

Committee on Commerce
4/11/2022

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

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Monday, April 11, 2022
1:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS

RESOLUTION: 220133

1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good

3 morning, everyone. Today is Monday,

4 April 11th. We have our Committee on

5 Commerce and Economic Development.

6 Before we begin the public

7 hearing today, I will make the following

8 announcement: Due to COVID and the

9 continuing threat of public health from

10 COVID-19, City Council Committees are

11 currently meeting remotely. We are

12 using Microsoft Teams to make these

13 remote hearings possible.

14 Instructions for the public

15 hearing of Council Committees are

16 included in the public hearing notices

17 that are published in the Daily News,

18 Inquirer and Legal Intelligencer prior

19 to the hearings and can also be found on

20 PHLCouncil.com. I now not that the hour

21 has come.

22 Mr. McMonagle, will you please

23 call the roll to take attendance from

24 Members who are attending, will please

25 indicate that you are present as we move

1 forward. Mr. McMonagle.

2 THE CLERK: Thank you,

3 Councilmember.

4 Councilwoman Brooks.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Present.

6 THE CLERK: Councilman Domb.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Good

8 afternoon, Councilmember Squilla Chair,

9 colleagues. Present.

10 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

11 Gauthier.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

13 afternoon, Mr. Chair, colleagues and

14 Philadelphia. Present.

15 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

16 Gilmore Richardson.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

19 Good afternoon, colleagues. I am

20 present.

21 THE CLERK: Councilman Green.

22 (No response.)

23 THE CLERK: Councilman

24 Johnson --

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Good --

1 THE CLERK: I'm sorry.

2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- afternoon
3 (audible).

4 THE CLERK: Councilman, you're
5 really breaking up.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Mr. Chair,
7 colleagues. I am present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilman Jones.
9 (No response.)

10 THE CLERK: Councilman Oh.
11 (No response.)

12 THE CLERK: Councilman Squilla.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good
14 morning. I am present. Mr. McMonagle,
15 thank you.

16 THE CLERK: Councilman Thomas
17 as well.

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm present
19 at today's hearing as well. Thank you,
20 Mr. Chair.

21 THE CLERK: We have a quorum,
22 Mr. Chair.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
24 Mr. McMonagle. A quorum of the
25 Committee is present and the hearing is

1 now called to order. This is a public
2 hearing of the Committee on Commerce and
3 Economic Development regarding
4 Resolution No. 220133.

5 Mr. McMonagle, will you please
6 read the title of the bill -- of the
7 resolution.

8 THE CLERK: Resolution No.
9 220133, authorizing the Philadelphia
10 City Council Committee on Commerce and
11 Economic Development to hold hearings to
12 better understand the local purchasing
13 goal set by the Administration in
14 response to Councilmember Thomas' Keep
15 It Local bill, to assess the progress
16 made toward that goal and to offer a
17 forum to discuss best practices in this
18 space going forward to ensure that the
19 City of Philadelphia always looks first
20 and forward to its homegrown small- and
21 medium-sized businesses when making
22 purchasing decisions.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.
24 Before we begin to hear testimony from
25 the witnesses we have for today,

1 everyone who has been invited to the
2 meeting to testify should be aware the
3 public hearing is being recorded.
4 Because the hearing is public,
5 participants and viewers have no
6 reasonable expectation of privacy. By
7 continuing to be on the meeting, you are
8 consenting to being recorded.

9 Additionally, prior to
10 recognizing Members for the questions or
11 comments they have for witnesses, I will
12 note for the record at this time we will
13 be using the chat feature available in
14 Microsoft Teams to allow Members to
15 signify that they wish to be recognized.
16 In order to comply with the Sunshine
17 Act, the chat feature must only be used
18 for this purpose.

19 Before we call the panel, I'd
20 like to ask Councilmember Thomas if he
21 would like opening remarks.

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
23 afternoon, Mr. Chair. I will be very
24 brief. I want to thank you and all the
25 members of the Committee for allowing me

1 to join you today. This is a very
2 important issue as it relates to the
3 recovery of the economy here in the City
4 of Philadelphia.

5 We've asked businesses and
6 people to invest in our City as it
7 relates to the economic issues that we
8 face during this pandemic and it's
9 important that if we're going to ask
10 other people to invest in our City, that
11 we lead that charge. And today's
12 conversation is about just that. It's
13 about us leading the charge as it
14 relates to investing in Philadelphia and
15 ensuring that we recover from the
16 economic issues that we've been facing
17 during this pandemic.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
19 you, colleagues. I look forward to
20 today's discussion.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
22 Councilmember, for bringing this to the
23 forefront.

24 Councilmember Green, did you
25 want to make a comment before we

1 started?

2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chair. I also want to thank you for
4 your leadership in terms of this
5 Committee. I also want to thank my
6 colleague Councilmember Thomas for
7 focusing on local procurement.

8 I have worked with the Chief
9 Administrative Officer a few years ago
10 on the Local Business Purchasing
11 Initiative to provide better
12 opportunities for businesses within the
13 City of Philadelphia to take advantage
14 of procurement opportunities with the
15 City. The work Councilmember Thomas has
16 done with his legislation and this
17 hearing continues that type of work and
18 it demonstrates collectively how we as a
19 body are trying to improve the business
20 climate for our local businesses.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
23 Councilmember Green.

