

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON THE DISABLED AND
PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, April 21, 2016
2:20 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM

RESOLUTION 160259 - Resolution authorizing the
Committee on Disabled & Persons With Special
Needs to hold hearings regarding ongoing
efforts to meet the demand for services among
children and adults with Autism by groups like
the Philadelphia Autism Project.

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COUNCILMAN GREEN: Good
afternoon. This hearing is called to
order. This is a public hearing of the
City Council Committee on Disabilities
and People with Special Needs. The
purpose of this public hearing is to hear
testimony on Resolution No. 160259.

At this time, I recognize the
presence of Councilwoman Helen Gym.
Other Councilmembers will be coming in.
As you know, we're in our budget season
and so days in the Council body in
Chambers is quite hectic.

I will have the Clerk read the
title of the resolution.

THE CLERK: Resolution No.
160259, resolution authorizing the
Committee on Disabled & Persons With
Special Needs to hold hearings regarding
ongoing efforts to meet the demand for
services among children and adults with
Autism by groups like the Philadelphia
Autism Project.

COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,

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2 Mr. Iannuzzi.

3 If we could have the first
4 panel come to the table. Still
5 Councilman to me, Councilman Dennis
6 O'Brien, Nina Wall, Pam Piscitelli.
7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And for me,
10 as many of you probably know, that autism
11 is an issue that's deep and personal to
12 me. My son was diagnosed on the autism
13 spectrum in 2004 when he was about 3.
14 And so at that time, one out of every 200
15 children were diagnosed with autism. Now
16 we're up to 1 out of every 68. And most
17 of your life is as an adult, not as a
18 child, so that's why we need to continue
19 the work of the Philadelphia Autism
20 Project, which was an initiative
21 spearheaded by Councilman Dennis O'Brien,
22 and also some of the other work that he
23 did in Harrisburg as the Speaker of the
24 House, especially in reference to Act 62,
25 the Autism Insurance Act of 2008. So

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2 we're going to continue that work that
3 he's being doing, and that's really the
4 purpose of these hearings, to kind of
5 give a recap of the work of the
6 Philadelphia Autism Project, an
7 initiative that I had a chance to
8 participate in before becoming a member
9 of this body and to continue to support
10 the work, its efforts, and so we can
11 really provide hope and resources for
12 children and families who are living with
13 autism and living with this learning
14 difference.

15 So thank you.

16 I'm sorry. The Vice Chair of
17 the Committee, Helen Gym.

18 I'm not sure if you had any
19 opening comments.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I'm fine.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So we'll
22 start with the first panel. Thank you.

23 I'm also joined by Councilman
24 Allan Domb. Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: Thank you,

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2 Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee,
3 Councilwoman Gym, Councilman Allan Domb.
4 I'm going to stick to my testimony,
5 because I think I have the reputation for
6 going off script, and that can be very
7 dangerous.

8 So good afternoon, Councilman
9 Green and members of the Disabled and
10 Special Needs Committee. My name is
11 Dennis O'Brien, and this panel will speak
12 about the inception of the Philadelphia
13 Autism Project and the importance of the
14 collaboration between the project and the
15 ASERT Collaborative.

16 I'd like to start by providing
17 some background about the prevalence of
18 autism and how that impacts the work that
19 is done in Philadelphia and in the
20 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As the
21 Chairman has just noted, the Center for
22 Disease Control and Prevention found that
23 1 in 68 children meet criteria for
24 autism. When we look more specifically
25 at the data for Pennsylvania and

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2 Philadelphia, we can identify how many
3 people in the state and the City
4 respectively are receiving services. The
5 2014 Pennsylvania Census Update -- and we
6 are the only commonwealth that is doing
7 that census -- found that the number of
8 Philadelphians with autism receiving
9 services increased 116 percent to 4,617
10 individuals from 2,142 in the 2009
11 report. In Pennsylvania, the number
12 increased from nearly 20,000 to over
13 55,000 children and adults.

14 It is also important to note
15 that autism impacts individuals of all
16 racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic
17 backgrounds, and the diversity of the
18 population in Philadelphia warrants the
19 identification and creation of the
20 services and programming to support these
21 individuals. Although Philadelphia is
22 recognized as one of the top ten cities
23 to live in if you are diagnosed with
24 autism, we realized there continues to be
25 gaps in the services and supports, as

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2 well as unmet needs that must be
3 addressed. As a result, the Philadelphia
4 Autism Project was conceived in 2013.
5 The project is the first citywide
6 initiative of its kind and started with a
7 partnership with the Philadelphia
8 Department of Behavioral Health and
9 Intellectual disAbility Services. The
10 project was designed to create an
11 inclusive process that relies upon a
12 citywide task force of key stakeholders
13 to examine the quality and access to
14 services and supports for individuals
15 with autism and their families living in
16 Philadelphia.

17 At the start of the project, a
18 select leadership team helped identify
19 over 135 stakeholders representing the
20 following groups: self-advocates, family
21 members, policymakers, researchers,
22 service providers, and others who met in
23 three phases of working meetings. The
24 input and work of the stakeholders
25 resulted in a final strategic report

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2 outlining more than 100 initiatives to
3 create a more effective, efficient, and
4 comprehensive system of care. The report
5 represented an action plan for
6 Philadelphia to significantly improve the
7 lives of individuals and families living
8 with autism and is a critical first step
9 in our process to overcome the identified
10 environmental barriers.

11 The Philadelphia Autism Project
12 initiatives identified by the
13 stakeholders and outlined in the report
14 are currently being implemented to meet
15 the needs of the individuals with autism
16 and their families in Philadelphia. The
17 Philadelphia Autism Project is working in
18 conjunction with the ASERT Collaborative
19 Eastern Region, many of whom are in the
20 audience today, to support the
21 implementation of these initiatives, with
22 the input from the project stakeholders
23 and leadership. The ASERT Collaborative
24 is funded by the Bureau of Autism
25 Services, the Pennsylvania Department of

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2 Human Services. The Bureau of Autism
3 Services works to support individuals
4 with autism and their families throughout
5 Pennsylvania. In its mission, ASERT
6 provides expertise in clinical, data, and
7 policy projects. This partnership
8 between the ASERT Collaborative Eastern
9 Region and the Philadelphia Autism
10 Project provides a unique connection
11 between state and city efforts to
12 identify the most effective, efficient,
13 and comprehensive system of care for
14 individuals with autism at both levels.

15 The ASERT Eastern Region uses
16 data to identify the needs of individuals
17 with autism in Pennsylvania, which
18 supports the Bureau of Autism Services
19 and ASERT in project development. This
20 data is beneficial on both the state and
21 city level by informing service and
22 training development to address the
23 changing needs of the expanding and aging
24 population. More specifically, the ASERT
25 Collaborative has been able to support

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2 the Philadelphia Autism Project by
3 providing Philadelphia-specific data on
4 autism and in the organization and
5 implementation of stakeholder-generated
6 initiatives. Through community input and
7 citywide and statewide data, this
8 partnership helps identify and address
9 the needs of individuals with autism and
10 their families and is key to ensuring
11 that Philadelphia remains one of the top
12 ten cities to live in if you are
13 diagnosed with autism.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Ms. Wall.

15 MS. WALL: Good afternoon.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Good
17 afternoon.

18 MS. WALL: Councilman Green and
19 members of the Committee, my name is Nina
20 Wall. I serve as the Director of the
21 Bureau of Autism Services at the
22 Department of Human Services in the
23 Office of Developmental Programs, and it
24 is my great pleasure to be here today to
25 offer my support to the work that has

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2 been underway with the Philadelphia
3 Autism Project.

4 For those of you who don't
5 know, Pennsylvania, although we still
6 feel very much that we are at the
7 beginning of our work to build models to
8 support and assist people with autism,
9 Pennsylvania is really one of the states
10 that is leading the way in the
11 development of models of care and in
12 terms of the collaborations that have
13 been developed to address some of the
14 very complex systemic issues that we're
15 facing.

16 The work that has been rolling
17 out of the Bureau of Autism Services,
18 which I oversee, was born out of an
19 effort that reminds me an awful lot of
20 the Philadelphia Autism Project. It was
21 at the state level, and we brought
22 together about 300 people. And this was
23 way back in 2003. And the idea was to
24 bring lots of individuals together to
25 talk about what in the system was working

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2 for people with autism and also what
3 wasn't working, but the hardest part of
4 that effort -- because sometimes it's
5 very easy to identify what's broken.
6 Much more difficult to then develop
7 recommendations to move the system
8 forward. And this group, the Autism Task
9 Force, was charged with doing that.

10 They developed a report which
11 was issued in 2004, and that report, like
12 the report generated by the folks who
13 participated in the Philadelphia Autism
14 Project, became really a blueprint for
15 all of the work that's been underway in
16 Pennsylvania.

17 So this effort that is still
18 very young in the City reminds me a great
19 deal of what happened at the state level.
20 And I think what allowed the work at the
21 state level to move forward had a great
22 deal to do with vision and leadership.
23 Advocacy was a huge part of that as well.
24 And it was actually former Councilman
25 O'Brien, then-Speaker of the House, who

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2 really championed this issue at the state
3 level.

