

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
JOINT COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY
AND LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, March 4, 2025
10:10 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE

RESOLUTION: 240718

1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
3 morning, everyone. I note that the
4 time has arrived for a public
5 hearing, a joint public hearing
6 between the Committees of Public
7 Safety and Legislative Oversight to
8 review Resolution No. 240718,
9 introduced by Member O'Rourke.

10 Ms. Stack, would you
11 please call the roll?

12 THE CLERK:
13 Councilmember Jones.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES:
15 Present.

16 THE CLERK:
17 Councilmember Lozada.

18 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
19 Present.

20 THE CLERK:
21 Councilmember Landau.

22 (No response.)

23 THE CLERK:
24 Councilmember Thomas.

1 (No response.)

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember Gauthier.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

5 Present.

6 THE CLERK:

7 Councilmember Brooks.

8 (No response.)

9 THE CLERK:

10 Councilmember Harrity.

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

12 Present.

13 THE CLERK:

14 Councilmember Young.

15 (No response.)

16 THE CLERK:

17 Councilmember Squilla.

18 (No response.)

19 THE CLERK:

20 Councilmember Phillips.

21 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

22 Present.

23 THE CLERK: And,

24 Councilmember O'Rourke.

1 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

2 Present.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: I

4 will note for the record that we've

5 established a quorum for -- could

6 you, Ms. Stack, read the title of

7 Resolution 240718.

8 THE CLERK: Resolution

9 No. 240718, authorizing the Joint

10 Committees on Public Safety and

11 Legislative Oversight to hold

12 hearings examining actions

13 necessary to significantly reduce

14 the Philadelphia Prison population

15 in an effort to permanently close

16 Philadelphia's oldest and most

17 inhumane prison facility, the

18 Detention Center.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank

20 you, Ms. Stack.

21 Before I turn it over to

22 the author of this resolution, I

23 just want to start by thanking

24 everyone who's here to testify. I

1 want to say as Chair of Public
2 Safety, this is an ongoing issue
3 which transcends, Committee
4 members, and that we are going to
5 stand ten toes down to make sure
6 that everything we can do will be
7 done to make sure that a couple of
8 things, one, that we can reduce the
9 population where appropriate and
10 always improve the conditions of
11 those human beings that we take
12 custody of, because that's a big
13 statement for you to deny someone's
14 freedom, you are responsible for
15 their well-being.

16 And with that, I want to
17 turn it over to Member O'Rourke.

18 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Make
21 sure your mic --

22 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Good morning, everyone.

1 Thank you to all the guests that
2 are joining us this morning, all
3 the panelists that have taken the
4 time out today to testify as well
5 as to Chairman Jones and Chairman
6 Thomas in his absence, Chairs of
7 the Committee that are meeting here
8 today.

9 It's good to be here to
10 really dig into some issues that
11 for too many, so, so many, only
12 seem to surface with a hot headline
13 attached to it, a juicy little
14 headline that get folks' attention.
15 We read about riots and escape will
16 be big news for a week, you know,
17 some sort of breakout will capture
18 everybody's attention or maybe you
19 hear about the \$25 million that our
20 City was forced to set aside by a
21 federal judge.

22 That's exactly what
23 happened last August before the
24 current PDP administration was

1 here. Since we violated the 2002
2 settlement in Remick v.
3 Philadelphia, a class-action
4 lawsuit that only asks to clear the
5 low bar of constitutional treatment
6 for people in prison.

7 The City was found in
8 contempt of court for being out of
9 compliance with the provisions laid
10 out by the settlement. And to be
11 clear, we're not close to meeting
12 that bar right now unfortunately.
13 When the contempt order was handed
14 down based on a monitor's report
15 from last March, the City was in
16 substantial compliance with only
17 30% of the provisions laid out in
18 the agreement, and that's rounding
19 up.

20 Last October we were
21 still at 30%. These provisions
22 again are the constitutional floor,
23 the floor now, daily out-of-cell
24 time, basic and timely health care

1 and behavioral health, access to
2 the law library and other basics
3 that should happen in our prisons.

4 And if you've read them,
5 you know the federal monitor for
6 our jails is not holding back in
7 these reports. I want to read just
8 one portion of the last report from
9 October into the record, if you
10 don't mind. "By its own inaction,
11 the City has failed to honor its
12 dedicated workforce and prolong the
13 neglect of many incarcerated
14 persons. It must take ownership,
15 the City now, of every substantive
16 provision in this court's orders
17 and resist any political
18 inclination to shirk
19 responsibility, shift blame or
20 scapegoat has occurred during the
21 initial settlement term."

22 So today we're here to
23 talk and take responsibility, to
24 stop pointing fingers, to address

1 something that we've known for
2 decades. All is not well up on
3 State Road, and that's despite what
4 have been some real successes, if I
5 can say. Some in this room
6 remember how we saw the
7 incarcerated population plummet
8 when Philly joined the MacArthur
9 challenge.

10 Some remember
11 celebrating the closure of the
12 House of Corrections. Folks
13 remember that #CLOSEthecreek
14 campaign, and there is much in
15 those efforts to celebrate. Yet
16 and still we find ourselves here
17 talking about a rolling crisis that
18 continues to affect so many
19 families and communities in
20 Philadelphia.

21 There are bright spots
22 in the conversation. Like the work
23 the Defender's, District Attorney's
24 Office and the First Judicial

1 District did last year to fast-
2 track the release of 100 pre-trial
3 detainees. That's the kind of
4 coordination -- I want to emphasize
5 that particular word today -- the
6 kind of coordination that we need
7 in order to address the crux of the
8 problem, which is the ratio between
9 staff and the incarcerated on State
10 Road.