24 Mr. McMonagle, will you please
25 call the first panel.

1 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
2 have Monique Nesmith-Joyner.

3 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: Good
4 afternoon.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Monique,
6 just state your name for the record and
7 then you can proceed with your
8 testimony.

9 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: Yes.
10 Monique Nesmith-Joyner, Procurement
11 Commissioner for the City of
12 Philadelphia. Good afternoon,
13 Councilmember Squilla, Chair of the
14 Committee on Commerce and Economic
15 Opportunity, Councilmember Domb,
16 Vice-Chair, other members of the
17 Committee as well as the sponsors of
18 this resolution. My name is Monique
19 Nesmith-Joyner and I am the Procurement
20 Commissioner for the City of
21 Philadelphia.

22 I am here to testify on
23 Resolution No. 220133 to discuss the
24 progress made toward the City's local
25 entity contracting goals. The

1 Procurement Department is the central
2 purchasing and materials management
3 agency for the City of Philadelphia.
4 Procurement's goal is to acquire
5 services, supplies, equipment and
6 construction through a fair and open
7 process and at the best value to the
8 City.

9 Procurement seeks to leverage
10 the use of taxpayer dollars in a way
11 that upholds trust by using sound
12 procurement practices. In the fall of
13 2020, Bill No. 200353A updated the
14 reporting requirements of Section 17-109
15 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
16 "Local Business Preferences," by
17 requiring the establishment of local
18 business participation goals and regular
19 reporting on the achievement of such
20 goals as a way to assist businesses in
21 the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

22 Procurement strongly supports
23 any effort aimed at local -- excuse me,
24 Procurement strongly supports any effort
25 aimed at supporting local business

1 entities as well as minority-, women-
2 and disabled-owned businesses and at
3 promoting transparency and
4 accountability. We recognize the
5 importance of reinvesting locally and
6 providing for an inclusive procurement
7 process that provides greater access and
8 transparency, particularly for
9 businesses that have historically been
10 disenfranchised.

11 The Chief Administrative Office
12 and Procurement have led and supported
13 numerous initiatives specifically aimed
14 at increasing LBE and M/W/DSBE access to
15 City contracting. CAO, Procurement and
16 the Office of Economic Opportunity
17 partnered with Councilmember Green to
18 develop the Local Business Purchasing
19 Initiative.

20 Councilmember Green sponsored
21 an amendment to Section 8-200 of the
22 Home Rule Charter which was approved by
23 voters in November 2019 as well as a
24 companion legislation amending Section
25 17-1400 of The Philadelphia Code to

1 raise the formal bid threshold for
2 contracts from 34,000 to 75,000 and from
3 35,000 to 100,000 for opportunities only
4 open to certified local business
5 entities.

6 The Procurement Department
7 developed regulations requiring
8 departments to actively solicit at least
9 three minority, women, small, disabled
10 business entities or alternative diverse
11 businesses on all contracting
12 opportunities issued under the new and
13 formal purchasing thresholds.

14 Since the inception of LBPI,
15 the Local Business Purchasing
16 Initiative, in November of 2019, LBE
17 certifications increased from 158
18 businesses to 220 certified local
19 businesses despite the pandemic and
20 economic conditions. In addition, the
21 City launched a new contracts hub
22 website making it easier for the public
23 to search for opportunities.

24 Contracts Hub serves as the
25 central location to search listings of

1 both professional services and
2 procurement activities and successfully
3 navigate the contracting process,
4 including registering as an LBE or
5 M/W/DSBE. Further in October 2018, the
6 Chief Administrative Office issued a
7 policy establishing the Local
8 Contracting Opportunity Review Committee
9 to review most professional services and
10 nonpublic works that's valued or RFPs
11 valued at \$2 million or more to ensure
12 these RFPs are maximizing opportunities
13 for local diverse business entities.

14 We will continue to identify
15 ways to maximize local business
16 participation and impact on our largest
17 projects. In July of 2021, Procurement
18 established a 58 percent goal for the
19 total contract dollars awarded to local
20 business entities for Calendar Year
21 2021. This goal was established based
22 on a three-year trend analysis from 2018
23 to 2020 where we found 59.3 percent of
24 all procurement contracts were awarded
25 to local business entities.

1 In Calendar Year 2021, the
2 total number of contracts were awarded
3 in the amount of \$558,029,832. And of
4 the total amount awarded, \$145,788,823
5 or 26 percent were awarded to businesses
6 certified as LBEs. The City missed the
7 goal. The City missed the 2021 LBE goal
8 due to reduction in public works
9 contracting opportunities and an overall
10 shift to spending on COVID-related
11 needs.

12 Procurement is dedicated to
13 supporting the City's local spend goal.
14 And to that end, we will continue
15 internal and external promotion of the
16 Local Business Purchasing Initiative and
17 LBE certification. In addition, the CAO
18 and Procurement will continue to work in
19 partnership with OEO in developing an
20 LBE goal that considers findings from
21 the OEO Disparity Study and existing
22 M/W/DSBE goals as well as leveraging
23 OEO's existing systems and processes.