4 We have gone forward at the
5 state level to develop models that still
6 don't exist in other states. We
7 currently support about 700 adults with
8 autism in two models that are the first
9 of their kind. We developed the concept
10 of ASERT and the very rich collaboration
11 that has allowed us to extend our reach
12 into areas of the state and into domains
13 where there's a need for understanding
14 the problem at a larger scale using data.
15 So the collaboration of ASERT has been a
16 central cog in our wheel.

17 So I just want to say I was
18 heartened to watch the work unfold here
19 in the City, the Philadelphia Autism
20 Project, because I'm a big believer that
21 great things can happen when you bring
22 very energized, talented, visionary
23 people together. Good things can come of
24 that kind of energy. And I have watched
25 this collaboration unfold, and it's still

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2 a very young effort, but I think it's
3 very bold and it is the first of its kind
4 in the nation as well. This is -- I
5 think Philadelphia reaching out and
6 saying it wants to be the first
7 autism-friendly city in the country is
8 extraordinary, and I love the idea of the
9 state being able to work, again, with
10 folks at the local level to continue to
11 build capacity and extend our reach.

12 So this is a really
13 extraordinary effort that's underway
14 here. And I do want to just emphasize
15 that this is Autism Awareness Month. I
16 think we are the first state now to -- I
17 think we've officially changed that to
18 Autism Acceptance Month, and I think that
19 is important and compelling in many ways.

20 My own son was diagnosed with
21 autism in 1994, and I remember at the
22 time there was very little information
23 about autism. I think there was one book
24 in our local bookstore, and it was a time
25 where you need information as a parent,

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2 you need information, you need people,
3 you need resources, you need tools to
4 understand and navigate the system, and
5 those things were not available at the
6 time.

7 Now fast forward 20 years and
8 I'd have to say we're still very much at
9 the beginning of the work, but I look at
10 these kind of partnerships and the kind
11 of focus that has emerged certainly at
12 the state level and here in Philadelphia,
13 and it really does give me pause, and I'm
14 excited and encouraged to see what that
15 will yield.

16 So I think with that, I think
17 I'm going to pass the mic over to Pam,
18 because you're going to talk a little bit
19 more about the work in detail. But I --
20 one final thought. I just want to say
21 that the innovation that I see emanating
22 out of this effort is really quite
23 extraordinary. In order to address the
24 challenge we're seeing in the autism
25 arena right now is going to require

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2 really all hands on deck. It will
3 require resources. It will require
4 collaborative partnerships, but it's also
5 going to require innovative thinking
6 about how we address complex problems.
7 And I see that emerging here, and so I
8 have great hope and excitement about
9 what's to come.

10 So thank you very much for
11 inviting me here today.

12 Pam.

13 MS. PISCITELLI: Thank you,
14 Nina. Thank you, Denny.

15 Good afternoon, Councilman
16 Green and members of the Committee on
17 Disabled and Special Needs. My name is
18 Pamela Piscitelli. I am the Project
19 Manager for the Philadelphia Autism
20 Project and the Clinical Project Manager
21 of the Autism Services, Education,
22 Resources and Training Collaborative, or
23 ASERT, Eastern Region. ASERT is funded
24 by the Pennsylvania Department of Human
25 Services' Bureau of Autism Services. The

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2 Philadelphia Autism Project and the ASERT
3 Collaborative Eastern Region are housed
4 at the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute at
5 Drexel University.

6 As the Project Manager for the
7 Philadelphia Autism Project, I have
8 worked closely with the leadership
9 committee, stakeholders, and staff to
10 implement the initiatives identified
11 through multiple stakeholder meetings and
12 outlined in the Philadelphia Autism
13 Project report. These initiatives are
14 designed to address the diverse needs of
15 individuals with autism, their families,
16 and providers. During the past year and
17 a half, we have focused our efforts on
18 the implementation of key initiatives
19 designed to reach underserved and
20 underrepresented populations living with
21 autism in Philadelphia. Stakeholders
22 have identified better connectivity to
23 resources and outreach to underserved
24 communities as top priorities.

25 With my time here today, I'm

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2 going to discuss four of the Philadelphia
3 Autism Project initiatives, including an
4 online resource hub, an annual
5 conference, training, and seed awards.
6 These initiatives have been completed or
7 ongoing to meet those priorities.

8 The first initiative I will
9 discuss is the creation of an online
10 resource hub, phillyautismproject.org.
11 The website was designed to be connected
12 to the existing ASERT Collaborative
13 website, paautism.org, so Philadelphians
14 could access City-specific resources as
15 well as statewide resources. The website
16 is continuously evolving to meet the
17 needs of the community through user
18 feedback and feedback from the Philly
19 Autism Project leadership and
20 stakeholders. Currently, information for
21 over 30 in-person support groups in
22 Philadelphia is available through a
23 user-friendly neighborhood map interface.
24 This map interface also highlights our
25 work with the Free Library of

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2 Philadelphia by identifying library
3 locations throughout the City and
4 providing information on autism-friendly
5 events and services offered at each
6 location. Phillyautismproject.org also
7 includes Philadelphia-specific resources,
8 project updates, and an events calendar
9 highlighting local events.

10 The second of these initiatives
11 is an annual conference. The first
12 Philly Autism Project conference was held
13 in October 2015 at the Free Library of
14 Philadelphia, Parkway Central Branch. We
15 received an overwhelmingly positive
16 response to the conference, with over 150
17 conference attendees and speakers,
18 including self-advocates, family members,
19 and professionals from throughout the
20 Philadelphia region and beyond.
21 Attendees had the opportunity to connect
22 with leaders in the education, clinical,
23 policy, and research fields while also
24 learning about the Philadelphia Autism
25 Project community engagement efforts.

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The conference was an opportunity to provide concrete tools, innovative strategies, and vital resources for Philadelphians impacted by autism across the spectrum and lifespan. Future conferences will expand upon these initial connections and continue to build support for the organization of a grassroots advocacy movement by bringing together a community of individuals with autism, families, providers, and researchers.

In the spring of 2015, we distributed seed award funding to organizations and groups to reach underserved and underrepresented populations living with autism in Philadelphia. Twelve organizations and groups throughout the Philadelphia area were awarded funding. Through seed award funding, we were able to support programming and services that promoted community inclusion, created welcoming environments, engaged faith-based

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2 organizations, and created awareness
3 around the unique challenges faced by
4 families from diverse backgrounds.
5 Planning is already underway for another
6 round of seed award funding in 2016 to
7 target grassroots organizations and the
8 creation of support and self-advocacy
9 groups.

10 Trainings and outreach have
11 been another key component of the
12 Philadelphia Autism Project and will
13 continue to be a focus of our
14 implementation efforts in the future.
15 Catered trainings on resource navigation,
16 ASD 101, and justice system interactions
17 are just a few examples of the topic
18 areas that have been provided for family
19 members, providers, and justice system
20 professionals. These trainings are
21 another mechanism designed to increase
22 awareness and education about autism for
23 the community.

24 In order to further the efforts
25 of the Philadelphia Autism Project, four

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2 workgroups have been established. The
3 goals of these workgroups is to
4 accomplish the initiatives suggested by
5 stakeholders in the Philadelphia Autism
6 Project Implementation Survey during the
7 2013-2014 stakeholder meetings. The four
8 areas that these workgroups will focus on
9 in the future include funding, education,
10 clinical concerns across the lifespan,
11 and community inclusion. Each workgroup
12 has selected the top stakeholder
13 initiatives to support maximum impact and
14 effectiveness of the project.

15 As the Philadelphia Autism
16 Project continues to develop and grow, it
17 will be informed by emerging data,
18 outreach, and stakeholder and community
19 engagement. With continued support and
20 organization from City Council, we will
21 be able to maximally support individuals
22 with autism in Philadelphia as well as
23 their caregivers, family members, support
24 professionals, educators, and fellow
25 community members in the community and be

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2 responsive to their needs.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I want to
5 thank all of you for your testimony. I'm
6 going to open it up with a few questions
7 I have and then open it to other
8 questions that members of the Committee
9 may have.

10 When I think about the things
11 that were said earlier, Ms. Wall, you
12 talked about autism acceptance and
13 Pennsylvania moving in that regard, and
14 we know this is Autism Awareness, and I
15 guess part of my concern is how do we
16 get the -- although Pennsylvania and
17 Philadelphia is in a really good place
18 compared to the rest of the nation,
19 there's still so much more information
20 that needs to get out, and part of the
21 challenge that I see in other issues or
22 concerns around not just the City but the
23 nation, there's often a sustained
24 marketing initiative to get people more
25 familiar with the concern and issue.

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2 When I think about my work with
3 Councilwoman Tasco working with the
4 Maternity Care Coalition and we did a lot
5 of work regarding SIDS and sudden infant
6 death syndrome and other issues like HIV
7 and AIDS and people are much more
8 familiar. And I think we're getting to
9 that in reference to autism on a more
10 macro level, but when it comes to
11 resources, there still seems to be
12 information that's not there.

13 How would you suggest we
14 continue to grow our ability to get
15 information out of where to get resources
16 for parents and families dealing with
17 autism?

