name for the
21 record and proceed with your
22 comment.

23 MS. TYNES: Okay. Good
24 afternoon. My name is Tia Tynes.

1 I'm one of the Co-directors of
2 Trash Academy. Pretty much
3 everyone here has said something
4 that I would have said so I can
5 give you a remix? No, okay. Well,
6 can I still get oop-oo.

7 Well, actually, I'm just
8 going say this, I'm a person with
9 asthma as well and sometimes my
10 triggers are not very big. Okay.
11 It could be something like fresh
12 cut grass, and I love fresh cut
13 grass. I love cayenne pepper. I'm
14 very heavy-handed on it, but
15 sometimes it can give me an issue.

16 Chester is in the soup.
17 They got to deal with this every
18 day and it's not fair. And here in
19 Philly, we have a problem with
20 illegal dumping. Chester has a
21 problem with legal dumping. Okay.
22 Philadelphia is one of those legal
23 dumpers and we need to do something
24 about that. Because it's not fair

1 that a city that wants to be clean
2 and green and is doing all this
3 work on illegal dumping, that we're
4 legally dumping on them and putting
5 them in that soup, so we have to do
6 something about that.

7 As Shari said, it's
8 about waste diversion. As someone
9 else says, cutting our consumption.
10 And yeah, we just need to be
11 mindful of the things that we
12 consume and the after effects of
13 that. So there's my slight remix.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

16 Thank you so much, not just for
17 today but for all of your work.
18 Thank you.

19 Will the Clerk please
20 call the next several public
21 commenters.

22 THE CLERK: Vanessa
23 Zapata, David Gibson, Jada La
24 Fontaine.

1 (Witnesses approached
2 witness table.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

4 Good evening. Please state your
5 name for the record and proceed
6 with your comment.

7 MS. ZAPATA: Good
8 evening, Chair Gauthier and members
9 of the committee. My name is
10 Vanessa Zapata and I'm a staff
11 attorney at the organization
12 nonprofit Just Zero. Our
13 organization is an environmental
14 advocacy organization and we work
15 nationally to advance equitable and
16 community-centered zero waste
17 solutions.

18 We advocate for the end
19 of climate damaging and toxic waste
20 disposal practices because we
21 believe that all people deserve
22 zero toxic exposures. And I want
23 to thank you for the opportunity to
24 testify today in strong support of

1 Bill 250768, the Stop Trashing Our
2 Air Act.

3 You heard devastating
4 stories as well as clear data on
5 the adverse public health impacts
6 of incineration. So I won't
7 restate, but I do want to add that
8 incineration also releases PFAS,
9 which is increasingly an area of
10 concern.

11 Additionally, the toxics
12 that are emitted not only pollute
13 our air, but they do infiltrate our
14 soils and water as well. This bill
15 is a critical step to real zero
16 waste solutions. It closes the
17 door on costly, toxic and outdated
18 incineration and this bill would
19 push the city to invest in
20 meaningfully, prioritize safe and
21 sustainable opportunities to reduce
22 waste.

23 In fact, nearly half of
24 what the city throws away is

1 compostable and recyclable. For
2 these reasons, Just Zero commends
3 the Committee in giving this bill a
4 favorable report and our
5 organization would like to provide
6 any assistance in achieving the
7 city's zero waste goals through
8 meaningful zero waste policy.

9 So please call me up if
10 you want help with that. And I
11 want to thank you again for your
12 time and for your commitment to
13 protecting Pennsylvania
14 communities.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
17 Thank you so much.

18 MS. LA FONTAINE: Good
19 evening. My name is Jada
20 La Fontaine. I'm a West
21 Philadelphia native and lifetime
22 resident of District 4. My short
23 career so far has revolved around
24 environmental equity and connecting

1 residents to decision-making
2 processes that shape their quality
3 of life, like the one we're
4 gathered for today.

5 Most recently, I worked
6 in the Office of Environmental
7 Justice at the Pennsylvania
8 Department of Environmental
9 Protection or DEP. And there, I
10 learned about the extent of
11 negative health impacts our
12 neighbors in Chester are subject to
13 via industrial pollution, including
14 those stemming from this
15 incinerator.

16 It's worth considering
17 that just in the past five years
18 alone this site has accumulated
19 over 40 environmental health and
20 safety violations according to DEP
21 eFACTS database. A handful of
22 violations within recent months,
23 include an incident in late June
24 when the facility failed to

1 properly operate and maintain a
2 pollution control device.

