

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

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, April 30, 2015
3:10 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

BILL 150093 - An ordinance amending Chapter 18-200 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Airports," by requiring providers of ground-handling services at City airport facilities to obtain a permit from the City before providing ground-handling services and providing for possible permit revocation, all under certain terms and conditions.

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2 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Good
3 afternoon. This hearing is called to
4 order. This is a public hearing of the
5 Commerce and Economic Development
6 Committee on Bill No. 150093. My name is
7 W. Wilson Goode, Jr., Chair of the
8 Committee.

9 I note that a quorum is
10 present. To my right is Councilwoman
11 Jannie Blackwell. To my far left is
12 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown. To
13 my immediate left is Councilman Kenyatta
14 Johnson.

15 The title of the Bill No.
16 150093, amending Chapter 18-200 of The
17 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Airports,"
18 by requiring providers of ground-handling
19 services at City airport facilities to
20 obtain a permit from the City before
21 providing ground-handling services and
22 providing for possible permit revocation,
23 all under certain terms and conditions.

24 Our first witness is Dr. Peter
25 Hall.

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Our next
4 witness is Gabe Morgan.

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Our next
7 witness is Samai Kallon.

8 Let me note for the record
9 Councilman Mark Squilla is here as well.

10 And Latrese Pickett.

11 (Witness approached witness
12 table.)

13 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And Dawn
14 Rivera.

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Good
17 afternoon, sir. Please state your name
18 for the record and proceed with your
19 testimony.

20 MR. KALLON: Chairman of the
21 Philadelphia City Council,
22 Councilmembers, including all airport
23 workers present here today, I'm extremely
24 delighted and excited to honor and greet
25 you all in the name of solidarity. My

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2 reason here this afternoon is brief but
3 important. It is important to me, but
4 the hard-working union 32BJ to talk about
5 our deplorable living wage at the
6 Philadelphia International Airport. In
7 this regard, I wish to personally present
8 some of (unintelligible) sitting with me
9 here.

10 My name is Samai Kallon. I'm a
11 lead wheelchair attendant for Prospect at
12 the Philadelphia International Airport.
13 I've been there just over a year. Right
14 now I make \$7.05 an hour. I get no
15 government assistance. This is my only
16 job because of my age and my health.

17 When I started, I made 5.75 an
18 hour because I was a wheelchair agent.
19 Then I moved to a traffic -- as traffic
20 agent and made 7.25 an hour. Now it is
21 7.75 an hour. Despite the increase, I
22 still can't make it. It's really bad.
23 It's stressful, very stressful living on
24 this meager, meager wage.

25 I'm originally from Sierra

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2 Leone in the western part of Africa.

3 When I tell people there what I make

4 here, they can't imagine it. People

5 there feel like America is the greatest

6 country and everything that is absolutely

7 working for us. They think I also be

8 rich, but they are mistaken.

9 In Sierra Leone, I was a

10 teacher. I later worked for the

11 teacher's union as the regional

12 (unintelligible). I was making good

13 money as a unionist. My job was

14 making -- it was to make sure the

15 teachers there didn't suffer at all. The

16 union is there to protect the employees,

17 and that is what I did.

18 I went through many, many

19 crucibles. Rebels not only need to keep

20 me (unintelligible), because I was there

21 to ensure we seek the welfare of our

22 employees.

23 I've been here for almost five

24 years now, but I'm worse off here

25 financially than I was at home. It's

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2 difficult to afford to return home. I
3 can't afford it. Plus many there think I
4 am doing well.

5 I rent a house here. I've had
6 difficulty paying the rent. I have
7 medical procedure that set me back
8 financially and I wasn't able to pay it
9 for several months. In addition to my
10 rent, I have bills to pay. I also have
11 several children back home that I'm
12 responsible for. My children rely on me.
13 Some are in college and some are in high
14 school in my country. All the money I
15 get is what we all depend on. I rarely
16 have any money left over at the end of
17 the month. 7.75 is not salary for me.