11 Commissioner Resnick can
12 attest to the fact that recruitment
13 and retention is getting better at
14 PDP, but that's only one side of
15 the equation, just one of the
16 scales that we need to balance and
17 we need to find that balance to
18 ensure that we don't violate the
19 rights of thousands of
20 Philadelphians, that is, assuming
21 that we do care in today's age.

22 I know that politics is
23 shifting that we care about not
24 violating each other's rights, let

1 alone each other as persons.
2 Because a lot of those folks come
3 home, y'all, and we have to be
4 honest about the fact that too many
5 return with more fear, more trauma,
6 more shame, even if their stay is
7 only a couple of days.

8 And frankly, there are
9 too many going in for 5 or 6 or 13
10 days for it to always be a wise use
11 of our resources. I think there's
12 agreement there. When folks return
13 to their communities with a broken
14 spirit, we know we have failed. We
15 should know that. Thankfully that
16 isn't always the case, and a number
17 of justice-impacted Philadelphians
18 return home with a drive to improve
19 their community, with demands on
20 their lips as we would want them to
21 have, asking for the basics like
22 accessible and affordable housing,
23 health care for their families,
24 good jobs and strong pipelines to

1 good work once they get those jobs,
2 and for institutions that can be
3 held to account for the harm they
4 inflict, especially in a time when
5 institutions don't want to be held
6 to account for the harm that they
7 inflict.

8 I'm grateful to be
9 joining Chairman Jones and Chairman
10 Thomas, who in his absence I should
11 say, in building an institution
12 that we seek -- or excuse me, that
13 will seek transparency and
14 accountability when it comes to our
15 jails. But we need all of the
16 decision-makers in this criminal
17 legal system to step into the
18 frame, to get into the picture.

19 So I'll be honest, I do
20 wish that the First Judicial
21 District could participate in
22 testimony, especially with some of
23 the good work that they are doing.
24 As legislators, we know advances

1 are being made but we need to be a
2 part of it and each branch needs to
3 be better at bringing the public
4 into our process.

5 If you have a family
6 member who's in a burning building,
7 and we know that some of our city
8 have experienced that,
9 unfortunately so I don't mean to be
10 light-hearted in this, but in
11 seriousness if you have a family
12 that's in a burning building and
13 you don't rest assured knowing that
14 the Fire Department is strategizing
15 thinking somewhere about how
16 they're going to fix it, you want
17 to see them address the problem in
18 realtime, inperson. That's a
19 reasonable human expectation
20 because these are real issues.

21 There are whole families
22 shaped and scarred by cycles of
23 incarceration, whole neighborhoods
24 that have been forever changed. It

1 is no secret that they tend to be
2 the most violent ones as a result.
3 And at the end of the day, it's
4 those with the least that are
5 getting locked up the most.

6 I don't want to make
7 anyone out to be blameless, but the
8 way incarceration actually works in
9 America looks like a war against
10 those without means, if we're
11 talking about who is actually
12 targeted on the outside and who was
13 forgotten about once they're on the
14 inside.

15 So the change that we
16 need moves beyond just the jail.
17 The change we need must sweep
18 through City Hall and through our
19 courts, be felt in our
20 neighborhoods, on the concrete,
21 touch the ground and raise
22 expectations for all of the actors
23 in the criminal legal system.

24 If we stay on the same

1 course, we'll pay deeply for it and
2 not just in dollars. The cost will
3 live on in Philadelphians now
4 enduring the demoralizing violence
5 of incarceration, the families'
6 mourned loved ones who have died on
7 the inside and we speak their
8 names, and the communities facing
9 cycles of confinement that are
10 anything but rehabilitating. Let's
11 pay the \$25 million of course, but
12 we have to understand there are
13 greater debts that we owe and
14 greater heights we wish to reach in
15 our governance.

16 Pope Francis, God bless
17 him, I think he's doing a little
18 better today. He shook up the
19 church last year when he confessed
20 to an interviewer that he hopes
21 hell is empty. That was his hope.
22 Contrary to church doctrine, at
23 least in the Western world, he
24 admitted that he wants the

1 salvation of each and every man,
2 woman and child to be secured.

3 I cannot help but to
4 echo that hope, that damnation is
5 nobody's destiny. That having been
6 said thank you, Mr. Chairman, for
7 the time. I look forward to this
8 hearing.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
10 you. Thank you, Member. And I
11 appreciate you bringing this to the
12 Committee's attention and bringing
13 this before the public. And we
14 will get to the bottom of where we
15 are.

16 It's reminiscent
17 about -- you gave me a flashback.
18 A couple of years ago before the
19 pandemic we started a Criminal
20 Justice Reform Committee, which I
21 was a Co-chair, along with Keir
22 Bradford-Grey And now Police
23 Commissioner Bethel. And when they
24 tried to kind of put their arms

1 around what the system was, we
2 received a process chart. And when
3 I tell you it was seven pages long
4 with possible outcomes, possible
5 releases, possible penalties.

6 And putting your arm
7 around it is a very difficult
8 thing, but what you said grabs me
9 that we should be thinking about
10 how we can improve that process to
11 shrink it, to make it more
12 efficient, and that's the spirit of
13 what we are doing today.