3 A week earlier, it was
4 cited for incorrectly running one
5 of the pollution-producing sources
6 in its air cleaning system. And
7 two weeks prior to that effect,
8 showed the radiation related
9 violations that Councilwoman
10 Gauthier described earlier. These
11 types of offenses and others are
12 repeated throughout its decades of
13 long inspection history and often
14 translate into real-life events
15 where unpermitted levels of toxic
16 chemicals, sometimes visible and
17 foul-smelling, are released into
18 the local community, sometimes for
19 hours on end.

20 It's also worth noting
21 that Reworld is currently being
22 sued by a former 13-year operations
23 supervisor, Eric Bass, who claimed
24 he was wrongfully fired for

1 refusing to falsify emissions data
2 at the Chester facility in
3 discussion today as the largest
4 incinerator in the United States.

5 It is not hyperbole to
6 say that Reworld is making a
7 killing. Philadelphia routinely
8 makes socially responsible
9 contracting decisions and this bill
10 presents us with an opportunity to
11 apply those same standards here.
12 Chronic noncompliance and disregard
13 for worker and community health
14 should not be rewarded with another
15 taxpayer contract.

16 Beyond all of that, it
17 is time to move away from burning
18 trash. As you've heard today, the
19 science now shows us that it is
20 more detrimental to public health
21 and the climate crisis than its
22 alternatives.

23 For Philadelphia, the
24 financial cost of landfilling

1 versus incineration may be
2 comparable. But when factoring in
3 health and climate impacts,
4 incineration is far costlier.

5 Today, we have moved forward an
6 opportunity to stop trashing our
7 air. Overburdening communities
8 with pollution is a form of
9 violence and Philadelphia does not
10 have to remain complicit.

11 After today the
12 questions remain, will Council use
13 this. The claim that more studies
14 are needed to continue business as
15 usual with a chronic public health
16 offender or ultimately will Council
17 seize this opportunity to be
18 serious about being clean and
19 green. Divest from environmental
20 racism and shift towards upstream
21 waste solutions that protect
22 health, promote circularity and
23 build real economic opportunity.
24 I'm hopeful in Council's ability to

1 chart a new path forward. Thank
2 you.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

5 Thank you very much. We appreciate
6 your testimony today.

7 Please state your name
8 and proceed with your testimony.

9 MR. GIBSON: David
10 Gibson. First of all, let me thank
11 you for this opportunity to speak
12 and congratulations on putting this
13 bill out of committee. I'm the
14 Co-coordinator of Peace, Justice,
15 Sustainability Now. It's an
16 associate member group of Peace
17 Action, and we have members and
18 supporters across the state of
19 Pennsylvania, with a particular
20 concentration in the Philly area
21 and the surrounding suburbs.

22 We also coordinate a
23 statewide network of over 30
24 organizations across Pennsylvania,

1 including many here in the city. I
2 just want you to know I've crossed
3 out this, this and this, so I'll be
4 able to get through this pretty
5 quick.

6 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

7 Thank you very much.

8 MR. GIBSON: And our
9 name, Peace, Justice Sustainability
10 Now is our purpose. We believe
11 everything is connected. And we
12 stand today to speak in favor of
13 this legislation, because as
14 constituents and consumers, we're
15 dedicated to protecting and
16 restoring our ecosystem.

17 We know that
18 incineration is worse than
19 landfilling when it comes to air
20 quality and climate emissions.
21 Incinerators are the most expensive
22 and polluting way to manage waste
23 or to make energy. They're
24 documented EPA data showing that

1 it's dirtier than burning coal,
2 that's pretty dirty.

3 They're also documented
4 to be worse than using landfills.
5 Reworld likes to boast about how
6 many homes are powered by their
7 trash burning, as if power
8 production is why they exist. We
9 saw earlier that Reworld has got to
10 get in the real world.

11 In fact, they produce
12 very little power to begin with.
13 No power company would ever think
14 of building a trash incinerator to
15 produce electricity since it's the
16 most expensive way to do so. The
17 six trash incinerators in
18 Pennsylvania together produce just
19 .65% of Pennsylvania's electricity
20 in 2024.