24 We are committed to
25 collaborating with City Council, OEO and

1 Commerce as well as the diverse and
2 local businesses and stakeholder
3 organizations to maximize LBE and
4 M/W/DSBE participation on City
5 contracts. This concludes my testimony
6 and I'm happy to answer any questions
7 from the Committee. Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
9 so much.

10 And I see that Councilmember
11 Thomas has a question.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chair. I have several, if that's
14 okay with you.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Sure. Go
16 right ahead.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Okay. So
18 first of all, thank you for your
19 testimony. It's very much appreciated.
20 I just wanted to get some percentage
21 numbers on the record so we can assess
22 where we are and what direction we need
23 to go in. So based on the original goal
24 of the bill which the Administration set
25 at 58 percent, listening to the numbers

1 that you communicated to us, what is the
2 exact percentage of businesses that went
3 to local Philadelphia-based businesses
4 last year? I know you said we missed
5 our goal. But what percentage did we
6 actually produce?

7 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: The
8 percentage was 26 percent as opposed to
9 the goal being 58 percent. So 26
10 percent of the total contract dollars
11 awarded went to local businesses.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Okay. So
13 in looking at that huge drop-off, I'm
14 wondering -- and you said that a lot of
15 it was because of COVID-based
16 initiatives. I'm wondering what is
17 it -- I don't understand how it was
18 because of COVID-based initiatives. Can
19 you go indepth on what do you mean when
20 you say it was COVID-based initiatives
21 and why? Because one would think that
22 with the economic issues that we were
23 facing and the issues that we knew we
24 would face, one would think that we
25 would see more investments in local

1 businesses, not necessarily less. So
2 can you help us understand why would we
3 go in the direction of less investment
4 in local business?

5 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: So
6 basically, there were a number of
7 cancellations of public works contract
8 opportunities because of the economic
9 downturn, and due to the City's need to
10 shift to COVID-related spending, we were
11 not able to -- several of the public
12 works departments did not issue or
13 several public works departments either
14 canceled some of their projects, a large
15 number of their projects and/or did not
16 conduct public works jobs for Calendar
17 Year 2021. A large --

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: For those
19 who are in the listening audience and
20 for the general public, can you explain
21 what public works is and what
22 opportunities are there?

23 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: Yes.
24 Thank you. So public works are public
25 construction projects. So these

1 projects are Aviation or the Airport,
2 the Water Department, our Streets
3 Department, the Department of Public
4 Property as well as some of the Rebuild
5 projects that come through our Parks &
6 Rec.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So because
8 a lot of those things were not able to
9 function in the way that they normally
10 would, we seen a huge drop in the number
11 of contracts that would normally go to
12 local businesses. But in the midst of
13 creating new procurement opportunities,
14 why didn't the Administration prioritize
15 Philadelphia-based businesses?

16 I'll give you an example. I
17 remember when COVID first hit
18 Councilmember Green talked a lot about
19 who would get the procurement
20 opportunities to do a lot of the things
21 that we knew what happened. He talked
22 about it a lot leading into us providing
23 those procurement opportunities, and the
24 Administration gave a lot of RFPs and
25 procurement opportunities to businesses

1 without going through the normal process
2 because there was an emergency.

3 I'm sure that we had
4 Philadelphia-based businesses that bid
5 on some of those procurement
6 opportunities. I'm wondering what type
7 of rubric do we use and how can we look
8 at why couldn't we prioritize
9 Philadelphia-based businesses during
10 this time?

11 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: So we need
12 to realize, first of all, the shift due
13 to COVID was of course significant and
14 it was untimely. It did not allow
15 preparation from businesses and there
16 was little time for us to also shift as
17 an Administration. So, yes, there were
18 a number of procurement opportunities
19 that were --

20 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: But we
21 tried to help. We were on persistent
22 communication with the Administration.
23 We tried to help. I understand the
24 timeliness was somewhat of an issue, but
25 there was a lot of outcry as it related

1 to local-based businesses that wanted to
2 be -- go ahead. I'm sorry.

3 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: So
4 professional services, I want to be
5 clear that professional opportunities
6 are not awarded through a local business
7 preference, right. So what we report on
8 are sealed bid opportunities, so those
9 are true procurements that are either
10 public works or public construction or
11 the service, supply and equipment
12 opportunities, and that is what 17-109
13 is based on and that is what we report.
14 So professional services opportunities
15 are not included in our reporting. And
16 that is not what 17-109 speaks to.

17 So in terms of things that we
18 shifted to for procurement for COVID,
19 specifically the use of the need for
20 gloves, the need for masks, gowns,
21 certain things that our businesses were
22 not based in Philadelphia to respond to
23 those needs or those types of
24 procurements, that base of vendor pool
25 was not available and/or businesses in

1 Philadelphia or businesses at large is
2 what we found were not able to shift
3 quickly to respond to that need. And
4 what I mean by shifting quickly is some
5 of them may not have been able to alter
6 their core business to move into those
7 that were providing services or goods
8 that were more COVID-related.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So do you
10 feel like we're on a trajectory this
11 year to meet the goal that the
12 Administration created?