14 With that, Ms. Stack,
15 who's the first panel of witnesses
16 to testify.

17 THE CLERK: District
18 Attorney Larry Krasner and
19 Commissioner Michael Resnick from
20 the Philadelphia Department of
21 Prisons.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
23 you. We have an ambitious agenda
24 today, Committee members. We have

1 a hard stop at 1 o'clock because of
2 the next panel and Committee to use
3 these chambers.

4 (Witnesses approached
5 Witness table.)

6 COUNCILMAN JONES:

7 Welcome. Good morning.

8 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

9 KRASNER: Good morning.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: I

11 guess we will start with the
12 District Attorney. You've been
13 here before. Please state your
14 name for the record and begin your
15 testimony.

16 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

17 KRASNER: I'll try to state my name
18 in less than 10 minutes, I promise.
19 My name is Larry Krasner. I'm the
20 elected District Attorney for the
21 City of Philadelphia. I'm going to
22 run a clock because sometimes I
23 talk too much. We're going to try
24 not to talk too much. And I

1 appreciate the opportunity to be up
2 here with Commissioner Resnick
3 because there has been a lot of
4 collaborative work on the
5 challenges that we face.

6 I want to start out by
7 saying that first and foremost when
8 we try to diagnose a problem, when
9 we try to fix a problem, that's not
10 a blame game. That is simply
11 trying to work with your partners
12 in ways that are effective. So to
13 the extent there's conversations
14 about things that might change, we
15 all got to leave our egos at the
16 door. I know I'm leaving mine.
17 And we have to talk about things
18 that might be able to change
19 because this is a difficult
20 problem. It is not something that
21 is brand new or recent. This is a
22 problem that has been developing
23 over many, many years.

24 And I think while we're

1 making a lot of great progress and
2 I'm very happy about the
3 collaboration that we have, among
4 others, with Commissioner Resnick
5 and with the Department of Prisons,
6 with the Sheriff's Office, with the
7 Police Department, with the
8 judiciary, while there's a lot of
9 good stuff happening there, there's
10 a lot more to do.

11 So let me be clear. If
12 I talk about solutions that involve
13 all of us, that's not a criticism.
14 That is simply an effort to work
15 collaboratively so that we can get
16 somewhere with some of these
17 problems.

18 I heard Councilmember
19 O'Rourke talk about the reality of
20 poverty and its interaction with
21 criminal justice. It was Bryan
22 Stevenson, author of Just Mercy,
23 the man who appeared I think six
24 times before the U.S. Supreme

1 Court, won almost all those times.
2 It was Bryan Stevenson who said,
3 you're better off -- and this is a
4 paraphrase, you're better off being
5 rich and guilty than broke and
6 innocent in the prison system. And
7 he's not wrong.

8 There is no good reason
9 why bail status or freedom status
10 should be attached to money. It's
11 a really bad idea. It's been a
12 really bad idea for a long time.
13 And as much as my office has tried
14 to simulate a system in which we
15 make recommendations to either hold
16 or release and a system that would
17 essentially be a no-cash bail
18 system, the kind of system that has
19 been so effective in Washington,
20 D.C., for 35 years that is now used
21 in New Jersey, Illinois, Kentucky,
22 a system that is eventually going
23 to take over, even though we've
24 tried to simulate that, it's a

1 matter of state law to get cash out
2 of it.

3 And in case anybody
4 doesn't know what no cash bail
5 means, it means some people get
6 held. That's what it means. In
7 D.C., it has meant about 12% get
8 held until their trial because they
9 are deemed to be such a danger to
10 the community or so likely to flee
11 or often both, that they're held.
12 This is not everybody goes home and
13 the other 88% have a much more
14 robust system of support on the
15 outside to make sure they don't
16 trip up on the outside. That's
17 where we need to be.

18 But this is where we're
19 stuck. We're stuck with a cash
20 bail system. It is a bail system
21 in which the DA does not set the
22 bail. The bails are set by members
23 of the judiciary, like everything
24 else that all of us do, sometimes

1 very wisely, sometimes not so much.
2 And so, there are many different
3 steps in this process where we can
4 do things to try to make sure that
5 the people who need to be in jail
6 are in jail, but that as many
7 people as possible who are safely
8 out of jail can get out of jail.

9 Very briefly I'm going
10 to talk a little bit about the
11 crime statistics because I think
12 it's relevant. It was not that
13 long ago we had 11,000 people in
14 County custody. You may remember
15 there were a bunch of rootin'-
16 tootin' law and order people,
17 meaning people claiming that they
18 were pursuing law and order, but
19 all of that incarceration was not
20 actually consistent with the law
21 and it was not giving us order. At
22 that time, we had a lot more crime.

23 What's going on right
24 now in the city of Philadelphia is

1 that we are safer than we were back
2 in 2018. We are freer than we were
3 back in 2018. And we are a lot
4 safer and a lot freer than we were
5 when there were 11,000 people in
6 County custody under one of my
7 predecessors. Okay. That's
8 reality. Safety and freedom are in
9 no way inconsistent as long as it's
10 done carefully, as long as it's
11 done wisely.

12 And so, I commend any
13 process that is directed at getting
14 us to be safer and freer all at the
15 same time because we've shown it
16 can happen. We led the country
17 among big cities in improvements in
18 public safety last year despite
19 being the poorest of the 10 largest
20 cities, despite there being more
21 guns on the street every day than
22 there were the day before. So
23 there's nothing at all inconsistent
24 about safety going along with

1 freedom.

2 I said 11,000 people in

3 County custody back in the day.

4 This morning I believe the

5 Commissioner, who is my source of

6 information for this, will tell you

7 there's about 3700 people in County

8 custody. There's about 3700

9 people. And our crime numbers

10 right now are way below where they

11 were last year, which was an

12 exceptional historic record year

13 both locally and nationally, right.