21 About 30 organizations
22 have signed on to this bill. I
23 don't have to read them here. That
24 would take up too much time, but I

1 can send you that list. You
2 probably already know it. We
3 recognize that landfilling too has
4 its drawbacks, but it makes no
5 sense to make matters worse.

6 What's really needed is
7 more investment in alternatives.

8 CM Squilla spoke to this a bit.

9 And I want to touch on a few things
10 we can do as a city that could help
11 us move in a better direction. We
12 can start -- and these are, by the
13 way, moral solutions.

14 THE CLERK: Can you
15 start by quickly wrapping those up.
16 Thank you.

17 MR. GIBSON: We can
18 start by reprioritizing investments
19 in city resources into a robust
20 mitigation, improved recycling and
21 composting programs. And just a
22 word for the workers, my brothers
23 and sisters over here. We also
24 need to include green transition

1 funding in anything we do so that
2 these folks don't get kicked to the
3 curb. So that's it. I'll wrap it
4 up with that. Thank you.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

7 No, thank you very much for your
8 testimony. Very much so heard and
9 noted.

10 Will the Clerk please
11 call the next remaining testifiers
12 to come forward. And as folks are
13 coming forward, as you can see we
14 have moved into the winter months
15 almost and it's getting darker by
16 the second. So please if you don't
17 mind, try to consolidate and
18 summarize your testimonies to about
19 a minute and a half as we want to
20 make sure that we get everybody in
21 as the night draws nigh. Thank you
22 so much.

23 Clerk.

24 THE CLERK: Erica Brown,

1 Kim Quick, Lynn Robinson.

2 (Witnesses approached
3 witness table.)

4 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

5 Has your name been called? If your
6 name has been called, please come
7 forward.

8 THE CLERK: Erica Brown,
9 Kim Quick, Lynn Robinson.

10 (Witnesses approached
11 witness table.)

12 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

13 Thank you very much, my brother.
14 Please state your name and begin
15 your testimony.

16 MR. DRE: Yes. My name
17 is Bigga Dre, member of CRCQL,
18 Chester Residents Concerned for
19 Quality Living. I just wanted to,
20 you know, give my experience of
21 living in a city of a five-mile
22 radius that has been adversely
23 impacted by a process that's
24 outdated. Chester's a five-mile

1 radius. Philadelphia is about 100
2 times larger than Chester,
3 Pennsylvania. This is the City of
4 Brotherly Love.

5 There were some comments
6 that were echoed here at this
7 session of where the trash is going
8 to go. I think we should
9 reasonably reflect and say, well,
10 the trash can go back to where it
11 originated from.

12 According to statistics,
13 the children in Chester's blood
14 lead level is 60% higher than the
15 recommended level of the CDC.
16 Philadelphia's burns about 37% of
17 its trash, and about a third of it
18 is processed in this five-mile
19 radius city of Chester,
20 Pennsylvania.

21 I hear about feasible
22 studies and I'll end on this part
23 right here. How many feasible
24 studies have to take place before

1 we actually take action?

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

4 Thank you so much for your
5 testimony. As was reminded to us
6 earlier, the time is always right
7 to do what's right. So we thank
8 you for making emphasizing that
9 particular point.

10 Please state your name
11 and begin with your testimony. And
12 again, just be mindful of trying to
13 summarize about a minute and a
14 half.

15 MR. KRONHEIM: Thank you
16 very much. My name is David
17 Kronheim. Philadelphia's landfills
18 are for construction and commercial
19 waste. The rest of Philly's trash
20 goes outside of Philly to
21 landfills, incinerators, including
22 the nation's largest in Chester,
23 which is about seven miles from
24 your airport.

1 Over 40 years ago, my
2 wife and I were living in Northwest
3 Philadelphia, 63rd and Haverford.
4 May 13, '85 a bomb was dropped in
5 West Philly on a rowhouse where the
6 MOVE commune was. We lived a
7 little more than a mile from the
8 MOVE fire. There's a continual,
9 huge black column of smoke we saw
10 rising from the inferno. That fire
11 burned for over six hours.

12 For the last five years,
13 my wife and I have lived in the
14 city of Chester, a little more than
15 a mile from the Covanta Reworld
16 incinerator. Sometimes smoke
17 columns from Covanta Reworld are
18 visible. Sometimes they're not.
19 Regardless, the columns of smoke
20 enter our air 24 hours a day, seven
21 days a week, every day, every week,
22 dwarfing the columns of smoke that
23 came out of the MOVE fire by
24 sending trash to the Chester

1 incinerator.