13 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: So I do.
14 We have increased significantly. What
15 we have seen so far, and I do have data
16 in front of me, keeping in mind that the
17 data is based on a calendar year, so
18 from January of this year to March of
19 this year we are on target at about 45
20 percent of overall awards have been made
21 to LBES. So we've already seen a
22 significant jump from 26 percent up to
23 45 percent just for this calendar year
24 alone.

25 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Should the

1 Administration be moving the number from
2 58 percent to a different target or is
3 the number 58 percent, which the
4 Administration came up with themselves,
5 is that still the target goal?

6 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: Yes. So
7 that goal was for Calendar Year '21. So
8 the goal for Calendar Year '22, we will
9 still utilize a three-year trend
10 analysis, so we consider 2019, 2020 and
11 2021. And that number will reduce our
12 goal. Because 2021 was so low, we will
13 move from a 58 percent goal down to a 46
14 percent goal based on that three-year
15 trend analysis. And again, we're almost
16 at that goal now with the awards thus
17 far.

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And this is
19 my last question, Mr. Chair.

20 When you look at where we are
21 in our numbers compared to other cities,
22 how are we doing overall right now and
23 how did we do compared to other cities
24 during the pandemic as it relates to as
25 how they invested in their local economy

1 compared to how we invested in our local
2 economy?

3 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: I would
4 need to get back to you on that
5 specifically comparing us to other
6 cities. I do know that not all cities
7 have a local target spend. There are a
8 few larger cities that do, but we have
9 not compared ourselves directly,
10 especially not over the pandemic years
11 to understand where we fell in
12 comparison to some other cities. But we
13 can certainly do an analysis and provide
14 that information.

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Well, we're
16 more than willing to work with you on
17 that as well as the other things that
18 were discussed today. I just want to
19 say thank you for your testimony and
20 thank you for the work that you're doing
21 as well as the entire team as it relates
22 to investing in Philadelphia-based
23 businesses and putting us in the best
24 economic position that we can be in.
25 Thank you, Monique.

1 And thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 MS. NESMITH-JOYNER: Thank you
3 so much.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
5 Councilmember Thomas.

6 Is there any other questions?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Hearing
9 none, Mr. McMonagle, can we hear the
10 next person to testify.

11 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
12 have Donna Allie please.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Hey,
14 Donna. Thank you for being here. Just
15 state your name for the record and then
16 you can proceed with your testimony.

17 MS. ALLIE: (Muted).

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I think
19 you're muted.

20 MS. ALLIE: Is that better?

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah,
22 there you go.

23 MS. ALLIE: Thank you. Famous
24 words, you're muted.

25 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah. It

1 happens to all of us.

2 MS. ALLIE: So I'm Donna Allie,
3 last name A-l-l-i-e. So thank you,
4 Councilman Thomas, for inviting me.
5 Investments in a city do not always
6 equal investments in citizenry. While
7 both may be true at once, Philadelphia
8 leaders have historically struggled to
9 nurture diverse Philadelphia-based
10 businesses instead choosing to fund the
11 City's needs through large contracts
12 with even larger national firms.

13 Other major cities have
14 recognized the economic and social
15 detriments of denying local business
16 opportunities to grow, employ local
17 citizens and reinvestment in communities
18 and neighborhoods. As Philadelphia
19 delivers another set of budget hearings,
20 there must be, must be, a sense of
21 urgency to meet the needs of our own
22 diverse populous by prioritizing local
23 procurement with Black-owned and
24 women-owned businesses and community
25 leaders. Meeting the needs of

1 constituents is the bare minimum.
2 Investing in representative local
3 businesses and citizens is necessary for
4 the growth and longevity of our City.

5 In my 40 years of experience as
6 an employer of Philadelphians at Team
7 Clean with a vested interest in the
8 City's growth and improvement, I have a
9 unique understanding of the vast
10 potential within local procurement. In
11 the '90s my small company, mind you I
12 only had eight active employees, was
13 awarded the Veteran Stadium contract by
14 the City of Philadelphia. Almost
15 overnight we saw an increase of
16 employees of over 2000 percent. In the
17 following 30 years, the number of jobs
18 provided to local Philadelphians
19 increased by another 250 percent,
20 eclipsing 722. While Team Clean, Inc.
21 blossomed, but the impacts on the City
22 reached far beyond jobs and revenues.

23 Philadelphia has benefited from
24 the development of its citizens. As we
25 train community leaders and organizers,

1 there's a sense of duty to communities
2 from which we grew. We invest in and
3 work with youth organizations such as
4 local YMCAs, providing crucial avenues
5 for the safety and development of our
6 youth. We've established women at the
7 forefront of our company, holding 7 out
8 of 12 upper management administrative
9 positions. We have partnered with other
10 Black companies like PRWT U.S.
11 Facilities, often doubling our revenues
12 and their revenues as well, allowing for
13 even more avenues for community
14 involvement?

15 Through a partnership like that
16 the opportunity -- excuse me. Through a
17 partnership with the Philadelphia
18 Workforce Investment Board for many
19 years, ex-offenders are granted the
20 opportunity to seamlessly integrate into
21 society helping disadvantaged
22 communities heal. These experienced
23 values and initiatives are not unique to
24 my business. Local Black- and
25 people-of-color-owned companies share

1 these ideas because they know what it's
2 like to be Philadelphia-made, to be
3 Black in Philadelphia and therefore
4 understand the value of
5 community-centric missions.