14 They're way below that.

15 So, no, it's not what

16 they sold you. It's not a

17 situation where the more people you

18 lock up, the safer you get. On the

19 contrary, the more people who don't

20 need to be there whom you lock up,

21 the less resources you have for

22 public schools, for sports

23 programs, for everything else that

24 is so preventative and so

1 proactive.

2 What we should be after
3 is preventing the next
4 victimization, not just punishing
5 the last. Both have their place.
6 But what we should be after is a
7 system where we keep getting safer
8 and we keep getting freer. And to
9 me, that is very doable.

10 Dealing with the issues
11 in County custody is a crucial part
12 of that. So let me talk about one
13 of the things that has been going
14 on for a few years. It is our
15 early bail review program. That is
16 a good program. That in my opinion
17 had a lot of benefit in terms of
18 reducing the prison population,
19 County prison, without causing any
20 increase in crime that we can see,
21 and hopefully that we will never
22 see.

23 This is a program where
24 every day there's a courtroom and

1 there are about 20 to 25 cases that
2 are considered more or less a week
3 after the first bail is set. They
4 are considered by a judge of the
5 Municipal Court, and the Public
6 Defender's Office and the DA's
7 Office go in there and make
8 recommendations.

9 Sometimes the DA's
10 Office is saying, yeah, drop the
11 bail. Sometimes they're saying,
12 don't drop this bail, we need to go
13 higher. There are parameters on
14 this. It must be bails that are
15 250,000 or less. And there is also
16 a list of cases that will never
17 make it to that hearing and rightly
18 so. They include cases, for
19 example, where you have a child
20 victim where the case is an FOJ.
21 That means it's someone who's being
22 held locally because they have a
23 warrant from a different
24 jurisdiction, to where a defendant

1 has a state parole detainer. Why
2 do an EBR hearing if they're going
3 to be held in state custody anyway?
4 Where the defendant is accused of
5 killing or shooting someone, those
6 cases don't even show up for EBR.

7 Where the defendant has
8 what they call an active Nebbia,
9 That means there is a belief that
10 the defendant is funded by illegal
11 money so we shouldn't have people
12 paying their bail with illegal
13 money or where the defender is
14 accused of violating a protection
15 from abuse order and that, of
16 course, is because of the special
17 and especially dangerous dynamic of
18 domestic violence.

19 This is a careful
20 program that began actually in 2016
21 but it was much, much smaller, much
22 tighter guardrails. It has
23 broadened over the years. And what
24 we have seen is that it has an

1 impact. But let me tell you this,
2 part of the reason we need it is
3 because the initial bail process
4 can be improved.

5 We came up with a second
6 bail hearing essentially to fix the
7 problems with the initial bail
8 hearing. There are things we can
9 do with the initial bail hearing
10 that are actually really important
11 as well, and I am happy to work
12 with any or all of you. I'm happy
13 to do it in private. I'm happy to
14 do it in public hearings to talk
15 about what things we might do
16 because there are more
17 improvements.

18 Second point that I want
19 to raise in my capacity as someone
20 whose job it is to try to protect
21 everyone, and everyone -- of course
22 includes correctional officers, it
23 includes inmates and includes
24 vendors and other personnel,

1 sheriffs who go to and from the
2 prisons. We have enjoyed good
3 progress with the Commissioner and
4 with the Police Department in
5 trying to deal with the reality
6 that there was a lot of criminal
7 activity going on in the prisons,
8 some of it by inmates, some of it
9 by correctional officers, no
10 aspersions on the other ones who
11 have a tough job and do it the
12 right way.

13 But that criminal
14 activity has been fed by other
15 forms of -- other challenges in the
16 prisons. It has been fed by
17 staffing issues. It has been fed
18 prior to this Administration by
19 efforts to remedy the staffing
20 issues. It has been fed by a lack
21 of up-to-date cameras. It has been
22 fed by a lack of up-to-date
23 technology. I won't get real
24 specific because we're not trying

1 to teach people how to get out of
2 prison, but it has been fed by
3 these other things.

4 This city is a city that
5 cannot experience what happened at
6 Attica. We cannot do it. If we
7 got cell doors that open, they need
8 to be fixed. If we have camera
9 systems that are down, they need to
10 be fixed. If we have alarm systems
11 that are problematic, that needs to
12 be fixed.

13 I have heard the idea of
14 body-worn cameras on correctional
15 officers. I think that's good for
16 everybody, good for everybody,
17 especially when they are
18 supplemented with cameras that are
19 stationary and permanent so you get
20 the full picture of what's going
21 on.

22 I won't get into the
23 various prosecutions because I see
24 I'm at the end of my 10 minutes,

1 but I'm happy here to address any
2 questions you may have because I
3 think this is a very, very
4 important project for the city and
5 can make a tremendous difference in
6 making us safer and freer all at
7 the same time.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
9 you, District Attorney.

10 I want to acknowledge
11 the presence of my Co-chair Isaiah
12 Thomas --

13 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
14 No, that's Council President.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh,
16 I'm sorry. I'm looking right in
17 his face. Council President, I
18 gave you a demotion. I'm giving
19 you a promotion -- Council
20 President Kenyatta Johnson, would
21 you like to say anything, sir?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
23 JOHNSON: I just want to come past
24 and briefly just give some support

1 to the sponsor of this particular
2 resolution and hearing, the Whip of
3 the Minority Party Councilmember
4 Nicolas O'Rourke as well as
5 acknowledging my leader in public
6 safety, Councilmember Curtis Jones,
7 Jr., as well as the Legislative
8 Oversight Chairperson Mr. Isaiah
9 Thomas who's the Chair. And just
10 wanted to -- just a couple things,
11 one or two to follow up on,
12 Mr. Krasner. It's always good to
13 see you.