2 Philly has been
3 collaborating for over 33 years in
4 the poisoning of Philadelphians and
5 in the region, allowing for a
6 generational health and
7 environmental disaster dwarfing the
8 disaster of the MOVE bombing. Make
9 June 30, 2026 the last day of
10 Philadelphia's contract with
11 Covanta Reworld. Make today the
12 day when every member of City
13 Council commits to voting for the
14 Stop Trashing Our Air Act and the
15 Mayor commits to signing it.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

18 Thanks. Thank you very much. Your
19 testimony is very stark and
20 shocking. I was appreciating
21 Dr. Bettigole causing us to
22 remember the fires burning in
23 Canada, and how many of us smelled
24 and that were impacted by that.

1 Despite a couple years now that was
2 up in Canada, right, to say nothing
3 about what is being done just a
4 couple of miles away from our city
5 limits. And I appreciate your
6 calling us to remember even what
7 happened just in six hours with the
8 MOVE bombing. This is very
9 important. And I appreciate your
10 testimony.

11 Please state your name
12 and begin with the testimony.

13 MS. ROBINSON: My name
14 is Lynn Robinson. I'm a Germantown
15 resident and I'm going to scrap
16 what I brought to say. But I just
17 want to point out a couple of
18 things. First of all, I didn't
19 hear Article I, Section 27
20 mentioned today. But it's our
21 constitutional right to breathe
22 clean air.

23 And it occurred to me as
24 I was preparing this that the right

1 to breathe clean air is to protect
2 our fundamental freedom. You
3 cannot have freedom without your
4 health freedoms. But anyway, I
5 just want to point out that there
6 was a mistake made today by the
7 administration.

8 Reworld does not sell
9 their ash. They pay landfills to
10 take their ash because it's
11 completely toxic. And so, if we
12 stop burning our trash in Chester
13 and we send our trash to landfills,
14 those landfills will be healthier
15 because they will not be receiving
16 the ash that we're burning in
17 Chester.

18 The ash is when it goes
19 to a landfill, it leeches out all
20 kinds of heavy metals and other
21 major toxic materials quickly
22 because it's already been burned
23 down into very small particles and
24 it goes out into the environment.

1 So those landfills may have more
2 volume, but they're going to be
3 less toxic because it won't have
4 our incinerated ash.

5 The other thing -- I
6 think there was something else I
7 wanted to say, but -- oh, yeah. To
8 delay this, saying they're looking
9 into different options is
10 completely immoral and stupid.
11 There's no reason to delay the
12 decision to end the contract with
13 incineration. Even if we send
14 everything to landfills for four
15 more years and it takes four years
16 for them to figure out diversion
17 programs and whatever else, there's
18 really no excuse. That's all.
19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

22 Thank you very, very much for your
23 testimonies.

24 Will the Clerk call the

1 next witnesses to testify.

2 THE CLERK: Steve
3 Simmons, Jasmine Bahamonde,
4 Dr. Marco Castaldi.

5 (Witnesses approached
6 witness table.)

7 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
8 Was there anyone who was called
9 that has not come forward?

10 Clerk, was there anyone
11 who was called that did not come
12 forward?

13 THE CLERK: Jasmine. I
14 think that she's making her way
15 towards the --

16 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
17 Okay. Perfect.

18 MR. SIMMONS: Good
19 evening. My name is Steve Simmons.
20 I'm a consultant in the solid waste
21 industry. I'm a resident of
22 Chester County, Pennsylvania, where
23 I serve on the Board of Directors
24 of the Chester County Solid Waste

1 Authority.

2 I've worked on waste
3 issues in and around the city of
4 Philadelphia for 30 years. Thermal
5 waste energy facilities have a long
6 and successful track record as an
7 environmentally safe, reliable and
8 secure option for the management of
9 waste which is not otherwise
10 recycled or composted, which should
11 be our first priority.

12 So we all agree that
13 communities in our region have
14 utilized these facilities as a
15 preferred management option for
16 over 30 years. Three counties in
17 Pennsylvania; Bucks, Delaware and
18 Montgomery, along with two in New
19 Jersey, provide almost 40% of the
20 waste disposal capacity in this
21 region. Also of note is the fact
22 that over the past decade, the
23 region's available landfill
24 capacity has declined and continues

1 to do so.