6 Local companies like Mosaic
7 founded by Leslie Smallwood-Lewis which
8 supports communities of color through
9 reconstructions of vacated and blighted
10 properties; FutureNET owned by Noel
11 Lowe, a local IT company with a
12 tremendous education and growth program.
13 Pride Enterprises founded by Craig
14 Williams and flourishing through
15 contributions of Director Angela
16 Hendrix, they established a program
17 through which local contractors and
18 workers participate in community and
19 construction projects, such as
20 libraries, community centers and the
21 like; Angelo Perryman, which levers his
22 position as the oldest Black contractor
23 in Philadelphia to give back actively,
24 sponsoring numerous civic and community
25 programs. Local procurement is more

1 than a benchmark through which a
2 government can pat itself on the back.
3 It is the backbone of the neighborhoods
4 and communities that's the same as the
5 City.

6 However, these growth and
7 community investment opportunities rely
8 entirely on the City's willingness to
9 put in the time, effort and resources to
10 establish such impactful partnerships.
11 Philadelphia has been notorious in its
12 efforts to save a few dollars by
13 displacing the firms mentioned above,
14 including my own. In 2016, Philadelphia
15 awarded one of our most significant
16 cleaning contracts to a big Floridian
17 developer.

18 When a portion of our
19 businesses withdrawn, our profits sank
20 alongside us. Revenues, jobs and growth
21 opportunities plummet and the City
22 becomes increasingly reliant on
23 companies that don't understand our
24 City's intricate issues and do not seem
25 to care. Our government needs to care

1 for those who care. Around the country
2 major cities have long since recognized
3 the benefits, growth of diverse local
4 vendors, increased job opportunities,
5 local revenues of investments in
6 Black-owned businesses -- excuse me, and
7 procurement reform.

8 For example, Chicago's
9 Department of Procurement Services has
10 implemented a contract compliance system
11 and a procurement reform taskforce to
12 ensure responsible and effective
13 allocation of procurement to minority-
14 and women-owned businesses. Los
15 Angeles, which spends around 1.5 billion
16 on professional services but gives less
17 than 10 percent to entrepreneurs of
18 color, has relied on a city-accelerator
19 initiative to reduce complicated and
20 racially bias red-tape procurement
21 restrictions. Milwaukee, a city of
22 primarily minorities, uses the same
23 avenue to improve its 30 percent people
24 of color-owned business.

25 In 2020, City Council Isaiah

1 Thomas passed the Keep It Local bill,
2 which prioritizes diverse local
3 investments. Last week as the budget
4 hearings began, Thomas said that
5 politics is the allocation of scarce
6 resources. Philadelphia's scarce
7 resources must be prioritized for
8 Philadelphia companies, the women and
9 people of color who founded and grew
10 companies in our communities and should
11 be first to receive contracts and
12 funding from the City rather than
13 out-of-town firms will bolster our
14 cities. I want to thank you very much
15 for allowing me to testify.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Donna,
17 thank you so much for your testimony.

18 Are there any questions from
19 any of our colleagues to Donna's
20 testimony?

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: May I be
22 recognized, Mr. Chair?

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Sure,
24 Councilmember Thomas.

25 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,

1 Mr. Chair.

2 Thank you for your testimony.

3 That was amazing testimony, and I think
4 more important a testament to what can
5 happen to Philadelphia-based businesses
6 when we invest in them as local
7 government.

8 Just a couple quick questions
9 for you. So for a business like yours,
10 you talk about the number of people that
11 you were able to employ in the City of
12 Philadelphia, the type of impact that
13 that had on those employees, which is
14 great, but I'm wondering when you're
15 talking about your business, when you
16 were able to get a procurement
17 opportunity from the City of
18 Philadelphia, what did that do as it
19 relates to you being able to get a line
20 of credit for your business to be able
21 to help grow and expand and offer other
22 opportunities and pursue a vision that
23 you might have for your actual entity?
24 How did a contract with the City help
25 create a line of credit with banking and

1 other means that might have helped put
2 you in a better position as an entity?

3 MS. ALLIE: Yes, having a
4 contract with the City of Philadelphia
5 is big time. I was able to go to other
6 smaller municipalities and say -- even
7 for instance, we do the Philadelphia
8 Police Department. I was able to go to
9 Lower Merion. I was able to go to Upper
10 Darby because of my track record and
11 working for the City.

12 So it is really -- banks, there
13 was a long time before I could get a
14 loan from a bank. But when I presented
15 them with this large contract from the
16 City of Philadelphia, they were more
17 willing to talk to me. Does that answer
18 your question?

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Absolutely.
20 And when they hailed their opportunity
21 to present themselves, did you at any
22 time decide to move your entity out of
23 Philadelphia and relocate your business
24 out of Philadelphia because you were
25 able to get these other contracts or did

1 you remain in Philadelphia when --

2 MS. ALLIE: I remained in
3 Philadelphia.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And my last
5 question, Mr. Chair, for this particular
6 witness, being a Philadelphia-based
7 business when you hire, right, what
8 percentages of your employees
9 approximately are Philadelphia
10 residents? And when you lost that
11 contract, how many Philadelphia
12 residents do you feel like were impacted
13 based on that contract being given to a
14 company that's not in Philadelphia?