18 I'm not able to save any money.
19 My expenditures are more than my income.
20 I'm already in the pit and I'm trying to
21 rise. By the grace of the Almighty God
22 that keep me here will make me rise. I'm
23 still persevering with the hope of having
24 a raise.

25 I have to get my healthcare

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2 from the marketplace. I don't have sick
3 days or any type of benefits at my job.
4 If I don't work, I don't get paid.

5 When I was sick, I was rushed
6 to the hospital. I was put on
7 medication. This last month I had to
8 have surgery. Every week I get letters
9 to pay the hospital bills, but I can't
10 pay them because of what I make. That
11 then causes me to stress and raise my
12 blood pressure all the time, which
13 impacts my health.

14 We've been promised raises last
15 year in January this year and now July of
16 this year. As of now, we have yet to see
17 a raise.

18 We need the airlines to hold
19 the contractors they hire accountable.
20 If you hire them, you need to make sure
21 they are treating workers with dignity
22 and respect. Make them pay us what the
23 residents of this city voted for, what
24 the Mayor signed off on, and pay us what
25 we are promised and what we deserve.

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2 I've already made this crystal
3 clear that we, the workers at the
4 airport, (unintelligible) in a very big
5 pit. And the only person I depend on, I
6 rely on to raise me from that pit is
7 32BJ, and they be working tirelessly,
8 relentlessly to ensure that we really get
9 raise. Even if we get that raise, if we
10 don't have a union, how do we really
11 stand? But the union is here to protect
12 workers. The union is here to really
13 seek the welfare of workers, employees.
14 Without the union, the employers take
15 advantage of us at any time. Watch what
16 they'll do. Either reduce our hours or
17 they really fire us or probably lay us
18 off. But when we have a union, we are
19 very grateful.

20 According to what Nelson
21 Mandela recently said before he died, he
22 said the greatest glory in living lies is
23 not in never falling, but raising every
24 time we fall. We are already in the pit,
25 but we optimistic to rise through the

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2 help of 32BJ union.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. KALLON: Martin Luther

5 King, Jr. said the ultimate measure of a
6 man is not where he stands in moments of
7 comfort, convenience, and happiness all
8 the time, but where he stands in time of
9 challenges, controversies, difficulties,
10 triumphs, and (unintelligible). He said
11 when I need (unintelligible) crucibles,
12 this or this. (Unintelligible) or raise
13 the town of dread to the town of
14 almighty. We are in the pit, but at
15 32BJ, you know the strongest senior
16 (unintelligible) so far is there to
17 really rise me from that pit.

18 Similarly, when life gives you
19 a hundred reasons to cry, show life that
20 you have a thousand reasons to laugh. We
21 are (unintelligible), but if soon that
22 (unintelligible) employees smiling.

23 So among other things, in spite
24 of everything, I want to beg your
25 indulgence to really allow me to stop

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2 here for now, because I'm aggravated over
3 that sort of low income we are getting.

4 We are serving. I'm a gentleman. Also a
5 very powerful person in my union. When I
6 came here, I thought I was going to
7 really get an (unintelligible), but what
8 the reason I get here? Nothing else
9 really. We are struggling for survival.

10 Thank you very much.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you
13 for your testimony.

14 Are there questions for this
15 witness?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Seeing none,
18 Latrese Pickett, Dawn Rivera, please come
19 forward.

20 (Witness approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Please state
23 your name for the record and proceed with
24 your testimony.

25 MS. RIVERA: My name is Dawn

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2 Rivera and I work for PrimeFlight, and
3 good afternoon to all the Councilmen.

4 Hello. My name is Dawn. I'm a
5 mother of two and I work 2:00 a.m. to
6 10:30 a.m. for PrimeFlight Aviation at
7 the Philadelphia Airport. I worked there
8 for almost two years.