2 In the Pennsylvania
3 Department of Environmental
4 Protection Southeast region, which
5 is comprised of the City of
6 Philadelphia, Berks, Chester,
7 Delaware and Montgomery Counties,
8 there's only one remaining
9 commercial landfill. The cost of
10 transporting our waste out of our
11 region, whether by truck or rail,
12 to landfills and communities far
13 away from Philadelphia is ever
14 increasing and the landfills are
15 ever farther away.

16 If the city were to
17 adopt the policy of banning waste
18 energy treatment facilities as a
19 waste management option, in the
20 future it may be left with only one
21 disposal option in the PA Southeast
22 region. Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

24 Thank you. Please proceed with --

1 I'm sorry. Please state your name
2 for the record and proceed with
3 your comment. Thank you so much.

4 MR. CRISTALDI: Marco
5 Cristaldi. Good afternoon. Thank
6 you for the opportunity to broaden
7 my thoughts on Bill 250768. I'm a
8 Professor of Chemical Engineering
9 and Chairman of the Chemical
10 Engineering Department at the City
11 College of City University of New
12 York. I'm a Technical Fellow of
13 the American Society of Mechanical
14 Engineers and the American
15 Institute of Chemical Engineers.

16 I've been conducting
17 research and engineering
18 assessments on sustainable waste
19 management solutions ranging from
20 reuse to landfill for nearly 20
21 years. I've received the Fulbright
22 Global Scholar Award in recognition
23 for that work. I hope my comments
24 provide helpful guidance.

1 Managing waste is a
2 problem that requires several
3 technologies as well as appropriate
4 public responsibility. The concept
5 of zero waste or zero waste to
6 landfill is fiction. All waste
7 management processes, except for
8 reduction efforts, will have a
9 residual waste.

10 The average U.S. MSW
11 generation rate is 4 pounds per
12 person per day, which is an
13 enormous rate. Therefore, attempts
14 to manage MSW must match the scale
15 of generation and be reliable and
16 resilient. Currently, there are
17 only two solutions that can
18 completely manage all the MSW
19 generated by society. They are
20 waste to energy and landfilling.
21 All other solutions can only manage
22 a portion and together will not
23 match the generation scale.

24 There are robust air

1 pollution control systems in place
2 that have brought every category of
3 WTE emissions significantly below
4 regulatory limits. Finally,
5 European epidemiological studies
6 have not found the connection
7 between modern, well-run and
8 maintained WT operation to adverse
9 human health effects. Thank you to
10 allow me to provide this
11 perspective to the great City of
12 Philadelphia.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
14 Thank you so much for your comment
15 today.

16 Please state your name
17 for the record and proceed with
18 your comment.

19 MS. BAHAMONDE: Good
20 afternoon. And thank you for the
21 opportunity to speak today. My
22 name is Jasmine Bahamonde, and I am
23 the HR Manager at Reworld in
24 Chester and also a lifelong

1 resident of Philadelphia.

2 As a proud Latina who
3 grew up in this region, I take true
4 pride in working for a company that
5 is not only committed to
6 sustainability, but also to the
7 people who make our community
8 thrive. Reworld is a sustainable
9 solutions company focused on
10 helping cities and businesses
11 reimagine what their waste can do.
12 But for us, sustainability goes
13 beyond environmental goals.

14 It also is about
15 creating sustainable opportunities
16 for people. When I joined Reworld
17 in February of 2023, only a few
18 employees lived locally in the
19 Chester area. And through
20 intentional hiring practices,
21 community partnerships and a strong
22 commitment to equity and inclusion,
23 we've increased that number to over
24 20, specifically 26 of Chester

1 employees and growing.

2 These individuals bring
3 invaluable perspective, pride and
4 representation to our workforce.

5 As team members move on or retire,
6 we remain intentional about filling
7 those roles with talent from the
8 Chester community. This focus on
9 local hiring strengthens our local
10 impact. It's about more than
11 filling positions. For me, it's
12 about opening doors to meaningful,
13 long-term careers.

14 One example is Bruce
15 Griffith, a Chester high school
16 student who has been with us for
17 over 33 years. Today he's our
18 training and operations supervisor,
19 mentoring others and showing what's
20 possible when local talent is given
21 the opportunity to grow and lead.