15 MS. ALLIE: Okay. So when I
16 lost that contract, fortunately the City
17 of Philadelphia has laws in place that
18 make sure that the rank-and-file
19 employees don't get displaced, so I
20 didn't lose a lot of rank-and-file
21 employees but the employees that were
22 impacted was our management staff, so
23 throughout the entire company that was a
24 big contract for us to lose. So I would
25 say we lost probably about

1 percentage-wise, maybe about I would say
2 3 to 4 percent.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And out of
4 that 3 to 4 percent, do you feel like
5 the majority were Philadelphia
6 residents?

7 MS. ALLIE: Oh, absolutely.
8 All, 100 percent.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
10 hypothetically speaking, if we were to
11 see sharper investment in the City of
12 Philadelphia for businesses like
13 yours -- we have right now a huge issue
14 as it relates to poverty, over 20
15 percent of our City lives in poverty --
16 how could us investing in businesses
17 like yours address the poverty crisis
18 that we're facing as a municipality
19 right now?

20 MS. ALLIE: Well, because we're
21 here, we care, we live here and we have
22 good union jobs. I'm speaking for Team
23 Clean. We have good union jobs. We
24 believe in paying a fair salary. We
25 understand the nuances of Philadelphia.

1 We understand the people. We understand
2 the culture. And it's just -- what more
3 can I say except for we are here and we
4 care.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: No, I think
6 that says a lot. And I think far too
7 often when we see us as the City doing
8 business with entities that's not in the
9 City, far too often we find businesses
10 who are removed and don't necessarily
11 have that understanding of the City.
12 But more importantly, similar to what
13 you said, they don't care about the
14 people in our City because this is not
15 where they live.

16 Mr. Chair, I'm sorry. I was a
17 little longer than I planned. But
18 again, I just want to say thank you for
19 your testimony today. It was amazing,
20 it was greatly appreciated and it's a
21 testament to the success that we could
22 all have as a municipality when we
23 invest in local businesses.

24 And thank you, Mr. Chair. I
25 appreciate it. And again, thank you to

1 this witness.

2 MS. ALLIE: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
4 for your questions.

5 I do not see any additional
6 questions. Mr. McMonagle, can you call
7 the next person to testify.

8 THE CLERK: Yes, can we please
9 have Madjid Tavana.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: If you
11 could unmute and if you're available to
12 testify.

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I see them
15 here on the screen. I do not know if
16 they're available at this time.

17 Mr. McMonagle, do you want to
18 read the next person and we'll call back
19 to Madjid.

20 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
21 have J'nelle Lawrence.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: J'nelle,
23 are you available?

24 MS. LAWRENCE: I am. Can you
25 hear me okay?

1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: We hear
2 you fine. Just state your name and then
3 proceed with your testimony. Thank you.

4 MS. LAWRENCE: Yes, J'nelle
5 Lawrence. So good afternoon. I'm
6 J'nelle Lawrence. I'm the Deputy
7 Executive Director for the PAGE
8 Initiative at the Economy League of
9 Greater Philadelphia. The Economy
10 League is an 112-year-old nonprofit here
11 in Philly, a do-and-think tank. We have
12 several programs within the Economy
13 League and they're all based towards
14 building a better Philadelphia in terms
15 of either racial equity, social equity
16 and the program that I'm going to be
17 speaking on today is our PAGE
18 initiative.

19 So PAGE stands for Philadelphia
20 Anchors for Growth and Equity, and it is
21 a partnership between the Economy
22 League, the City of Philadelphia and
23 more than a dozen Philadelphia area
24 institutions that work to increase local
25 purchasing by our institutional buyers

1 to grow Philadelphia businesses,
2 strengthen the local economy, create
3 jobs and build wealth. I've been at the
4 Economy League and PAGE for two years
5 now and was recently promoted to our
6 Deputy Executive Director role at the
7 Economy League. And my manager Jeff
8 Horenstein, our Director for the Economy
9 League, sends his regards as well.

10 So the opportunity with PAGE,
11 it all stems from -- we look at our
12 institutional supply chains from our
13 anchor institutions and increasing local
14 purchasing by our anchor institutions
15 offers a tremendous opportunity to grow
16 jobs and build local wealth here in
17 Philadelphia.

18 Today the 34 universities and
19 hospitals located in Philly together
20 spend over \$5.3 billion on goods and
21 services every year, but nearly half of
22 these dollars are currently spent
23 outside of Philadelphia. Analysis of a
24 local business landscape suggests that
25 at least \$530 million of anchored

1 dollars currently being spent outside of
2 the region align with our local market
3 supply. So basically that means that we
4 have businesses here in Philly that can
5 perform against this supply.

6 Capturing just 25 percent of
7 this half billion dollar opportunity
8 would translate into 1250 new
9 manufacturing jobs and over 4,000
10 indirect jobs here in Philly. And we
11 get the question a lot of what is an
12 anchor institution. So with anchor
13 institutions, historically there are eds
14 and meds. So if you want to think about
15 CHOP, Thomas Jefferson University and
16 Hospital, Drexel, Penn, Penn Medicine,
17 so our anchor institutions are anchored
18 in place by assets such as historic
19 academic campuses or medical facilities.
20 Because they are rooted in place,
21 anchors are invested in improving the
22 welfare of their surrounding
23 neighborhoods.