18 MS. PISCITELLI: So I can start
19 and if you guys want to add.

20 So I think some of the things
21 that we've been doing as ASERT and also
22 as the Philadelphia Autism Project is,
23 we've created info graphics that are very
24 user friendly, increase awareness, just
25 trying to get information out there, for

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2 example, about the adult programs that
3 are available in Pennsylvania. We
4 created specific ones about Philly Autism
5 Project initiatives, and they are
6 released to increase information and
7 awareness to the public. They're usually
8 about one page. They're easy to read and
9 understand, and they're very visually
10 appealing, and I think that's a key
11 component of getting information out
12 there and increasing awareness. And I
13 think one of the important components of
14 the Philadelphia Autism Project is
15 reaching underserved and underrepresented
16 populations who may not be able to get
17 information about autism and know where
18 to go for help.

19 So I think -- we did video
20 screening events at different library
21 locations in different neighborhoods
22 throughout the City, trying to reach
23 people and go to where they are as
24 opposed to making them come to us.

25 So I think those are just a few

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2 examples of things that we've been doing
3 and will continue to do to try and
4 increase awareness.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yeah, I
6 would agree. I mean, one of my concerns
7 is that in communities that are
8 underserved or may be low- to
9 moderate-income, they may not have access
10 to the tools to get the information. And
11 although there's an increase in the
12 amount of awareness especially in April
13 regarding autism, it also seems that a
14 lot of organizations have, for lack of a
15 better word, kind of one-off type events
16 in April. So this organization will do
17 something regarding autism, which is
18 great for that day or that weekend, but
19 then there's not additional information
20 to direct people how to get services. Or
21 this other organization is having an
22 event which is great for an opportunity
23 for either kids to play or for people to
24 be engaged regarding the issue, but after
25 that event is over, how do I continue to

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2 get information.

3 I think that's where the
4 concern and disconnect may be.

5 MS. WALL: Can I maybe speak to
6 that a little bit. I referenced in my
7 first experience as a parent with a new
8 diagnosis and the feeling of absolute
9 isolation, and coming from a family
10 relatively well resourced. So that's
11 something certainly that I have taken
12 into this work at the state level, very
13 much is the memory of what it feels like
14 to be without information, without
15 contact with other people.

16 So a focus of the Bureau of
17 Autism Services and, quite candidly, the
18 development of ASERT was focused with a
19 vision of trying to ensure that resources
20 and informational resources and tools
21 could get to people where they are. So
22 one of the things that we have really
23 focused on in some of the ASERT work is
24 not in any way trying to supplant
25 grassroots efforts. I came out of --

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2 when I found my first support group,
3 that's where I made my friendships.
4 That's where I got the secret decoder
5 ring that taught me how to navigate the
6 system. It was talking to other moms and
7 dads.

8 So the idea wasn't that the
9 state was going to create something that
10 was going to in any way supplant what
11 already existed at the grassroots level.
12 I think what we have to do is look at the
13 resources in the communities, meet people
14 where they are, make sure they can access
15 information, and that is really an
16 integral dynamic of just the ASERT
17 vision. And I think it's going to take
18 time. You know, when you're going
19 through this, there's an urgency about
20 it, which I understand, and -- you know,
21 it's like peeling back an onion. I think
22 of Autism Awareness Month and the focus
23 wonderfully is -- there is focus now, but
24 it is still primarily the faces of
25 children that you see. And, Councilman

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2 Green, you referenced that, which is
3 wonderful. So please know when I say
4 that, I think back to when I started when
5 there was no awareness. This is
6 progress. But, as you said, you spend
7 most of your life as an adult. And so I
8 think one of the things when we talk
9 about awareness and appreciation and
10 acceptance is that we have to be very
11 attentive to making sure that we are
12 painting the picture, right, that is the
13 accurate picture of the reality of the
14 community, including individuals whose
15 voices are very often not heard.

16 So I echo your concern and your
17 observation, and I think there's more
18 work to do, but I think we're -- we've
19 got some mechanisms in place, which is
20 heartening.

21 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: And,
22 Councilman, having hearings like this are
23 very important in driving this dialogue
24 to a place where it can be effective.
25 The critical mass I think is in the data,

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2 and that's why the individuals at ASERT
3 -- and there's three regions - the east,
4 western, and central regions, and it
5 respects those demographics, which an
6 excellent student of health is always
7 looking to have incorporated in any
8 study. The magic of Pennsylvania is when
9 you look at studies all over the country
10 on autism, they may have 10 to 15 people.
11 Our studies have six, seven, eight
12 hundred people.

13 But embodied in my testimony
14 and in testimony that others will
15 present, it's not the 1 in 68 that's
16 critically important. It's the fact by
17 the year 2030 we're going to have 79,000
18 new adults, and we're the only state that
19 has adult programs, the ACAP and the
20 Adult Waiver, 79,000. We have 600 people
21 in those programs now.

22 I always believed that when you
23 identify the problem, you have a
24 responsibility to act. This is like DNA.
25 These numbers don't break down. They

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2 don't go away, and it tells us a story of
3 a reality.

4 We also have to build our
5 advocacy, and I think when Estelle
6 Richman -- I say this all the time --
7 when she was Secretary of Welfare in
8 Harrisburg, she did such an extraordinary
9 job of making sure the most vulnerable
10 were attended to, and that's disappearing
11 across the country, that sense of
12 responsibility that we have for these
13 individuals.

14 But the other thing is that as
15 long as the Commonwealth is the first
16 payer for these services, then the
17 families who are burdened with just
18 trying to survive day to day, they're not
19 going to appeal the denials by the
20 insurance companies. All those issues,
21 finding new resources, which we did under
22 Act 62 and it's finally going to be
23 implemented -- and that's not a hearing
24 for today. That should be a hearing for
25 another day. But the responsibility to

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2 act on these numbers and the ASERT
3 centers -- and Craig Newschaffer and
4 David Mandell, Lindsay Shea, they're
5 doing things with data nobody has ever
6 done. They drill down inside that data
7 and they focus on outcomes, and by
8 analyzing that data in the unique way
9 that they do, it provides great
10 opportunity for new policy directives.
11 This is the way every part of government
12 should function.

13 But we are looking at a
14 tsunami, and the numbers -- we're the
15 only state that has created a census.

16 I remember when we were walking
17 around in Harrisburg, we first started
18 talking about autism, and after our third
19 legislative visit, they said, Well, how
20 many people are in my legislative
21 district? Hit myself right in the head
22 and I think Nina did and whoever else was
23 with us and said, We got to find that
24 out. And that became a very simple
25 process where we started a census. No

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2 one has that in any disease malady.

3 This is the biggest demographic
4 in the United States of America and
5 beyond. There are nations that are doing
6 things, and we're the greatest nation.
7 We should be about doing that by
8 protecting our most vulnerable.

9 But grassroots, through
10 hearings like this making people aware
11 that they have to come forward, and I'm
12 not saying put them on a bus and drive
13 them to Harrisburg every week, but,
14 listen, we have Spectrum Friends, which
15 is a group of adults in Harrisburg, and I
16 asked them one time -- they asked me to
17 come up and speak to them, and I said, I
18 don't want to do this. I want to make
19 Philadelphia the first autism-friendly
20 city. How do I do that? My head started
21 to explode. You just ask these
22 individuals for the pathway, and with the
23 analysis and the data and the
24 programmatic designs that we're creating
25 here in Pennsylvania and uniquely here in

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2 Philadelphia with the efforts of
3 Dr. Arthur Evans and Joan Erney at CBH.
4 And Arthur, when you talk about
5 underserved communities, has a unique
6 vision that will drive this forward in a
7 way that it's never been recognized
8 before.

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I mean, as a
10 follow-up, when you talk about under the
11 census and I think from the 2014 update,
12 we're over 4,600 and then by 2020, you're
13 talking over 20,000, and when you have
14 that huge increase, it creates that type
15 of epidemic type of perspective. And you
16 mention Act 62, and I think I'm often
17 focused on how can we leverage and
18 considering that insurers who should be
19 paying have not been, and that puts an
20 additional burden on the Commonwealth and
21 on taxpayers, and I think we need to look
22 at this not just in a public health
23 perspective but also an economic
24 perspective, when we as citizens are all
25 paying more when the insurance companies

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2 should be paying more, and how can we
3 leverage that to help get some additional
4 resources to get information out, to fund
5 more a sustained either marketing or
6 advertising campaign or initiative to let
7 everyone know in the City of Philadelphia
8 and the state about issues of autism and
9 how can you get resources. Because I
10 think that's what we need to do to try to
11 get more help to not only let people know
12 about the Philadelphia Autism Project but
13 issues involving autism. So if you're at
14 69th and Elmwood, you're at 52nd and
15 Kingsessing, you're at the Mayfair Diner,
16 if you're somewhere at the Klein Center,
17 anywhere in the City of Philadelphia,
18 you're constantly getting information, so
19 that way, when you get that first
20 possible indication that your child may
21 be on the spectrum, you know where to go.
22 And I think that's part of the challenge.
23 Even with all the information we have,
24 people are still in this kind of fog, is
25 my child on the spectrum, I'm not sure.

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2 It's not just them, but also primary care
3 physicians. Some who are the more recent
4 graduates and have gone through residency
5 have more information, but those who have
6 been practicing maybe 15, 20, 25 years
7 still are somewhat challenged by how do I
8 provide information to my patients
9 regarding whether their child may be on
10 the spectrum or not.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Hello.