22 We're proud of the
23 progress we've made and we're
24 committed to continuing to expand

1 local career opportunities right
2 here in the Philadelphia and
3 Chester region and we will continue
4 to be inclusive. Thank you so
5 much, Madam Chair and the rest of
6 the committee.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
8 Thank you so much for your comments
9 today. Thanks to all of you.

10 Will the Clerk please
11 call the next several public
12 commenters.

13 THE CLERK: Anne Dixon,
14 Alyssa Wilde, Marvin Gomez.

15 (Witnesses approached
16 witness table.)

17 MS. DIXON: Anne Dixon
18 with Reclaim. Thank you,
19 Environmental Committee. And thank
20 you for staying for the bitter end.
21 So the results of this past
22 election show that all around our
23 country people are aligned with
24 progressive values.

1 The Mayoral election in
2 New York City brought out the most
3 voters in 50 years and brought a
4 big win for Zohran Mamdani. This
5 was because his policies are
6 clearly very different from what
7 people have been living with.

8 City Council, please
9 pass on this message to your fellow
10 Councilmen that for your own best
11 interest, break with the tired
12 policies of the past and ride this
13 wave of progressiveness. Note that
14 only that -- let's see. We've been
15 inhaling poison from burning our
16 own trash for many decades. Voting
17 for the Stop Trashing Our Air Act
18 will make you more popular with
19 your own electorate. Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
21 Thank you very much.

22 Please state your name
23 for the record and proceed with
24 your comment.

1 MR. GRIFFITH: My name
2 is Bruce Griffith. I'm here for
3 Alisa's spot because she left, if
4 that's okay.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
6 That's fine.

7 MR. GRIFFITH: Thank
8 you. Thank you for the opportunity
9 to speak to us on this matter. My
10 name is Bruce Griffith. I'm a
11 lifelong Delaware County resident,
12 seven-year United States Marine
13 Corps veteran, and I was born and
14 raised in the city of Chester. I'm
15 still Training and Operations
16 Supervisor at the Chester Reworld
17 facility.

18 I've been fortunate
19 enough to work at the facility for
20 34-plus years, starting out as a
21 laborer. I got that and knew
22 nothing. Laborer through the
23 training, went in the maintenance
24 department, the operations

1 department. 10 years in the
2 control room, which you need a
3 federal license of running boilers,
4 so you know what's coming out that
5 stack, and progressed into several
6 management positions. Worked my
7 way up. I was operations manager
8 for a few years. Stepping back and
9 I'm getting ready to retire.

10 We produce sustainable
11 electric generation, which reduces
12 the dependence on burning fossil
13 fuels. We recycle both ferrous and
14 non-ferrous and we reduce the
15 weight of the MSW substantially by
16 90%, as before mentioned by others.
17 Just as important to our continual
18 commitment to our surrounding
19 communities, though we do city
20 cleanups, provide meals to the
21 service center, clothing drives,
22 food drives throughout the year.

23 I personally take pride
24 in assisting the opportunities for

1 employment with the people of our
2 community, specifically my city of
3 Chester, passing on my knowledge to
4 the new employees, which provides
5 me with a feeling of knowing
6 sustainable solutions for the
7 evergrowing concern that waste
8 management can continue to move
9 forward.

10 I personally conduct
11 numerous tours at the facility and
12 discussions with high schools,
13 elected officials, colleges,
14 professional individuals and
15 personal just seeking for
16 information on our process and
17 what's the result of it.

18 The facility provided me
19 stability for me and my family when
20 Pennsylvania Ship Building was
21 closed down. After I got out of
22 Marine Corps, I worked there. Six
23 years it closed down. I went there
24 as a laborer and I've been there

1 for 34 years. It's afforded me the
2 opportunity to learn and grow my
3 knowledge and the challenge of
4 field of thermo chemical operation
5 that I can provide to the people
6 that still live in my city. Thank
7 you for your time.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

9 Thank you for your comment today
10 and thank you for your service to
11 our country.

12 MR. GRIFFITH: It was my
13 pleasure. I'd do it again in a
14 heartbeat.

15 MR. GOMES: Good
16 afternoon. My name is Marvin
17 Gomes. Chairwoman Gauthier and
18 members of the Environmental
19 Committee. I'm the owner and
20 President of Caribbean Operators, a
21 proud, certified minority-owned
22 business and certified local
23 entity.