14 I always like to state
15 for the record that crime has been
16 significantly higher, potentially
17 homicides and shootings under
18 District Attorney Lynn Abrams as
19 well as District Attorney Ron
20 Castille, who were two tough
21 law-enforcement-tough-on-crime
22 DA's, and crime was still higher
23 than it is now. I just want to
24 state that for the record so we can

1 frame this conversation.

2 Crime is down
3 significantly in the city of
4 Philadelphia and also across the
5 state of Pennsylvania. And a
6 reason why, from the work that we
7 have been doing comprehensively to
8 take a look at how we address gun
9 violence and shootings here in the
10 city of Philadelphia. On a state
11 level, part of the Governor's
12 proposal is to actually shut down
13 two particular precedents based
14 upon us not sending people Upstate
15 anymore, and that's based upon the
16 work that we have been doing
17 consistently over and over and
18 over.

19 When you talk about the
20 issue of bail reform, a lot of
21 people say, well, we deal with this
22 issue of gun violence, and I know
23 Council Chairman Jones, we worked
24 on this early on. But give us an

1 overview when it comes to
2 particularly gun violence your
3 office approach, when you have
4 individuals in custody and you
5 request a certain amount of bail, I
6 think 999,999, just short of \$1
7 million bail to make sure the worst
8 of the worst isn't let back out on
9 the street, what usually happens in
10 that case? And tell me about your
11 team's approach.

12 And this is just to set
13 the record straight because a lot
14 of people think that we lock them
15 folks up and we just let them get
16 out, but don't really know that
17 you're actually moving forward
18 saying I want this person to stay.

19 DISTRICT ATTORNEY
20 KRASNER: Thank you, Council,
21 President. I appreciate that
22 framing and I appreciate your
23 participation as always. So our
24 approach is pretty straightforward,

1 which is that there are categories
2 of crimes and there are individuals
3 who engage in them who need to be
4 locked up. It is a lot fewer than
5 it used to be, but there's some
6 people who need to be locked up
7 because at this time they pose a
8 danger to other human beings and
9 it's incompatible with safety on
10 the streets to have them out and
11 about.

12 As I said though, when
13 you go from 11,000 people to fewer
14 than 4,000 people, which is where
15 we are now, it's a lot fewer than
16 used to be locked up in the old
17 days. If anything, our frustration
18 as an office is that when we're
19 trying to go real low when we're
20 recommending no bail at all for
21 some nonviolent offense with
22 someone who's suffering from mental
23 illness, when we're doing that, a
24 lot of times the judges will put a

1 small bail on that case, so we're
2 effectively locking up somebody for
3 being broke.

4 And then at the other
5 end when we go in looking for a
6 million bucks, and the reason it's
7 slightly off of a million bucks has
8 to do with how the prisons at that
9 time were housing people. It was a
10 public safety measure to be under 1
11 million because it limited the
12 prisons options on how and where
13 they house people during COVID,
14 right. But that's how we got to
15 that number.

16 We wanted to have a zero
17 number, and then we wanted to have
18 a number that was so high that it
19 was very unrealistic that people
20 who pose a clear danger could get
21 out. We have very often been
22 frustrated that we're going in for
23 a million bucks and what we get is
24 a quarter of a million bucks.

1 While that may sound like a lot of
2 money, it only takes \$8,000 to get
3 out on a quarter of million bucks.

4 First of all, the rules,
5 for frankly no good reason, say
6 every single bail has to be 10%.
7 They didn't used to say that. And
8 second, you go to a bail bondsman
9 you only pay a third of that, so
10 you're paying 3.33%, right. So
11 when we're actually asking for \$1
12 million, even though it will hold
13 an awful lot of people who pose a
14 danger in custody, what they would
15 need to get out is about \$33,333.
16 That's about what it is.

17 And even then we have
18 cases where there's been a horrific
19 shooting at a playground and we
20 have bail commissioners who give a
21 quarter million dollars, which is
22 \$2,000. That's what you're looking
23 at. I think I got my math right
24 there. That is unacceptable. We

1 have to be able to do something so
2 that the highs are high and the
3 lows are zero, because that is what
4 actually works.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: And just for the record,
7 I just want to clarify that's not
8 your decision?

9 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

10 KRASNER: It is not my decision.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: I want to clarify that
13 for the record.

14 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

15 KRASNER: It's not. It is not,
16 Council President. And it is the
17 consequence of just long-
18 established practices. We have
19 bail commissioners who are not
20 elected -- and some of them are
21 great, don't get me wrong -- but we
22 have bail commissioners who are not
23 elected and some of them are not
24 lawyers. They have not been judges

1 who supervise people on probation
2 and parole, who did trials with
3 individuals. Their skill set is
4 more administrative and
5 bureaucratic than it is judicial
6 and it poses problems. It does not
7 have to be that way. It is not
8 that way in any other county in
9 Pennsylvania.

10 And I'm not saying scrap
11 it all and I am not here to diss
12 those individuals who are bail
13 commissioners. But we do have to
14 look at the fruit of the tree. And
15 the fruit of the tree is that some
16 things that should be nothing are,
17 in my opinion, too high. So it
18 broke people in jail, which clogs
19 up the jails. And at the other
20 end, some people who are really
21 dangerous have lower bails than
22 they should despite the fact that
23 we're going in for higher bail.