12 Thank you very much for being here and
13 your testimony. Did I hear you say that
14 the Philadelphia Autism Project has one
15 of the largest demographic studies of the
16 compilation of who is autistic or who is
17 living with autism here in the City?

18 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: No. I
19 think Craig Newschaffer and David Mandell
20 are -- they can speak to the research
21 studies and the fact that because of the
22 populations that are available in
23 Pennsylvania, studies that Craig
24 Newschaffer are doing are more
25 comprehensive.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So do we
3 have demographic information on those
4 families, where they live generally and
5 racial, gender?

6 MS. WALL: The work started
7 with the statewide Autism Census, which
8 the first was conducted and data released
9 in 2009. It was updated in 2014. And
10 that very, very rich, robust dataset is,
11 I think, allowing us to understand a lot
12 about the individuals with autism served
13 in the system, and a lot of that has been
14 foundational to some of the work in
15 Philadelphia in trying to understand the
16 populations. I think we're still very --
17 we're getting -- we're kind of at the
18 beginning of that work and working with
19 the data, but the data is there and we
20 are able to drill down I think even
21 more --

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Can you
23 repeat again a little bit, what would the
24 data include? Would it include like
25 income or racial and gender diversity?

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2 Is it going to include like the types of
3 autism across the spectrum? Where the
4 students go to school maybe?

5 MS. WALL: I can't really speak
6 specifically to the Philadelphia data.
7 There are people here who can.

8 MS. PISCITELLI: So we do have
9 county-specific data from the Census
10 Update, which is on the website
11 pautism.org. So you can get information
12 about what's going on in Philadelphia
13 specifically on the website.

14 Also, our data project manager
15 will be speaking, giving his testimony
16 tomorrow, so he can speak more
17 specifically to some of those questions
18 and those numbers as well. He'll speak
19 about the justice system stuff, but as
20 well as some of the data.

21 MS. WALL: Beyond the census
22 initiative, we also launched a needs
23 assessment, and that was after the census
24 was conducted, because we really did want
25 to get, I think, a more granular

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2 quantifiable understanding of some of the
3 things we were seeing anecdotally.

4 So, for example, in our
5 day-to-day work at the Bureau, we were
6 getting calls and hearing about young
7 people who were winding up in the justice
8 system. We were getting the stories. We
9 were hearing a lot of things that were
10 very challenging, but we felt there was a
11 need to understand this from a data
12 perspective. So one of the ASERT
13 initiatives that was very, very
14 significant was to launch the needs
15 assessment. And I would encourage
16 everyone to look at paautism.org because
17 you can get all of that, all of the
18 reports that were generated as a result
19 of that needs assessment. That might get
20 to some of the issues and some of the
21 questions you have.

22 But I think we're learning a
23 lot and I think the data is going to
24 yield a lot of information going forward.
25 But we have it and it's a rich, robust

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2 dataset. And when I think about the
3 question how many -- and I remember that
4 day -- how many people with autism live
5 in my district and thinking, I can't
6 answer that question. At the time it
7 was, we have a hunch there are a lot, but
8 at budget time, you all know that's not
9 the answer that's going to maybe be too
10 terribly helpful. We needed to be able
11 to understand and quantify what we were
12 seeing.

13 So I would encourage you all to
14 look at the census and needs assessment.
15 And if you have specific questions, the
16 beauty is that folks at ASERT can work
17 with you on that. So I would encourage
18 you to engage with our colleagues.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then I
20 was wondering if, Ms. Piscitelli, you
21 could talk a little bit about the
22 trainings that those in the justice
23 system undergo for -- I'm curious about
24 what those entail, how long they are,
25 what results have yielded, what the

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2 experience has been like.

3 MS. PISCITELLI: So I can speak
4 a little bit broadly about the trainings.
5 More specifically our justice system
6 initiatives, including the trainings,
7 will be discussed tomorrow. So there'll
8 be more in-depth information there. And
9 I believe at the end of today, there'll
10 also be some additional information about
11 the CIT training that we do. So I don't
12 want to give too much away, but we do as
13 both ASERT and the Philly Autism Project,
14 we do catered trainings on a variety of
15 topics based on what the needs of the
16 audience are. So for justice system
17 professionals, we work with a consultant
18 who helps to create content, and then we
19 go out and meet the needs of if it's a
20 police officer or a parole officer or
21 probation officers, any sort of justice
22 system professional, and we give them
23 both background information on autism and
24 then also some strategies and techniques
25 that they can use in their line of work

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2 to help them when they're interacting
3 with individuals with autism. So
4 there'll be more information about that
5 throughout the hearing.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Great.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Councilman
8 Domb.

9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
10 Chairman Green, and welcome. I have a
11 very basic question and, that is, is
12 there a cure? Are they working on a cure
13 for autism as a country; do you know?

14 MS. WALL: That's not a small
15 question. That's a dicy one.

16 I mean, I don't know if you
17 guys want to tackle that, but I have
18 thoughts about it. I think there is some
19 extraordinary research underway that is
20 going to help us understand the etiology,
21 you know, what causes autism. I think
22 there's -- and some of that research is
23 very exciting. Some of it is happening
24 here in Pennsylvania.

25 What I will say is -- and this

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2 is a topic that can get a lot of people
3 really, really roused, but I think many
4 would say that autism is a lifelong
5 condition. That is not to say, however,
6 that individuals with autism when they
7 are provided with the right kind of
8 support, provided by individuals who are
9 well trained, and when those
10 interventions start at a very early age,
11 individuals can make extraordinary
12 progress and, in many cases, can become
13 active and very engaged in their
14 communities, can be great employees and
15 wonderful neighbors and -- but I think
16 it's also important to emphasize that
17 this is a spectrum disorder. So there
18 are individuals who are profoundly
19 challenged by their autism and who have
20 experienced very complex challenges
21 navigating the world, and they need a lot
22 of support and may need a lot of support
23 throughout their lives.

24 So it's hard -- I don't think
25 I'm comfortable saying there's a cure for

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2 autism, but I have watched individuals
3 that we have supported in our programs,
4 some who had never had interventions and
5 support. They came to us when they were
6 adults, they were mature adults, and we
7 started providing services, and we
8 watched the growth. And we watched
9 individuals who maybe hadn't ever had a
10 communication system, right -- something
11 so basic to being able to make your wants
12 and needs known -- be provided with the
13 right kinds of tools and supports and we
14 start to see growth and progress.

15 So I think we've learned a lot
16 about what allows individuals to grow and
17 progress and lead a better quality of
18 life, but I think most would agree that
19 autism is a lifelong condition.

20 And I don't know if anybody
21 wants to add anything to that.

22 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: I just
23 think the other bigger question is, there
24 are a lot of people that are advocating
25 to find a cure, and really our emphasis

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2 today really has to be on the supports
3 for those individuals to be successful.
4 And to finding a cure sometimes is not
5 inclusive of who the individuals are who
6 are living with autism. A lot of those
7 individuals really believe that they
8 figured it out and that their gifts are
9 substantial and are welcome in our
10 community. And there's nothing wrong
11 with them; there's something wrong with
12 us.

13 But I really believe that this
14 conversation really has to be directed in
15 the near term around the supports for
16 these individuals to be successful and
17 for their families to be able to be
18 functional.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Thank
20 you.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: As we wrap
22 up this panel, if each of you could maybe
23 give me an idea of what would you say
24 would be the top priority for the Autism
25 Project going into next fiscal year.

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2 MS. PISCITELLI: I'm sorry.

3 What was that?

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: From each of
5 you, if you can give me a perspective on
6 what you think should be the top priority
7 for the project going into next fiscal
8 year.

9 MS. PISCITELLI: So I think
10 that would start with some additional
11 meetings of stakeholders and thinking
12 about what the needs of the Philadelphia
13 community are. So building upon what was
14 in the Philadelphia Autism Project final
15 report and building on the initiatives
16 that we have been accomplishing thus far
17 and then also the initiatives that we
18 have yet to accomplish that the
19 workgroups are beginning to work on and
20 think about and thinking about what the
21 needs are of the community, because
22 that's something that's ever changing.

23 So I think it's hard for me to
24 pinpoint one thing specifically, but as I
25 mentioned, having another conference,

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2 making that an annual thing, continuing
3 to do the trainings, the seed award
4 funding to, again, reach grassroots
5 organizations, thinking about how we can
6 build upon the seed award funding from
7 last year. So I think that's just one
8 step and some ideas that we have, but
9 that's -- again, we need feedback from
10 the stakeholders and the community on how
11 we can move forward best.

12 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: You all
14 concur?

15 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: Yes.

16 MS. WALL: I continue and
17 certainly in my role at the state
18 continue to see the importance of the
19 training efforts that will build capacity
20 of professionals who are interacting with
21 individuals with autism. And I don't
22 know that that's going to be in the
23 docket for this year, but training is
24 needed in every system. So even if we
25 develop modalities and strategies to

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2 intervene, we need to have professionals
3 who know how to provide those supports.
4 So I know certainly at the state level,
5 we have directed a significant portion of
6 our resources to capacity building in the
7 system. So I don't know if that's on the
8 docket for this year.