24 I've been a long-time

1 hauler here in the city of
2 Philadelphia. I started my
3 business in 1999 beginning with
4 just one truck as a subcontractor.
5 And over the years, I've been
6 fortunate to grow my business into
7 a company that provides 50 jobs in
8 Philadelphia region and hauling
9 materials, hauling across the city
10 of Philadelphia.

11 As a local business
12 owner, I seen firsthand how
13 important it is for the city to
14 support companies and invest in our
15 community and create local jobs.
16 My team and I take great pride in
17 being part of the fabric of
18 Philadelphia, hiring local,
19 supporting small businesses and
20 help to keep the city clean and
21 striving.

22 Reworld has played a big
23 role in that journey. When I first
24 met them, I was just starting out.

1 Our partnership and their
2 commitment to local businesses has
3 helped me expand workforce and hire
4 more people who live and work right
5 here in Philadelphia.

6 I appreciate the
7 opportunity to share my perspective
8 today and I want to thank the
9 Council for your continued
10 attention to the needs of the local
11 operators like myself.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
13 Thank you so much for your comment,
14 for your work in the city and for
15 being here today. Thank you.
16 Thanks to all of you.

17 Please call the names of
18 the next several commenters.

19 THE CLERK: John Scott,
20 Carol Hagler and Abby Bustraan.
21 And I apologize if I mispronounce
22 any names, if you can come up.

23 (Witnesses approached
24 witness table.)

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

2 Good evening. Thank you so much
3 for joining us today. Please state
4 your name for the record and
5 proceed with your comment.

6 MS. BUSTRAAN: Sure.

7 Thanks. My name is Abby. I'm a
8 college student in Chester. I go
9 to Widener and I also work as a
10 social worker in Philadelphia,
11 which I'm here today, I skipped my
12 lunch break and my boss let me take
13 the afternoon off to be here today
14 because this is an important issue
15 to the people that I love.

16 I'm not a science
17 person, but I can talk about a
18 story that I have relating to this
19 issue. On one of my first days at
20 Widener during orientation week, I
21 remember walking out of my dorm to
22 a smell that I will never forget.
23 It was a sweet smell, but it wasn't
24 a nice smell. It was sort of like

1 a sickening sweetness.

2 It smelled to me like a
3 rotting -- I asked my friend at the
4 time who was with me that grew up
5 in Chester, what that smell was.
6 And she responded as if it was
7 nothing, that's the incinerator.
8 And I asked why it smelled sweet.
9 And she said, that's the chocolate
10 scent that they used to cover it
11 up. So every couple days you wake
12 up in Chester, you smell a
13 disgusting, chocolaty smell. It's
14 something that they put on the
15 trash before they burn it to cover
16 up the smell of the trash. Of
17 course, that covers up nothing.

18 Now, I have an
19 apartment. I live there full-time.
20 I smell that sickening, rotten
21 smell of trash every few times a
22 week when I remember what it means.
23 I hold my breath on the way to my
24 car.

1 And I talk from a place
2 of privilege. I didn't grow up in
3 Chester. I've only lived there for
4 four years. And I didn't breathe
5 in that trash growing up
6 developmentally the way that most
7 of the residents do. Many are not
8 that lucky. The kids that I see
9 walking to school in my
10 neighborhood have unusually high
11 rates of asthma, and lung cancer
12 ravages the community.

13 My partner grew up in
14 Chester his whole life. His entire
15 family has asthma and his
16 grandfather has terminal lung
17 cancer and is going to probably
18 pass away later this year. I want
19 to appreciate the individual
20 workers of Reworld, but the company
21 as a whole should be embarrassed of
22 itself.

23 The incinerator ruins
24 lives. It represents a total

1 overlooking of the Chester
2 community. It represents
3 environmental racism. I've only
4 lived in Chester for four years,
5 but it's been a wonderful home to
6 me. It's been nothing but kind to
7 me as a guest and it deserves much
8 better than what it has right now.
9 So thank you for allowing me to
10 speak.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Thank you for being here and thank
13 you for sharing such a personal
14 story. And thanks to your boss for
15 giving you some flexibility.

16 Please state your name
17 for the record and proceed.

18 MR. SCOTT: Good
19 evening, Chairwoman Gauthier,
20 Councilman O'Rourke and Councilman
21 Harrity. Thank you all so much for
22 having this hearing. My name is
23 John Scott for the record.