24 I mean, if you point a

1 gun at somebody and you shoot it,
2 that's pretty serious for
3 everybody, often including the one
4 who fired the gun. So to me that's
5 a little bit bothersome. We have
6 this rush to set bail and then we
7 have people setting bail who don't
8 even have the powers of elected
9 judges to do things like impose
10 enforceable stay away orders.

11 There are some changes
12 that can be made at that first
13 level. I truly appreciate the
14 leadership of the Municipal Court
15 at this time. Joffie Pittman and
16 also Karen Simmons, two excellent
17 judges who are very thoughtful
18 trying to do the right thing, I'm
19 all in to work with them, to work
20 with defense attorneys on a system
21 of bail that would be more accurate
22 from jump instead of having to come
23 back a week later and try to fix
24 things that could have been fixed

1 in the first place.

2 I think with a little
3 bit of both of these methods we may
4 be able to drive the prison
5 population down further. And
6 consistent with what we've seen for
7 years, drive it down further
8 without causing any endangerment of
9 the public.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
13 you, Mr. President.

14 We will allow -- are you
15 done with your testimony?

16 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

17 KRASNER: I'm done and only
18 available for questions.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Will
20 you stick around please --

21 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

22 KRASNER: Of course.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
24 after Commissioner Resnick does his

1 testimony, we can then begin the
2 questioning.

3 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

4 Thank you, Chairman Jones. Good
5 morning, Chairman Jones and Council
6 President Johnson and members of
7 the Public Safety and Legislative
8 Oversight Committees. I'm Michael
9 Resnick, the Commissioner of
10 Philadelphia Department of Prisons,
11 and I'm here to provide testimony
12 on Resolution 240718, introduced by
13 Councilmember O'Rourke, calling for
14 hearings examining actions
15 necessary to significantly reduce
16 the prison population in an effort
17 to close the Detention Center.

18 The resolution states
19 that the prison population was 4811
20 as of July of 2024. At the outset,
21 let me convey the good news that
22 our jail population through the
23 collective work of our criminal
24 justice partners has decreased to

1 3819 as of 2/27/25. And the
2 population this morning, as
3 testified to by the District
4 Attorney, is 3854 total and 3692
5 inhouse population.

6 I'd like to publicly
7 thank our partners in the First
8 Judicial District, especially the
9 honorable Karen Simmons of
10 Municipal Court, who has focused
11 her attention on bail review as
12 well as the honorable Rose Defino-
13 Nastasi of the Court of Common
14 Pleas, who has been focused on
15 mental health diversion.

16 The courts along with
17 the Defender's Association and the
18 District Attorney have been
19 outstanding partners in
20 implementing processes that have
21 resulted in this reduction. Also,
22 we meet monthly with the Criminal
23 Justice Advisory Board and members
24 of the Prison Population

1 Subcommittee. While the jail
2 population is seasonal, we must
3 continue our efforts to ensure that
4 as we move into the warmer months,
5 the recent population reductions
6 remain. We are working with the
7 criminal justice partners to reduce
8 the average length of stay, thereby
9 lowering the population.

10 As of July 2024, the
11 time of this resolution, our
12 average length of stay was 234
13 days. Currently it is an
14 unacceptable 260 days. So, yes,
15 the criminal justice system needs
16 to look at case processing. But as
17 I will discuss below, 60% of the
18 inmates in population are being
19 held on more serious charges.

20 And one thing I will
21 note for the record in alliance
22 with what the District Attorney had
23 testified to, at the end of the
24 month when you take a look at the

1 people who have been released from
2 our population, 43% of them have
3 been there for two weeks or less,
4 which begs the question why are
5 they there in the first place. And
6 as a lawyer, I understand process.
7 But if we're going to release
8 individuals, 43% of those that are
9 in custody, why should they be in
10 the population in the first place.

11 While the dramatic
12 reduction population is incredibly
13 positive news, it does not allow us
14 to close the Detention Center at
15 this time. The reason for this
16 lies in the custody level of our
17 population. 10 years ago the
18 percentage of our population that
19 was classified as closed custody,
20 think the equivalent of maximum
21 security, those with violent
22 charges or major facility
23 infractions, was only 30%.

24 Currently that

1 percentage is over 60%. The system
2 is released releasing more
3 nonviolent offenders. And as such,
4 the majority of our population are
5 those inmates with more serious or
6 violent charges. The remaining 40%
7 of the population are lower-custody
8 level. Good correctional practice
9 prohibits us from housing closed
10 custody inmates with those who are
11 minimum or medium or even community
12 custody, which is why the Detention
13 Center is still very much needed.

14 Most of the housing
15 units in our other facilities,
16 Curran-Fromhold, Riverside and
17 PICC, are used for closed custody
18 inmates. By their design,
19 construction and staffing, they are
20 meant to house closed custody
21 inmates. We simply do not have
22 enough housing units in the other
23 facilities to be able to house
24 minimum and medium and community

1 custody inmates completely separate
2 from the closed custody inmates.

3 We currently have
4 approximately 500 inmates housed in
5 the Detention Center, and that's
6 the only way we can house those of
7 that lower custody level completely
8 separate from the closed custody
9 population. Additionally, the
10 Detention Center houses a
11 significant number of our older
12 male population. These inmates, 55
13 and older, prefer to be housed
14 together, not with younger inmates.
15 These blocks have relatively no
16 disciplinary problems, are well-
17 ordered, quiet and well-maintained.