24 And the PAGE framework, we are
25 leveraging our deep knowledge of the

1 Philadelphia market and broad network of
2 stakeholders to provide insight into
3 institutional purchasing practices,
4 reduce barriers to participation for
5 local businesses, engage major suppliers
6 and catalyze the creation of a
7 supportive ecosystem. And really how we
8 do that on a daily basis is we work with
9 our anchor institutions so either folks
10 in Procurement, Supplier Diversity and
11 Purchasing and we go through their
12 contracts. We go through their
13 opportunities. We're really trying to
14 find what are the real anchor contracts,
15 what are the real RFPs that are coming
16 up in the next 12 or 18 months and how
17 can we connect them to our local
18 businesses here in Philly and especially
19 our local Black and Brown businesses.

20 And so, on February 1st we held
21 our annual PAGE Summit. The summit was
22 attended by more than 160 folks in our
23 ecosystem. We want to thank
24 Councilmember Mark Squilla,
25 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier and

1 Councilmember Isaiah Thomas who were
2 also in attendance at the summit. And
3 the theme of the summit was
4 acknowledging impact, identifying
5 opportunity and assuring accountability.

6 And what we did was we also had
7 our Mayor Jim Kenney announce the
8 accountability framework for our
9 anchors, and the accountability
10 framework is a challenge that we're
11 posing to our anchors of a \$75 million
12 new spend with our Black and Brown local
13 businesses here in Philly.

14 And so, I just wanted to
15 reiterate again that PAGE, we work with
16 our Philly anchors. We are a
17 collaboration between our anchor
18 institutions, the City of Philadelphia
19 and the Economy League to build a better
20 Philadelphia by helping our local Black
21 and Brown businesses, give them an
22 opportunity to compete with our anchor
23 procurement systems. And that concludes
24 my testimony.

25 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

1 Really appreciate your testimony. It
2 was very helpful.

3 Is there any questions from the
4 Committee?

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Mr. Chair.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
7 Councilmember Thomas.

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chair.

10 I just want to say thank you
11 for your advocacy and for all your work.
12 A lot of our advocacy and a lot of the
13 benchmarks that we try to push the
14 Administration to adhere to is based on
15 the work that's being done, and we
16 appreciate you getting our anchor
17 institutions to buy in to investment
18 into our local businesses. And again,
19 just another example of us asking the
20 private sector to do something different
21 than what we're doing as government.

22 So if we are going to ask these
23 anchor institutions to invest in a local
24 economy, we have to lead the way. So
25 thank you for all the work. Thank you

1 for supporting us throughout the course
2 of this process. And we look forward to
3 continuing to work with you and your
4 team to improve local spending and the
5 support system for local businesses. So
6 thank you.

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Awesome. No,
8 thank you. Thank you for your support.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
10 very much. I'm not sure if Madjid is
11 available.

12 If not, Mr. McMonagle, do you
13 want to read the name of the next person
14 to testify.

15 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
16 have Anne Gemmell.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Anne, are
18 you available?

19 MS. GEMMELL: Yes, I'm here.
20 Hi, everyone.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
22 Thank you, Anne, for coming to testify.
23 Just state your name for the record and
24 then proceed with your testimony.

25 MS. GEMMELL: Absolutely.

1 Sorry I'm not on video. Teams is now
2 telling me that video is not working for
3 Teams. Sometimes Teams and Mac don't
4 get along. So my name is Anne Gemmell,
5 long-time resident and now principal of
6 a consulting company. Thank you so much
7 for the opportunity to testify today
8 about Keep It Local and other local
9 business enterprise initiatives.

10 I love how City Council has
11 been building momentum over recent
12 years, really starting with the November
13 2019 Home Rule Charter change which
14 raised the threshold of where RFPs, how
15 much could be spent on an RFP without --
16 and they'll raise the threshold for
17 bidding on that. And as a local woman-
18 owned business, I do appreciate all of
19 this focus on local purchasing.

20 And my testimony today is in no
21 way meant to disparage how this great
22 work. However, in my role at the Office
23 of Workforce Development leading the
24 future of workers policy response,
25 several fellow public servants tried to

1 support the creation of an economic
2 development vision, mission and strategy
3 because we know a transparent and
4 accountable economic development
5 strategy would align other policies and
6 actions from other institutions. And
7 then in 2019 Growing With Equity was
8 released, but then the pandemic hit and
9 then the Commerce Department had a
10 leadership change and a lot of changes
11 overall.

12 And so, the question remains,
13 what is the City of Philadelphia's
14 collective economic development North
15 Star strategies. In my written
16 testimony, I've listed 10 questions that
17 touch on key unanswered questions for
18 regional leaders. What are we trying to
19 do, grow jobs or quality jobs, what
20 about commercial corridors in the age of
21 e-commerce, are we working on raising
22 average income or closing income
23 inequality gaps. What about the racial
24 wealth disparity, that's going to take
25 massive hits in the age of automation.