9 I spend so much time trying to
10 meet the needs of the company that is
11 causing me not to give 100 percent to my
12 family. The number one priority in
13 everyone's home should be family. I am
14 not there for my family as I should. I'm
15 either too tired or too busy. One of the
16 main purposes of having a job is to
17 provide for your family, but I work side
18 jobs to make ends meet, which causes me
19 to not spend time with my family. I'm
20 doing the very best that I can to
21 provide, but I am not there for them as I
22 should be.

23 If we didn't have to work so
24 hard, we can maintain stability in our
25 homes, as I know that you would like

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2 stability in your home. The kids
3 wouldn't be unhinged, because the parent
4 could be available more to spend time
5 with them and guide them.

6 I'm not making, you know, it on
7 this money. More money would allow
8 workers to come off some assistance. We
9 wouldn't need to rely on so much on CAP
10 or LIHEAP, the programs that are offered
11 to help us to pay for our bills. More
12 money would make me feel more
13 independent. Right now I feel like a
14 child who is still under her parents
15 asking for money. That should not be the
16 case. Better pay would allow me to
17 support myself, as well as other people
18 here that have that situation.

19 We don't receive any extra
20 money for filling in when co-workers
21 don't show up or are falling behind on
22 their shift. When the managers come in,
23 all you get is a pat on the shoulder.
24 The job doesn't realize how hard we're
25 working. We're holding up the company.

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2 PrimeFlight doesn't give us the
3 money we need. Of course, the company
4 can increase the wage, but we need
5 someone to ensure we get the money we
6 deserve, that our hours are stable and we
7 maintain 40 hours a week.

8 There needs to be some type of
9 regulation to make sure these companies
10 stop getting over on the little man.
11 These companies think the City is a joke
12 because they continue with business as
13 usual. The voters and the Mayor signed
14 off on the increase. What are we going
15 to do about it? What are we going --
16 when are we going to be able to as a
17 whole have this all, how you say, come to
18 a head and be resolved? The
19 subcontractors are brushing it off. It's
20 time to move forward, make a positive
21 step to conclude this situation of unfair
22 treatment.

23 Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you

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2 for your testimony, Ms. Rivera.

3 Are there questions for this
4 witness?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Seeing none,
7 thank you very much.

8 Let me note for the record also
9 Councilwoman Marian Tasco is here.

10 Is Latrese Pickett here?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Dr. Peter
13 Hall.

14 DR. HALL: Hi. Can everyone
15 hear me? Could you maybe give me a
16 thumbs up.

17 Okay. Well, thank you very
18 much for the opportunity to provide
19 testimony today as you consider this
20 bill. I've submitted a short written
21 statement and I'm going to speak to that
22 and obviously have the statement
23 submitted after that.

24 My area of specialty concerns
25 the transportation industry and its

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2 intersection with employment. It's one
3 of the topics that I work on both in
4 Canada and in the United States. And I
5 think I've particularly been invited here
6 today because of the study that we made
7 of the San Francisco International
8 Airport Quality Standards Program, which
9 was implemented back in 2000 and it
10 continues to enjoy the support of airport
11 management at SFO as well as the airlines
12 that have continued to make that a key
13 part of their North American operations.

14 We published the study, an
15 evaluation of the Quality Standards
16 Program, and last year we updated that
17 study in a chapter in a book, which I
18 believe was with my letter and might have
19 been circulated to you.

20 I think probably the best way
21 to think about something like the Quality
22 Standards Program is that it's the
23 regulating mechanism that really helps to
24 lock in the benefits that come from
25 higher wages. So we know that higher

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2 wages reduce employee turnover and
3 encourage improved worker performance,
4 but there is -- it is important that
5 those expectations and standards are
6 effectively communicated, both to the
7 workers as well as to the companies that
8 are involved. And so I would encourage
9 you as you consider the ordinance in
10 front of you to think of this as a
11 mechanism to ensure that the companies
12 that are contracting with the Airport
13 understand what's expected from them in
14 terms of training and service quality and
15 also that they effectively communicate
16 those expectations to the workers who are
17 the beneficiaries ultimately of the
18 living wage policy.