18 The Detention Center is
19 also home to PHSW, our Prison
20 Health Services Wing. PHSW houses
21 inmates with more severe medical
22 and behavioral health issues,
23 providing ongoing care for those
24 needs. PHSW is accredited by the

1 National Commission on Correctional
2 Health Care and the facility is
3 also licensed by the state of
4 Pennsylvania as a medical treatment
5 facility.

6 So you've heard why we
7 need to keep the Detention Center
8 open. Please allow me to respond
9 to the claim that the facility is
10 inhumane. Yes, the Detention
11 Center is old. It is our oldest
12 facility currently operating, but
13 it's not inhumane. We have
14 dedicated staff there who work hard
15 to ensure the conditions are as
16 good as they can be for the
17 population housed there.

18 There's an assertion
19 that the incarcerated population at
20 DC are only receiving one hour of
21 out-of-cell time. This is not
22 accurate. The inmates housed on
23 the dormitories can move about
24 those sections at will. They have

1 bathrooms, showers, phones,
2 televisions, tablets to use in
3 those sections.

4 Further, the four
5 dormitories at DC used to house as
6 many as 232 inmates per dorm.
7 Currently, we have less than 100
8 inmates housed on those dorms,
9 allowing the dorms to be far less
10 more crowded, more comfortable and
11 the inmates are allotted an
12 opportunity to use the rec yard for
13 two hours a day weather-permitting,
14 that's outside, and they're also
15 scheduled the opportunity to use
16 the rec gym four times a week, two
17 hours a time.

18 The inmates housed in
19 our three nondormitory housing
20 blocks, these are the over 55
21 inmates, around their cells for an
22 average of 10 hours a day and they
23 have bathrooms in their cells. But
24 while they're in the day rooms,

1 they have access to showers, phone,
2 television, tablets, also able to
3 play cards and other games.

4 They're also allotted the
5 opportunity to use the rec yard two
6 days a week weather-permitting, and
7 they're also scheduled an
8 opportunity to use the rec gym five
9 days a week.

10 As for programming, the
11 Detention Center houses individuals
12 enrolled in the Options program.
13 It is a therapeutic drug and
14 alcohol treatment program that is
15 court-ordered, and they participate
16 in that program consistent with the
17 court orders.

18 The Detention Center
19 also houses participants in our new
20 Leash on Life program. They
21 participate in the program designed
22 to deter recidivism as they prepare
23 rescue dogs for their forever
24 homes. They're provided with

1 internships, housing assistance,
2 job placement assistance upon
3 release, and we currently have the
4 37th cohort of that program ongoing
5 at the Detention Center.

6 Other programs available
7 are Better Minds, Fatherhood
8 Enrichment program, Anger
9 Management, Mindfulness and
10 Meditation, Career Keepers and
11 several other educational programs.
12 Regarding our medical backlog of
13 offsite appointments, we have
14 worked aggressively to reduce and
15 decrease the medical backlog
16 throughout the entire PDP.

17 The current Detention
18 Center backlog for offsite medical
19 appointments has dropped from 104
20 in July 2024 to just 11 now. Of
21 our other medical services in
22 general, please allow me to share
23 the following: We have increased
24 our budget for medical care by 3.4

1 million. The current budget
2 includes 360 full-time clinical and
3 support staff.

4 The healthcare vacancy
5 rate is 8%, but the functional
6 vacancy rate is minus -5.5, meaning
7 we are delivering more hours of
8 care than we are budgeted for.
9 Onsite primary and chronic care
10 backlogs are 87% less than the
11 highest during the COVID period and
12 overall are below the federal
13 monitor's return-to-normal targets.

14 Onsite specialty
15 backlogs are 78% below COVID high.
16 And in most cases, are below the
17 federal monitor's return to normal.
18 Off-campus specialty visit backlogs
19 continue to decline and are now
20 almost 50% or 47% below the COVID
21 highs. PDP continues to augment
22 and improve services.

23 Tablets are now being
24 used campus-wide for sick call

1 requests, Brixadi, a 30-day
2 injectable form of Suboxone, has
3 been added to our medical-assisted
4 treatment program so that inmates
5 charged with diversion of their
6 Suboxone get a second chance and
7 can remain in treatment.

8 PDP continues daily
9 physical and weekly behavioral
10 health care rounds on the
11 segregated units as per National
12 Commission on Correctional Health
13 Care standards. Additional rounds
14 are conducted as staff allow, and
15 there is a contention that the
16 Detention Center is infested with
17 rodents and cockroaches. We have a
18 contracted provider which comes
19 weekly, provides weekly pest
20 control and they also come on
21 demand if an issue arises.

22 Regarding issues of
23 flooding, the only time the
24 Detention Center or any of our

1 facilities experience flooding is
2 when an inmate places something in
3 the toilet that should not be
4 flushed and these incidences are
5 rare and immediately rectified by
6 our maintenance staff.

7 Recently we increased
8 our maintenance budget facility-
9 wide by \$5.5 million in order to
10 better address maintenance issues
11 throughout our facilities.
12 Understandably, great emphasis is
13 placed on the lack of
14 air-conditioning in the Detention
15 Center. Our three nondormitory
16 housing blocks are air-conditioned.
17 PHSW is air-conditioned.
18 Currently, the four dorms are not
19 air-conditioned. However, working
20 with Capital Projects and the
21 Office of Sustainability, we have
22 the installation of
23 air-conditioning units in the dorms
24 budgeted and in our plan for these

1 units to be installed this spring.