9 I would just have to echo the
10 importance of continuing to reach into
11 the communities to access the experiences
12 and the challenges of individuals we
13 haven't captured yet, and I think that
14 often gets lost. I certainly know when I
15 travel around the state, we struggle with
16 meeting the needs of individuals in rural
17 areas. Pennsylvania is largely a rural
18 state. The experience of people living
19 in rural areas is very, very different,
20 but I think that is mirrored here in the
21 City where there are other challenges
22 that communities face and to try to
23 understand and -- so that supports can be
24 targeted to meet those unique needs. And
25 I think you guys have really done a nice

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2 job launching with that kind of a focus
3 out of the gate.

4 So that would be -- and, again,
5 it's like peeling back the onion. I
6 could think of ten other things, but I'll
7 stop there.

8 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: I think
9 there were -- and I'll just reflect as
10 briefly as I can on the meeting with the
11 Spectrum Friends, and the first
12 individual that spoke said he doesn't
13 want to be poor, and that's very
14 important. And we had hearings in City
15 Council on that very subject concurrent
16 with that discussion. There's
17 individuals that are pursuing their
18 doctorate degrees, and when they declare
19 their dissertation, the educational
20 supports disappear at the most important
21 time. There's individuals who have
22 multiple Master's degrees and they have
23 hundreds of interviews and they never get
24 a job, and there's others that have
25 trouble navigating transportation.

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2 There's a story where an
3 individual came here and took a cab, and
4 the cab driver drove so fast and cut
5 corners. They couldn't take a cab. So
6 he decided he would drive his car here,
7 and the Parking Authority attacked him
8 because he was pulled over on the side of
9 the road. And while he was trying to
10 sort it out, he said, If you don't just
11 let me gather my information, then this
12 is -- I'm going to have a meltdown and
13 then I'll be in a more difficult
14 situation.

15 There's a number of -- the
16 Philadelphia International Airport
17 creates a world of opportunity. There's
18 31 million people that go through that
19 airport every year, and there's a
20 diversity of opportunity for our guys to
21 have intermediate job opportunities, and
22 then when their skills are recognized, to
23 gain wonderful employment opportunities
24 that can substantively improve the
25 workforce at the International Airport.

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2 I can tell you personally that every time
3 one of our individuals is either in an
4 insurance company or at the Northeast
5 Philadelphia Airport or some other place,
6 everybody in that workforce is enriched
7 by that experience, because there's no
8 prejudice, there's just a wonderful
9 example set by these individuals.

10 I'll tell you one story. When
11 we had one of our major snowstorms, one
12 of our guys was employed. He got to
13 work. His three colleagues didn't. He
14 did the work of all four. So guess what?
15 Those guys never missed another day after
16 that because they thought that he would
17 replace them. Our guys are wonderful.
18 Just given the opportunity, it could be
19 extraordinary.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. One
21 last thing. I would like to make this
22 request. If there is a possibility --
23 often in Council people look --
24 Councilman O'Brien, you talked about the
25 issue you brought up which kind of

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2 prompted the census of how many people in
3 my district were on the spectrum. Using
4 the most recent update to the census, is
5 there an ability on kind of like a
6 one-pager showing the City of
7 Philadelphia and giving a perspective in
8 each Council district --

9 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: -- the
11 number of people who are currently living
12 on the spectrum based on the 2014 census,
13 but then on the other side of that same
14 page, showing based on the data we have
15 what it will look like in 2020?

16 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: Yeah.
17 Absolutely.

18 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Because I
19 think that's the information that really
20 would help people get a perspective in a
21 very quick way how many of their current
22 constituents have a family member living
23 on the spectrum and then in just a few
24 years what that increase is going to look
25 like. And I think that's -- I think that

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2 visual will really send a message to
3 people why it is such a big issue in the
4 City.

5 COUNCILMAN O'BRIEN: Yes. And
6 as Frank pointed out to me, this Council
7 is very effective at using both sides of
8 the paper in a growing greener
9 conversation, so thank you for that.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.
11 (Thank you.)

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: We're going
13 to move on Panel No. 2, community impact
14 of the Philadelphia Autism Project. If
15 we could have Tom Quinn, Joe Benford,
16 Craig Newschaffer, and Captain Francis
17 Healy to come to the table.

18 (Witnesses approached witness
19 table.)

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: We'll start
21 with Mr. Quinn.

22 MR. QUINN: Good afternoon,
23 Councilman Green, members of the
24 Committee. My name is Tom Quinn and I'm
25 the Director of Education at the Walnut

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2 Street Theatre. We have a 30-year
3 tradition of providing education programs
4 through our theatre school and our summer
5 camp, and our touring outreach shows do
6 over 400 shows in area schools. Our work
7 using theatre to teach curriculum in
8 Philadelphia schools and Kid Series
9 performs one-hour musicals for family
10 audiences. Put that all together, we
11 reach 180,000 people each year with our
12 education programs.

13 We were honored to receive the
14 seed award funding from the Philadelphia
15 Autism Project this past fall to offer a
16 class for children on the autism spectrum
17 for the first time. We were able to
18 offer the class to 13 students between
19 the ages of 8 and 15. Six of those
20 students received a full scholarship and
21 seven paid for the class at a reduced
22 rate of \$50. We typically charge \$150
23 for a class like this. It was a
24 seven-week-long class, hour and a half
25 meeting each time.

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2 Due to the support, we were
3 able to bring in an outside consultant,
4 Mr. Roger Ideishi from Temple University.
5 Roger has become one of the leading
6 experts in the country in working with
7 theatres to make performances and classes
8 more accessible for people on the
9 spectrum. Roger was able to offer
10 training to our four teaching artists.
11 We concluded the class with a
12 presentation in one of our traveling
13 shows that we take to schools. Michael
14 Berenstain of the Berenstain Bears is
15 local to the area, and he gave us
16 permission to do an adaptation of his
17 newest book, Berenstain Bears: Hospital
18 Friends, and we performed it just for the
19 families of the kids who were in the
20 class. We made this our first
21 sensory-friendly show in the theatre.
22 The theatre has been around since 1809.
23 It was the first time we did a program
24 specifically with that in mind. And all
25 we had to do to make it a

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2 sensory-friendly performance was to
3 change the show so there weren't any loud
4 noises or anything that might alarm the
5 kids. We were to give them a chance to
6 meet the actors afterward, and they were
7 able to also try on the bear costumes,
8 which they enjoyed greatly.

9 As a result of this program, we
10 were also able to reach out to the
11 Kennedy Center in Washington, DC sharing
12 with them this work we were doing. The
13 result of that was that they offered to
14 support us in doing our first ever
15 sensory-friendly performance in our
16 one-thousand seat historic theatre. For
17 the first time, we will have a
18 performance for kids on the spectrum and
19 their families on June 8th, and we were
20 able to give out over 500 free tickets
21 for this performance. I don't get to do
22 that very much. That was very enjoyable
23 to be able to speak to families about
24 that.

25 There is no doubt that our

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2 involvement with the Philadelphia Autism
3 Project led to this opportunity.

4 I am also happy to report that
5 the project truly has been seed money for
6 us. We offered the class again, this
7 time without support, and at a cost of
8 \$135 per student. This spring we
9 currently have six students enrolled in
10 the class. It is my intention to make
11 this a regular offering of our theatre
12 school that serves over 1,500 students
13 every year offering drama instruction.

14 The most compelling aspect of
15 the program for me has been the effect
16 I've seen on the families. A parent from
17 our class in the fall sent me the
18 following: The pilot program was hugely
19 beneficial to my son. The teachers
20 helped him improve his ability to express
21 himself. His school staff told us that
22 they saw dramatic improvement in his
23 ability to share his feelings. I also
24 believe that seeing other children with
25 autism enjoying acting classes was

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2 beneficial. I am deeply grateful that he
3 had the opportunity to attend the pilot
4 class and hope to see the program grow so
5 other children can benefit.

6 From my own perspective, seeing
7 families have the ability to enjoy
8 theatre has been very meaningful. I have
9 heard many parents say that due to their
10 child with autism, they choose to not go
11 to public events as a family. This means
12 that siblings not on the spectrum miss
13 out as well. This program gave us the
14 chance to work at creating an accepting
15 and open environment. We are the oldest
16 theatre in America and we're very proud
17 of that, and people have been coming
18 through our doors since 1809. This
19 program has allowed us to truly be
20 accessible to kids on the spectrum. As a
21 result, it's my intention to make it a
22 permanent part of our educational
23 mission. I will be forever grateful to
24 the Philadelphia Autism Project. It's a
25 genuine good and an important resource

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2 for the Philadelphia autism community and
3 an example that other cities should
4 emulate.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

7 Mr. Benford.

8 MR. BENFORD: Councilman Green
9 and members of the Committee on the
10 Disabled and Special Needs, I am Joe
11 Benford, Deputy Director of Customer
12 Engagement at the Free Library of
13 Philadelphia. Siobhan Reardon, President
14 and Director, could not be here this
15 afternoon and has asked that I appear to
16 share with the Committee the work that we
17 do to provide services to families and
18 their children with autism spectrum
19 disorder and the support and guidance we
20 have received from the Philadelphia
21 Autism Project.