19 I think the one other thing to
20 say about the experience in San
21 Francisco, which is now 15 years -- has a
22 15-year track record, is that they have
23 not seen any decline in their business at
24 that airport and indeed have attracted at
25 least one major airline, international

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2 airline, to make that their hub since the
3 policy was implemented.

4 There seems to be an
5 appropriate way to deal with what are
6 really the front door to city economies
7 in the current global economy. This is
8 the first place that people see when they
9 visit your city and region. This is a
10 place where we should expect high
11 standards from the workers and from the
12 companies that are contracting there and
13 where we should, yes, at the same time
14 compensate those workers adequately for
15 that job.

16 So I'd be happy to take any
17 questions. Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you
19 for your testimony, Dr. Hall.

20 Are there questions from the
21 Committee?

22 (No response.)

23 DR. HALL: Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you
25 very much.

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2 We will wait five minutes for
3 Gabe Morgan. Is there anyone else here
4 to testify?

5 (Witness approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Good
8 afternoon. Please state your name for
9 the record and proceed with your
10 testimony.

11 MS. CRUZ: Daisy Cruz. I'll be
12 reading a statement on behalf of Gabe
13 Morgan.

14 Changes in the economy have
15 caused changes with businesses. All
16 businesses work to maximize profits, and
17 these impact the workers. The low-bid
18 contracting we have at the Philadelphia
19 Airport impacts the hard-working men and
20 women doing the strenuous jobs. There
21 isn't much being done at the Airport to
22 hold these subcontractors accountable for
23 their business practices.

24 There are about 2,500
25 subcontracted passenger service workers

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2 at the Airport working for 25 different
3 contractors. The men and women who work
4 for these subcontractors, like
5 PrimeFlight and Prospect, have access and
6 are responsible for going behind security
7 lines to highly sensitive areas. The
8 lack of permitting standards raises
9 several questions from property security
10 to safe working conditions. These are
11 multi-million-dollar companies that
12 operate in some of the nation's largest
13 airports and they do business the same
14 way everywhere, and it has to stop.
15 Selling out to the lowest bidder means
16 low-quality wages and working conditions
17 for low-wage workers.

18 Statistics show wages for
19 airport workers have declined over the
20 years due in part from the move from
21 direct hire to subcontracting. Average
22 weekly wages dropped by 14 percent going
23 back to 1991. With the decline of wages,
24 as of 2010, more than one-third of the
25 nation's airport cleaning and baggage

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2 workers live near the poverty line.

3 But the situation is worse in
4 Philadelphia. According to a 2013 report
5 by the National Employment Law Project,
6 three-fourths of surveyed airport workers
7 report having trouble paying their bills.
8 They said they had to forego medicine,
9 food, and even transportation to get to
10 those low-paying jobs.

11 Low pay and poor working
12 conditions mean workers have less money
13 to spend in their communities to help
14 stimulate the economy. That same survey
15 reports that on average airport workers
16 earn \$7.85 an hour. In 2014, the average
17 cost to rent an apartment was \$876. A
18 worker working 40 hours a week will have
19 to spend at least 64 percent of his or
20 her income on rent. That doesn't leave
21 much left for anything else when you
22 still have bills to pay. Because of
23 this, many workers live at home, working
24 two and three jobs, missing out on
25 precious time with their families. They

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2 aren't making ends meet. They tell us
3 bills still continue to come in, but they
4 can't afford to pay them, and that's not
5 right.

6 Philadelphia needs to follow
7 the example of Los Angeles and San
8 Francisco, those airports. They
9 recognized the disparities happening and
10 made some changes. They took the
11 initiative and raised standards for a
12 wide array of airport service provided by
13 airlines and subcontractors.