1 The list goes on in my written
2 testimony, and these are just 10 of the
3 key strategic questions that we need to
4 consider as regional leaders. The point
5 here is that as great as the Local
6 Business Enterprise Initiatives are and
7 Keep It Local legislation and the
8 Charter change, this is all great, but
9 where these are operational and tactical
10 and policy efforts that lack a coherent
11 economic development strategy overall.

12 There's so many terrific people
13 with amazing skills. We've heard from
14 them today. They're here on the call.
15 But many of them are inadvertently
16 working at cross-purposes with a little
17 bit of redundancy. And we can all
18 benefit, and I ask this Committee to
19 really assert your leadership as
20 longstanding continuous leaders in this
21 space to be co-conveners and efficiently
22 build a valuable and viable economic
23 development strategy convening the many
24 experts and citizens who deeply care
25 about this.

1 And the second request is that
2 you utilize the most cutting edge
3 strategic collaboration methodology that
4 is available for this type of thing.

5 This process was employed by the Obama
6 White House to craft the Obama Care
7 legislative strategy, and it can easily
8 include diverse perspectives. Everyone
9 on this call can contribute a few hours
10 to co-create a consensus-driven and
11 equitable economic development strategy
12 and vision, all under the privacy
13 protection of a secure nondisclosure
14 agreement. And you don't have to hire a
15 major global whale of a consulting firm
16 to do this for the City of Philadelphia.

17 You know who I'm talking about.
18 They will just dust off cookie-cutter
19 strategies that they've written for
20 other cities, and as Donna Allie and
21 J'nelle mentioned, without being
22 well-informed by the things that make
23 Philly uniquely Philly. So why now?
24 The timing is unbelievable. Obviously,
25 everything that was created before the

1 pandemic needs to be re-examined and
2 refreshed. And so, the timing is so
3 critical.

4 In my written testimony I list
5 seven reasons why the time is now for
6 this Committee to be a leader and
7 co-convene the creation of this
8 strategy. But I want to emphasize
9 specifically one top reason: The human
10 cost of operating inefficiently without
11 a coherent economic development strategy
12 really leaves hundreds of thousands of
13 people very vulnerable to technological
14 disruption because workforce development
15 strategies and talent supply strategies
16 work fast when they're aligned with
17 economic development strategies, and we
18 don't have an overarching economic
19 development strategic vision right now.

20 So the point is that these
21 local business efforts are amazing and
22 we all do our best. All of the entities
23 and experts and engaged citizens do our
24 best to collaborate. But very often
25 collaboration is left to personality and

1 personal charisma of various leaders who
2 take initiative. And we can't rely on
3 that because when their charisma leaves,
4 then the initiatives falter.

5 We need something that we can
6 always rely on and return to no matter
7 what happens around us, no matter what
8 happens if another pandemic hits. And
9 this is so urgent because we're at the
10 beginning of the age of automation, and
11 artificial intelligence is going to
12 accelerate so many things that we cannot
13 even imagine. And so, old school
14 collaboration fueled by ever-growing
15 political polarization means that the
16 loudest voices dominate important
17 discussions, and then problems become
18 intractable and people avoid trying to
19 solve them. And so, we need authentic
20 strategic collaboration. It's the key
21 to success, but it's very difficult.
22 You got emotions and power dynamics.
23 But I can tell you that I've personally
24 experienced this process and
25 methodology. It works.

1 Secretary Berrier of the
2 Pennsylvania Department of Labor and
3 Industry just released a product of this
4 process. 60 people from all political
5 stripes from across Pennsylvania,
6 business, labor academia, et cetera,
7 co-created a five year future of worker
8 strategy for the Commonwealth of
9 Pennsylvania that Governor Wolf will now
10 use as his transition document to the
11 next Governor to be determined. So we
12 can conduct authentic, strategic
13 collaboration, create opportunities for
14 leaders, spark innovation and get an
15 economic development strategy down on
16 paper. The time is now. It's so
17 urgent, and there's a local consultant
18 right here who's trained to do this
19 methodology.

20 Thank you so much for your
21 time. I'm happy to take any questions
22 and there's a lot more detail in my
23 written testimony and listed many of the
24 entities that could possibly be convened
25 under the leadership of this Committee.

1 Thanks so much for your time.

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Anne,
3 thank you so much for your testimony.
4 Much appreciated. And I believe that
5 you're the last one to testify.

6 And if there any questions from
7 anybody on the Committee, please notify
8 me and let me know. I think it's been
9 great testimony today and how important
10 it is to represent local businesses here
11 in the City of Philadelphia to make sure
12 we engage them properly to grow that.

13 If there's not any other
14 questions from anyone?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay.
17 Hearing none, there are no other
18 questions or comments from members of
19 the Committee. We will conclude the
20 meeting. This concludes the business
21 before the Committee on Commerce and
22 Economic Development. Thank you all
23 very much for your attendance and
24 appreciate all your time. Looking
25 forward to continuing this conversation

1 moving forward. Have a great day.

2 (Committee on Commerce and

3 Economic Development concluded at

4 1:53 p.m.)

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2 I, hereby certify that the
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6 this is a correct transcript of the same.
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