22 On a daily basis in each of our
23 63 library locations throughout the City,
24 individuals with ASD, along with their
25 parents, siblings, and caregivers, visit

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2 our libraries to take advantage of our
3 many resources. These individuals come
4 to attend programming, check out
5 materials, access our public computers
6 and free WiFi, and explore other areas of
7 interest, much like any other patron.
8 However, this audience also presents a
9 unique set of needs and opportunities.
10 With the support of the Philadelphia
11 Autism Project and organizations such as
12 ASERT, the Free Library has made
13 considerable inroads to being an
14 inclusive and welcoming environment to
15 individuals with autism.

16 In recent years and as a result
17 of greater awareness surrounding the need
18 for autism-related services, Library
19 staff has reported seeing an increase in
20 individuals with autism visiting
21 neighborhood and regional libraries. In
22 response, the Free Library began to reach
23 out to area experts for suggestions on
24 best practices. This led us to a
25 partnership with the Philadelphia Autism

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2 Project, which has greatly enhanced our
3 understanding and service to this
4 population. We have participated in
5 various efforts through our partnership
6 and look forward to identifying even more
7 ways to be of service.

8 The Free Library was delighted
9 to be selected to host the autism
10 conference for families and caregivers in
11 October of 2015. The event attracted 150
12 attendees, including advocates, medical
13 personnel, and families, and provided a
14 valuable networking and informational
15 opportunity.

16 The Free Library is piloting an
17 initiative called Transition Education
18 and Employment Support Services to Young
19 Adults with Autism in partnership with
20 MaST Community Charter School and SPIN, a
21 leading organization and provider of
22 services to people of all ages with
23 autism and intellectual and developmental
24 disability. This pilot program provides
25 an internship opportunity in which

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students can learn skills and build the independence that will help position them for employment opportunities after they finish school. Currently, four students from MaST Charter are participating in job-training activities over the course of 16 weeks at our Bustleton and Torresdale neighborhood libraries. Early feedback has indicated great success for all involved, students and partners alike, and we hope to continue the program again during the 2016-2017 school year.

In 2015, our Torresdale and Fumo Family Branch Libraries were each awarded \$1,500 in seed funds by the Philadelphia Autism Project to launch sensory story times and to create a challenge club that uses board games to facilitate social activities and interaction among youth with ASD. Both have been extremely successful and are continuing at these locations. The library has also held multiple screenings

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2 of videos aimed at educating the Latino,
3 Asian American, and African American
4 communities about the impacts of ASD,
5 each being screened at a neighborhood
6 library whose users are reflective of the
7 target audience.

8 Staff of all job classes have
9 attended training in best practices and
10 services provided by both the Children's
11 Hospital of Philadelphia's Center for
12 Autism Research and SPIN. These
13 trainings have served to better equip our
14 staff to deliver services, and
15 programming have resulted in greater
16 sensitivity to autism-related needs in a
17 variety of special programs.

18 We commend City Council and
19 this Committee for exploration of these
20 issues. The Free Library's efforts in
21 this area have been aided immeasurably by
22 the Philadelphia Autism Project, and we
23 encourage its continuation.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

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2 Mr. Newschaffer.

3 DR. NEWSCHAFFER: Thank you
4 very much, Councilman Green, members of
5 the Committee. So my name is Craig
6 Newschaffer. I direct the A.J. Drexel
7 Autism Institute at Drexel University.
8 I'm also a member of the Leadership
9 Committee for the Philadelphia Autism
10 Project, and as you heard, our institute
11 is fortunate to house the support
12 structure for the Philadelphia Autism
13 Project.

14 Most of what we do at the
15 institute -- we're a university-based
16 research institution, and we spend a lot
17 of our time engaged in what I think is
18 pretty cutting-edge research trying to
19 understand the public health challenges
20 posed by autism. We study whether or not
21 there's ways to prevent autism. We study
22 ways to identify autism as early as
23 possible and ways to more effectively
24 disseminate evidence-supported
25 interventions in our communities, and we

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2 also study how to improve quality of life
3 for individuals on the spectrum
4 throughout the lifespan. We have
5 federally funded research from NIH and
6 HERSA and other federal agencies, and we
7 are very serious about our research
8 mission. But I have to tell you that the
9 work that we do supporting initiatives
10 like the Philadelphia Autism Project and
11 ASERT is really some of the most
12 gratifying and important work that we do,
13 because by helping support these
14 initiatives, we're really doing work
15 helping to further work that directly
16 impacts the citizens in our city with
17 autism, and we take this service part of
18 our mission very, very seriously.

19 Autism, as you've heard, is a
20 huge public health concern nationally and
21 in the City. The one and a half percent
22 prevalence estimate that you hear, if you
23 apply that to the population of
24 Philadelphia, you get a very large
25 number, 25,000 individuals in the City

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2 who are affected by autism. And that's
3 going to be considerably larger than the
4 number of people who are identified
5 through the Autism Census, because the
6 census is identifying folks who are
7 recognized in receiving services for
8 their autism diagnosis. There are more
9 individuals in our city and more families
10 touched by autism than even those gaudy
11 numbers represent, and we have to bear
12 that in mind when we think about the
13 challenges that we face. And, again, the
14 work that the Philadelphia Autism Project
15 is doing, I think it's unique. It is
16 data informed, and that is a unique
17 element about it, but I think what's
18 really unique about it is the fact that
19 it's so stakeholder driven. And you've
20 heard about the process that the project
21 went through to engage a really diverse
22 set of stakeholders and to use those
23 stakeholders to set the priorities. And
24 the results are the initiatives that you
25 just heard about and many others, which

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2 are really having considerable impact
3 right here right now in the City.

4 So, again, I'm delighted that
5 the institute can do what it can to
6 support the initiative. I hope it
7 continues, and we hope that we can
8 continue to be a part of it.

9 Thank you very much.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

11 Captain Healy.

12 CAPTAIN HEALY: Good afternoon,
13 Councilman, Councilman Domb. My name is
14 Francis Healy. I'm Captain Healy in the
15 Philadelphia Police Department. I'm
16 Special Advisor to Commissioner Ross.
17 With me is Michele Dowell. She is the
18 Crisis Intervention Coordinator that
19 works between the Philadelphia Police
20 Department and the Department of
21 Behavioral Health and Intellectual
22 disAbilities.

23 I took the opportunity --
24 actually I kind of jumped at the
25 opportunity to talk about what we do here

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2 in Philadelphia with the Police
3 Department. We've done some pretty
4 innovative things, primarily with our
5 Crisis Intervention Team, which does not
6 specifically focus on autism, but it
7 encompasses how the police should respond
8 to people with autism, Alzheimer's
9 disease or anybody else in crisis per se.

10 The efforts that we've done so
11 far, I guess we are always constantly
12 trying to evolve, make our program
13 better. We implemented the program in
14 2007 and have been rolling it out since
15 then for volunteer officers. Now, it's
16 incredibly important that we use
17 volunteer officers because they come with
18 a different set of passion towards this
19 entire subject matter. We have never had
20 a shortage of officers volunteering. So
21 we continue to go forward. At this
22 point, we have over 2,300 officers in the
23 Philadelphia Police Department, first
24 responders, that first line 911 response,
25 trained in crisis intervention training.

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2 With respect to autism, we
3 initially came up with a program working
4 with the Department of Behavioral Health
5 years ago, but like I said, we're
6 continuously evolving this course, and
7 that's when we partnered with the ASERT
8 individuals and the whole organization as
9 a team coming together with a better way
10 or better method for our officers to deal
11 with people in crisis; namely,
12 autistic -- not just children. Autistic
13 children are growing up, and being able
14 to deal with them from a police officer's
15 perspective is incredibly important. How
16 we respond to people in crisis can either
17 escalate or de-escalate a situation. We
18 do a great deal of training and education
19 for our officers in how to actually
20 de-escalate situations, and understanding
21 that certain tactics and procedures that
22 we use in law enforcement, crime-fighting
23 per se, often escalate these situations.
24 Crisis intervention training -- I'll be
25 honest with you. I've used this analogy

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2 quite often -- is the bridge between two
3 worlds, between policing and the mental
4 health world and all the resources in
5 that world and, quite frankly, Michele is
6 that bridge. She's the connection for
7 the officers on the street. They make
8 one phone call to Michele and, quite
9 frankly, Michele connects the individuals
10 in crisis to whatever services the City
11 has. So whether it be a vet, an
12 autistic -- family with an autistic
13 child. So the Philadelphia Police
14 Department is very much ingrained into
15 this whole notion of making sure that we
16 take care of the people that we
17 encounter.

18 People in crisis, autistic
19 families -- and I'll be very honest.
20 Sometimes the children or the individuals
21 that are autistic, they don't have the
22 problem sometimes. It's the family
23 members that are often in crisis when
24 they call the police. So there's a lot
25 of de-escalation that goes on, and

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2 understanding that notion goes a long
3 way. And we also -- I've met multiple
4 times with different organizations around
5 the City about family members and what
6 they can do and how we can better serve
7 their kids and, quite frankly, we have a
8 mechanism through the CIT officers, if
9 you notify me in advance that you have an
10 autistic child, I can put that into our
11 police radio CAD system. So when an
12 officer is responding to your house, it
13 will come up that there's an autistic
14 child in the house, so the officer is
15 better prepared to handle that. But,
16 more importantly, you can ask for a CIT
17 officer. And we tell parents and people
18 that regularly have family members in
19 crisis, Feel free to ask for a crisis
20 intervention trained officer through the
21 dispatcher, and we'll do our best to
22 dispatch. Like I said, 2,300 officers.
23 We have quite a few officers on every
24 tour that are available to respond.