14 In the next 15 months, the
15 world's eyes will be on this City. In
16 September, the Pope will be here for the
17 World Meeting of Families. Next summer
18 the Democratic National Convention will
19 be hosted here. Dignitaries and
20 celebrities will be in our great city.
21 All eyes will be on us. This world-class
22 city needs a world-class airport. But
23 will it do what's right so the people
24 working there can have the right to a
25 decent way of life?

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2 Let's do what's right and hold
3 these contractors accountable so that
4 these hard-working men and women can live
5 with dignity and respect and not feel
6 like third-class citizens in the highest
7 paid nation in the world.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Ms. Cruz.

11 MS. CRUZ: Sorry.

12 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you
13 for your testimony on behalf of
14 Mr. Morgan. Councilwoman Tasco has a
15 question.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I just
17 want to ask a question. Is your concern
18 here today and that of the employees that
19 the wages have not gone up?

20 (Witness approached witness
21 table.)

22 MS. CRUZ: Not only have the
23 wages haven't gone up, but the
24 subcontractors haven't -- they're not
25 doing the right thing. They're not doing

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2 the right thing. They're not -- anyone
3 can get hired. These subcontractors --
4 and it could be any subcontractor and
5 they're not following any rules.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Are they
7 supposed to pay -- as I understand it,
8 there's an agreement July 1st that they
9 have to pay the 12.50.

10 MS. CRUZ: Yes.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: \$12 an
12 hour.

13 MS. CRUZ: \$12, yes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: You don't
15 agree with that?

16 MS. CRUZ: Do I not agree that
17 they should be paying it?

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, they
19 are supposed to pay it.

20 MS. CRUZ: They should be
21 paying it, yes.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: They will
23 be paying it July 1st.

24 MS. CRUZ: They say that they
25 would, but they haven't done anything --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well,
3 that's the agreement that --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
5 PrimeFlight has said they will not pay.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Beg your
7 pardon?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
9 PrimeFlight has said publicly they will
10 not pay the increase.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0:
12 PrimeFlight?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's
14 one of the subcontractors.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, then
16 they just have to leave, because that's
17 the law of the City. The ordinance says
18 that they have to pay the wage that was
19 passed by this Council. Then they have
20 to pay it.

21 MS. CRUZ: I agree.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So I'm
23 trying to figure out today what we're
24 talking about. That's my -- what are we
25 talking about? Because there is already

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2 an agreement as --

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE:

4 Councilwoman?

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO -- a Council
6 ordinance that they have to pay the
7 \$12.50.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE:

9 Councilwoman, in addition to wages and
10 benefits, what I think the witness stated
11 was they also want to set up other
12 requirements for the contractors to make
13 sure the contractors have certain
14 standards and meet certain standards that
15 are national standards.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Well, I'm
17 not sure I know what that means.

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay.

19 Thank you very much.

20 MS. CRUZ: Gabe actually just
21 walked in.

22 (Witness approached witness
23 table.)

24 MR. MORGAN: I apologize.

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: No problem.

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2 Thank you, Mr. Morgan. Actually,
3 Ms. Cruz gave your testimony.

4 MR. MORGAN: Okay. All right.
5 Is there anything I need to do here? She
6 read my testimony. I don't have
7 additional testimony other than I thank
8 this Council for having this hearing and
9 appreciate the way the Council has
10 proactively sought to address the issues
11 that are happening to thousands of
12 workers at the Airport who are deeply in
13 need of that action.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Any
16 questions for Mr. Morgan?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you
19 very much.

20 MR. MORGAN: Thank you.

21 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Is there
22 anyone else to testify?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Seeing none,
25 we will move from our public hearing into

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2 a public meeting within two minutes.

3 Thank you very much.

4 (Brief pause.)

5 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you
6 very much. We will not be taking action
7 on this bill at this time at the request
8 of the primary sponsor, and this hearing
9 is recessed to the call of the Chair.

10 Thank you.

11 (Committee on Commerce and
12 Economic Development concluded at 3:35
13 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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