24 You know, I'm here

1 representing Reworld. Chairwoman
2 Gauthier, I wish I could say this
3 in front of Councilman Driscoll,
4 Councilwoman Bass, and Councilwoman
5 Ahmad, but I do want to say that
6 tonight we had over 25 workers here
7 from the city of Chester that work
8 at the facility.

9 These are workers that
10 are sons and daughters of Chester.
11 These are folks that have played in
12 biddy basketball. These are folks
13 that are former Chester Panthers.
14 And so, for the record, for folks
15 to paint us out as if we do not
16 care about the city of Chester,
17 it's just not true.

18 I am someone who, you
19 know, I've worked in Chester for
20 over 13 years now. It's adopted me
21 and it's been a pleasure to work
22 there and also have friends that
23 come from there as well. As it
24 relates to this bill, in

1 understanding what the
2 administration said, I do believe
3 that there is a need to look at and
4 evaluate all disposal options.

5 The legislation as it's
6 currently written does not. And I
7 understand that we all want to be
8 great environmental stewards and we
9 want to do what's right, and I
10 think there is a chance to do that
11 by evaluating all of the options.
12 So in terms of the rush or as some
13 other people put it, I'd like to
14 say let's be thoughtful in how we
15 evaluate and how we look at things,
16 understanding that, you know,
17 there's context, and we don't want
18 to set a precedent in which we
19 can't come back from or that
20 signals negativity. So I'm sure
21 that this great body will look into
22 that and they'll do the right thing
23 as well and in lockstep with the
24 administration, which is what they

1 proposed.

2 As it relates to
3 development on the waterfront,
4 Reworld operates in a lot of other
5 communities where development
6 happens. There are multi-million
7 dollar condominiums in several
8 other communities that we operate
9 in. So from the standpoint of
10 saying, hey, development can't
11 happen if Reworld is there is just
12 not true. So I do want to kind of
13 point that out as well.

14 And this is the first
15 time -- I've attended Council
16 before, in which there's been
17 public comment done after a full
18 committee vote. But there's a new
19 time for everything and hopefully,
20 as we look to evaluate our options,
21 we can do so thoughtfully and
22 without rush and in a measured
23 approach. So thank you again,
24 Councilwoman Gauthier.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

2 Thank you for your comment. I
3 appreciate you being here. Just to
4 touch briefly on the topic of
5 negativity, some conversations are
6 hard. Every day we have hard
7 conversations in this chamber. And
8 then as far as the proceedings for
9 the hearing, it's not ideal but it
10 happens quite regularly that if
11 we're running out of quorum, we're
12 going to lose committee members, we
13 will break, we will vote and then
14 go back so that everyone is heard.
15 Thank you for your patience and for
16 being here today. We appreciate
17 it.

18 Before we end for the
19 day, I would be remiss if I did not
20 recognize my Legislative Director,
21 Mary Jones, who just walked into
22 chambers.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Mary worked so hard on this
2 legislation, on this hearing, and
3 this is not the only big or tough
4 topic she has taken on in the year
5 since she's been a part of my
6 Council office. And we appreciate
7 her hard and excellent work. Thank
8 you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

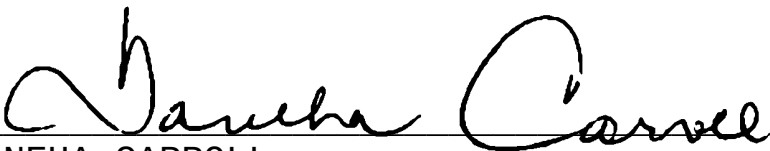
11 And with that, we are now
12 adjourning this hearing of the
13 Committee of the Environment. I
14 want to remind everybody still
15 watching and here today that the
16 Committee voted Bill 250768 out of
17 committee with a favorable
18 recommendation. Thank you so much
19 for being here today.

20 (Committee on the
21 Environment concluded at 5:40 p.m.)

22
23
24

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

I, hereby certify that the proceedings
and evidence noted are contained fully and
accurately in the stenographic notes taken by
me in the foregoing matter, and that this is a
correct transcript of the same.


TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

(The foregoing certification of this
transcript does not apply to any reproduction
of the same by any means, unless under the
direct control and/or supervision of the
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