25 I'm here really to answer any

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2 questions you may have. This is above
3 and beyond the training that the state
4 mandates. All our recruits get a basic
5 level of training in all special needs.
6 Every so often, every so many years, the
7 MPO Commission, which is the annual
8 licensing agency basically for policing,
9 they require a special needs component.
10 It hasn't been done in a few years, but
11 this is above and beyond what the state
12 requires in Philadelphia. And, like I
13 said, we have a great team in
14 Philadelphia that constantly evolve and
15 work together.

16 So I really think Philadelphia
17 is in a very, very good position when it
18 comes to dealing with children or people
19 with autism.

20 I'm happy to answer any
21 questions.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you
23 for your testimony, and thank everyone at
24 the panel for your information.

25 Captain Healy, from your work I

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2 think you said in 2007 when you started
3 the training of the crisis intervention
4 team and you have about 2,300 officers
5 who have now voluntarily decided to
6 receive that training?

7 CAPTAIN HEALY: That's correct.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That's my
9 understanding.

10 So on any given day, you have
11 how many officers, I would say, on the
12 street -- well, let's say a shift, during
13 a shift that may have that training. You
14 can give me a range without specifics.

15 CAPTAIN HEALY: I honestly
16 don't have the numbers, but the way we
17 focus the training, the training is
18 focused primarily on 911 responders,
19 which are district police officers. So
20 we didn't intentionally train a lot of
21 the special units because they would not
22 be available. But we have CIT
23 available -- I can honestly say without
24 any reservations, there are CIT cops
25 available around the clock, more than a

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2 few in each district at this point.

3 COUNCILMAN GREEN: In each
4 district?

5 CAPTAIN HEALY: And might I add
6 too -- this is important -- we opened
7 this up to other law enforcement agencies
8 in the area, because we collaborate on a
9 regular basis, SEPTA, Amtrak. Probation
10 and Parole have gone through my crisis
11 intervention, just so they understand the
12 de-escalation techniques and know if we
13 do cross paths as law enforcement
14 agencies, we're working as a team. So we
15 open it up. Quite honestly, anybody that
16 wants to come to the CIT program, I allow
17 them in, University of Penn, Temple.
18 Some Drexel police officers have been
19 through the program. So we have another
20 probably close to 500 outside
21 jurisdiction officers that have also gone
22 through our Philadelphia CIT program.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

24 During the budget testimony for
25 the Police Department, I also learned

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2 about, I believe it was called,
3 reality-based training.

4 CAPTAIN HEALY: Correct.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And that for
6 officers -- I think you have about 400
7 officers who have gone through that
8 training and that you're training about
9 ten a day, and that reality-based
10 training includes issues including
11 autism. So that's separate and apart
12 than the CIT training?

13 CAPTAIN HEALY: That training
14 is separate and apart. However, I have
15 gone through it and I'm trying to make
16 sure that everything ties in with the CIT
17 program. Some of the scenarios that the
18 officers are faced with are people in
19 crisis, not necessarily an autistic
20 child, but the question is people just
21 refusing police commands, what do you do,
22 how do you deal with them and making sure
23 we don't overreact and actually escalate
24 a situation. So those situations are
25 incorporated into the reality-based

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2 training so the officers get a full
3 perspective. It's not simply a shoot or
4 don't shoot like type of scenario. It's
5 what other resources can the officer do,
6 and sometimes, especially people in
7 crisis, the best avenue is really three
8 steps backwards. Oftentimes that can
9 de-escalate a situation as easily as
10 that. And those are the things we train
11 our officers in CIT and additionally the
12 officers in the reality-based training as
13 well.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And
15 have you, through either the crisis
16 intervention training or the
17 reality-based training, had any
18 interaction with the Autism Project and,
19 if so, what's been the nature of that
20 interaction?

21 CAPTAIN HEALY: Well, I'll have
22 Michele speak to that, but the Autism
23 Project, we partnered with them to help
24 better our curriculum. So we redid our
25 entire curriculum based on their input.

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2 MS. DOWELL: My name is Michele
3 Dowell. I am the Crisis Intervention
4 Team Coordinator and I am part of the
5 Autism Project stakeholders.

6 So we actually worked very
7 closely with them. We brought them in to
8 have a conversation, and their focus --
9 what we wanted them to do was have a
10 focus on basically providing information
11 about autism, the spectrum, and then
12 giving the officers some tools and
13 techniques that would be beneficial once
14 they leave our classroom and actually go
15 back out to the street.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And I know
17 Councilman Domb has a question.
18 Follow-up, you may or may not know this
19 answer, other first responders; for
20 example, the Fire Department, do they
21 also have a similar involvement with the
22 Autism Project, based on your
23 understanding? Has there been any
24 collaborative type of work together in
25 reference to what the Police do and also

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2 Fire with the Autism Project?

3 CAPTAIN HEALY: The answer is
4 no. We don't -- they address -- their
5 issues are much different than ours.
6 Oftentimes they're medical transport.
7 Many times we'll assist and vice versa,
8 but there's not a collaboration with
9 crisis intervention, but I'm sure the
10 Fire has a certain response protocol for
11 different individuals. I'm personally
12 not aware of it, though.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

14 MS. DOWELL: Throughout the
15 City of Philadelphia, there is Mental
16 Health First Aid, that there's an autism
17 component involved with that training.
18 So it may not be spearheaded by the ASERT
19 organization. However, it's spearheaded
20 by the Department of Behavioral Health.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay.

22 Councilman Domb.

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
24 Chairman Green.

25 I just have a few quick

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2 remarks. All good, nothing bad. But I
3 will say that I'm impressed actually with
4 the community impact you all are making
5 for autism, and I'm impressed by what you
6 said about the Police Department and how
7 your program is considered like one of
8 the top programs and the people are
9 seeking you out. I think that's great
10 for Philadelphia and I want you to
11 continue doing that. That's a great
12 thing.

13 And I want to speak to the
14 other people who testified. Tom Quinn
15 from Walnut Street Theatre, that's a
16 great thing you're helping us with the
17 classrooms and what you're doing with the
18 kids. I took a tour of the Walnut Street
19 Theatre. The oldest theatre in America
20 is in Philadelphia. It's an amazing
21 institution. We should support it. So
22 thank you.

23 And also I want to speak to the
24 Library. If I wasn't going to run for
25 City Council, the Library had asked me to

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2 be on the Board, but because of being on
3 City Council, there would be a conflict.
4 I didn't continue. But you guys do a
5 great job and you have, I think, a
6 reading program, Read by 4. There's a
7 lot of things the Library does. And one
8 of the interesting facts of the Library
9 is that when you have a home within, I
10 think it's, a mile of a library, it's
11 worth more money than homes that are not.
12 It just shows you the importance of
13 libraries.

14 And let me speak to the last
15 one, A.J. Drexel, right? So this is
16 special to me, but besides Drexel -- and,
17 Craig, your university does a great job
18 and John Fry is a great leader and really
19 one of our great leaders in Philadelphia
20 with what he's doing. He's great for the
21 City. And I have a special attraction to
22 Drexel, but it's in a weird way, and I'll
23 tell you why. I'm glad everything you've
24 mentioned, but I own a building called
25 the Drexel Building and it's at 15th and

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2 Walnut, and last week -- it took me a
3 little while -- I finally rented -- the
4 building was built in 1904. I finally
5 rented Anthony Drexel's old office space
6 from 1904. It wasn't vacant the whole
7 time. It's been vacant maybe a year.
8 But it's a special space. You're a
9 special institution. And I applaud all
10 of you, but I just got to tell you that.
11 I think you're doing great things, and
12 please keep moving forward in this arena.

13 Thank you.

14 CAPTAIN HEALY: Thank you, sir.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I want to
16 just follow up on Councilman Domb's
17 comments in reference to the work that
18 you do in the community, and I'm curious
19 in reference to both the Library as well
20 as Walnut Street Theatre. How did you
21 first initially get contacted by the
22 Philadelphia Autism Project in reference
23 to the opportunity for a seed award?

24 MR. BENFORD: Councilman, we
25 actually reached out to them, because as

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2 we discovered that we had a lack of
3 training among staff on how to deal with
4 people with autism and other special
5 needs, we basically did what librarians
6 do. We went out and searched for experts
7 in the field, and that's where we came
8 upon the Philadelphia Autism Project.
9 And they've been extremely helpful.

10 MR. QUINN: We were awarded the
11 Mayor's Access Achievement Award for our
12 work with the HMS Schools, kids with
13 cerebral palsy, back in 2014. And I
14 happened to chase down then-Councilman
15 O'Brien in the restroom at that event and
16 mentioned to him I was aware of his work
17 for a long time. He and I met at the
18 Philadelphia Autism Walk back in 2006 or
19 2007. And so I mentioned that we were
20 interested in doing more work with the
21 community, with kids with special needs
22 in particular, and we're seeing the great
23 effect that theatre could have for kids
24 in that population, and that started the
25 conversation.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And
3 for both the Library and also Walnut
4 Street, what was the amount of the seed
5 award?

6 MR. QUINN: It was \$1,500 for
7 us.

8 MR. BENFORD: And we had seed
9 money at \$1,500 for two neighborhood
10 libraries.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. Thank
12 you.

13 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
14 Chairman Green.

15 If you had more money, would
16 you be able to advance your programs?

17 MR. BENFORD: Absolutely.

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you.

19 MR. QUINN: Yes. I'm not sure
20 how to add to that, but yes.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Councilman
22 Domb, you didn't preface that with a
23 simple question. You said earlier you
24 had a simple question. That definitely
25 was a simple question.

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2 So at this point, is there any
3 further -- people who testified on Panel
4 1 or Panel 2, I don't know if you want to
5 offer any closing remarks or information.
6 We will be continuing this conversation
7 tomorrow at 2 o'clock, but I wanted to
8 offer the opportunity for any of the
9 first panelists or second panelists if
10 they wanted to provide any additional
11 information before we close the hearing
12 to the call of the Chair.

13 MR. QUINN: I think for me the
14 only thing I'd like to add is that I'm
15 thrilled that we're able to continue the
16 programming, but it was particularly
17 exciting for us to be able to offer it at
18 low cost or no cost the first time we
19 offered it. It's very expensive for us
20 to get teaching hours together and get
21 the training involved, and that
22 opportunity I think opened it up to a
23 much larger population of this city, and
24 if we're able to continue this program,
25 we can continue it for the kids and

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2 families who can afford it, but it would
3 be wonderful to be able to reach all
4 aspects and all economic demographics of
5 the City.

6 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And actually
7 your statement made me think of something
8 else. Were you surprised that you may
9 have had existing members that had
10 children or other relatives on the
11 spectrum, that once they learned about
12 this type of involvement you were having
13 in reference to autism, that even helped
14 to deepen their involvement with Walnut
15 Street or the Library?

16 MR. QUINN: That's very true.
17 We're a non-profit and we raise a
18 significant portion of the operating
19 budget for our theatre, and there have
20 been a number of Board members and other
21 donors that have -- people who have
22 become donors with us by finding out
23 about this program, because I think, as
24 you've experienced personally and I've
25 experienced personally, the network of

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2 people affected by autism is staggeringly
3 vast. And so when they found out we were
4 involved in this, people who were not
5 previously involved in supporting our
6 programming have come forward.

7 MR. BENFORD: I agree. And I
8 would just like to say that the Free
9 Library has a library in almost every
10 neighborhood in the City, and we are
11 moving through our 21st Century Library
12 Initiative to really creating community
13 hubs in each neighborhood, and this is
14 part of what we do and what we do well.
15 And so we're looking at not just this
16 project of working with people affected
17 with autism, but any type or any group or
18 any special group of people. We are a
19 community hub for resources for them. We
20 don't necessarily house the resources,
21 but we can certainly direct people to the
22 appropriate resource.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. I
24 want to thank all of you for attending
25 this day one of hearings regarding the

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2 Philadelphia Autism Project. We will
3 continue hearings on this resolution
4 tomorrow at 2 o'clock. That's Resolution
5 No. 160259.

6 This Committee stands in recess
7 until Friday --

8 (Audience member talking.)

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Hold on one
10 second.

11 If the panelists could be
12 excused, I think we have one person that
13 wants to present a question.

14 You have to come to the
15 microphone, Miss.

16 (Witness approached witness
17 table.)

18 MS. LEVIN: Hello.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: If you could
20 state your name for the record.

21 MS. LEVIN: My name is Judy
22 Levin. And I'm just curious, of any of
23 the beings in here, of these adults and
24 whatnot, does anybody in here have a
25 disability, autism or such? Anybody?

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2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I can't
3 speak for others. I --

4 MS. LEVIN: I'm just asking.
5 If you have autism, raise your hand.

6 Okey-dokey. So we know there's
7 all different kinds of -- like with
8 cancer and epilepsy and diabetes, there's
9 all different levels of everything.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Correct.

11 MS. LEVIN: And a lot to still
12 be learning. And what we learn with is
13 our brain, something that's been my
14 passion for more than half my life, when
15 someone crashed into me and gave me a
16 traumatic brain injury, that five years
17 later led to epilepsy. And temporal lobe
18 epilepsy they've been learning since 2013
19 now in adults gives us autism, which
20 begins to explain a lot why people got
21 very misunderstanding of me at 24 years
22 old. I'm now 48, of the change that
23 happened in my life, when I had had a
24 college degree and I tutored other
25 students and everything. I was a very

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healthy person. Everything that's a trend today I was into before it was a trend, the vitamins, the vegetarian. I'm a God-gifted artist. I'm living proof of artist therapy. I've been doing it all. And I was very misunderstood, like that woman who talked about her son up here. And when it came into his life -- mine began in '92, just two years after the ADA, and when I battled for that right, America knew nothing about epilepsy. It was seen as a mental or a physical. And 30 percent of the children with autism have epilepsy, and all those children are going to be growing to adults. And I have plenty of friends who are women who have children that are adults with autism. And like that gentleman over there had said, one part of the biggest problem for those of us with epilepsy or autism or any disability is those who don't have it, and the -- not awareness. Such that they really need is -- that makes the challenge for us to be working

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2 in the outer world so hard when we become
3 the adults, is so much more of them not
4 wanting to use their brains and abilities
5 to accommodate and learn and give us
6 equality and respect that we deserve,
7 especially when they're going to be
8 judging it based on our resume and such
9 or the abilities that they can't see from
10 the outside. Because to judge by a
11 cover, the way I see it, if you're going
12 to judge by that, I'm going to be able to
13 assume very easily when you go to a
14 library, like the librarians that were up
15 here, it's very obvious you're missing a
16 lot of great books. Because it's obvious
17 how you go to a library and read a book.
18 You don't. You're just going to look at
19 the cover and think you know the story.
20 You're missing out on a whole lot of good
21 stories.

22 I've been working for God all
23 these years now, because I've had
24 near-death experiences. I've had brain
25 surgery and also have now survived breast

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2 cancer. So I've been doing my job and
3 I've been wanting to also -- many of you
4 have known, and many that aren't in here,
5 my dear angel, John Ross. He was a
6 retired City police officer of the City
7 and a Commissioner, and five years ago
8 just last month, his wings spread and
9 flew. Without him I wouldn't have gone
10 through the risk of that brain surgery.
11 But he works through me too, because he
12 was coming here and telling a lot of you
13 of what I was sharing, and through him, I
14 also met Senator Specter, Senator Casey,
15 Governor Rendell, Bob Brady, everybody
16 who all knows me, because where I've been
17 advocating through all these years, even
18 before I met him. Because I don't want
19 to see anybody go through what I went
20 through.

21 When this came into my life, I
22 went to find out everything I could about
23 epilepsy and the brain and learned that
24 there was this much, and if there was
25 anything, it was just about children and

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2 seniors. And what I've learned and I've
3 been sharing -- I communicate very well.
4 I helped President Obama even do the film
5 banking for the health insurance, because
6 I had health insurance before this all
7 happened to me, and they left me when I
8 needed them most. So that became my
9 goal. I couldn't even talk eight years
10 ago or do anything. It's drive and
11 determination. I'm proof nothing stops
12 you unless you let it, and I won't. It's
13 not the money that keeps me going. I've
14 always knew true richness is what's
15 inside. It's the soul. And my job is
16 working for God.

17 But us being with disabilities,
18 like I try to remind people, our greatest
19 President, Roosevelt, if he didn't hide
20 his wheels and his epilepsy back in his
21 day, he wouldn't have been -- he probably
22 would have been killed, especially
23 because of the epilepsy. But none of us
24 should have to hide a thing today, like
25 those gays and lesbians and blacks

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2 wanting all the equality. Us with
3 disabilities still today, especially when
4 we're adults still, 21 to 64, the highest
5 percentage of it today, which is the age
6 where we want to be working. We don't
7 want to not be. We want to be. It's
8 just a discrimination.

9 Before my brain surgery, I was
10 working for Mural Arts, but I didn't
11 quit. I said I needed to step down to
12 see if my life can be saved, but humanity
13 doesn't seem to understand you keep the
14 door open for this woman so when she
15 comes back and she's able, she should
16 have that job still. But like when my
17 brain surgery happened eight years ago,
18 so did this, quote/unquote, smart phone,
19 which is controlled by a brain. Can't
20 work without one. No doors remained open
21 to me. It just seemed like everybody
22 enjoyed taking total discrimination and
23 advantage of me and what I couldn't
24 remember. Not even how to dress. It's
25 lucky I didn't kill myself, because I

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2 thank God for my neuropsychologist, whose
3 known me for ten years now, because she's
4 there for me. Because a lot of us kill
5 ourselves too. It's one of the highest
6 risks for people with disabilities,
7 especially epilepsy.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right. I
9 want to thank you for your testimony and
10 providing that for our record. We're
11 going to continue this conversation
12 regarding autism tomorrow as part of day
13 two. So thank you.

14 This hearing is recessed until
15 tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. on Resolution No.
16 160259 for the Committee on Disabilities.

17 Thank you.

18 (Committee on the Disabled and
19 Persons with Special Needs adjourned at
20 3:50 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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