2 Regarding our staffing
3 challenges, we have worked very
4 hard to increase and maintain our
5 staff and the results are positive.
6 Since April of 2024, we have hired
7 230 correctional officers. Our
8 attrition rate in that period of
9 time has only been 56 officers for
10 a net gain of 174 correctional
11 officers. Our attrition has
12 remained low since April of 2024,
13 in the single digits, and we are
14 running about 2% a month. So our
15 staff vacancy rate has dropped from
16 47% in April to 34% currently. We
17 currently have a class of 58 in the
18 academy scheduled to graduate in
19 April.

20 We are steadily
21 increasing towards our post plan of
22 1576. We have a recruiting
23 coordinator who's conducting
24 recruiting an outreach for us. We

1 have also engaged the Whalls Group,
2 a national recruiting firm
3 specializing in corrections.

4 In closing, I agree that
5 collaboration will be needed to
6 continue to reduce and maintain any
7 reductions in population to help
8 ensure that those who should not be
9 incarcerated are not. And just as
10 important, until there's a dramatic
11 increase in the closed custody
12 population we will not be able to
13 close the Detention Center. And I
14 will be happy to answer any
15 questions members may have.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES:
17 Before I turn it over to my
18 colleagues, I want to try to get
19 two questions in, one to each of
20 you. First and foremost, I was
21 around when we closed the House of
22 Corrections and affectionately, or
23 not affectionately, known as The
24 Creek, and that was a measured

1 response to the reduction in the
2 census up there.

3 I want to also say that
4 we have walked your pods up there,
5 me, Member Brooks, former Member
6 Gym and realized the immense
7 responsibility that your
8 professional staff have to undergo,
9 many of whom are female officers
10 overseeing 40 to 80 men on a pod.
11 And I just found it to be
12 exceptional work that you're able
13 to maintain any measure of control.

14 So before I go there
15 with you, Mr. District Attorney,
16 did I understand you to say in
17 simple plain English that the
18 prison population is down and crime
19 is down; two things can be true?

20 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

21 KRASNER: Two things are true,
22 Councilmember.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
24 you have been a long proponent of

1 looking at the cause as opposed to
2 just the cure. And I know there
3 are a lot of opponents to that kind
4 of thinking, but the numbers don't
5 lie. We are spending, you know, I
6 want to give Council some credit.
7 We put up a lot of money for
8 reduction-of-violence programs that
9 we fund, but we have to consider
10 our teammates in this that are
11 looking at this in a different
12 capacity and under different light
13 and say thank you because we are
14 getting there, not fast enough for
15 those who are victims of crime, not
16 fast enough, but we are getting
17 there with that methodology.

18 DISTRICT ATTORNEY
19 KRASNER: We are getting there and
20 we are getting there collectively.
21 It was not that long ago that you,
22 Councilmember, Council President
23 were leading the 100 Shooting
24 Investigation, which, you know,

1 challenged a lot of us to be in the
2 same room and exchange ideas and
3 identify agreement, identify
4 differences. It has been a
5 collective effort that has gone on
6 for quite some time, and obviously
7 many, many of these factors are not
8 easily within our control.

9 But I will say this: I
10 think a lot of the work that's
11 being done at the prisons is great.
12 I think it's important. I think
13 it's positive. Okay. And the
14 reality is we need to continue
15 that. But there are things that
16 the District Attorney's Office can
17 do, that the Public Defender's
18 Office can do, that the judiciary
19 can do, and it wouldn't hurt if the
20 \$25 million being held by this
21 judge, and it's a great judge by
22 the way, Judge Jerry McHugh. He's
23 about as decent and smart and good
24 and hard-working as it gets, but a

1 little bit of that money could be
2 used by all the entities I just
3 said, all three of us, DA, PD and
4 the judiciary, to come up with some
5 processes to make sure that we have
6 fewer people actually on the bus to
7 go into custody and we have more
8 people coming out successfully so
9 that they don't come back around.
10 Wouldn't take a lot really, but it
11 would make a big difference.

12 And one thing that
13 Council might be able to do, if you
14 are so inclined, is you could join
15 us in a letter in which we are
16 proposing that some portion of the
17 unexpended funds there, I know a
18 lot of them have been expended for
19 the prisons, and rightly so. But
20 some of that can go to take to lift
21 the burden on the prisons in other
22 ways, before people would even get
23 there or when people are stuck
24 there too long and don't have to

1 be. Some simple stuff can make a
2 difference.

3 I have with me Brett
4 Zakeosian, who has evolved as a
5 Special Investigations Unit
6 attorney to become effectively a
7 specialist in the prisons. And
8 there's a fascinating interaction
9 here between holding people
10 accountable for criminal activity
11 in the prisons and also controlling
12 that prison population. It is the
13 same good work that addresses both
14 of these issues.

15 So that's my little plug
16 for the value of collaboration with
17 the prisons but also with the
18 entities that are responsible for
19 people getting there and getting
20 out.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
22 you for that. And we heard you
23 with my good ear about that joint
24 letter. I heard you.

1 Commissioner Resnick,
2 real quick -- and I'm going to I
3 swear turn it over to you guys --
4 we some couple years ago
5 experienced some violence in the
6 parking lot of your facility. One
7 of the things that I'm channeling
8 my inner member Isaiah Thomas when
9 I ask these questions, how are we
10 on locks? How are we on cameras?
11 How are we on controlling of that
12 parking lot?

13 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
14 And so, Councilman, thank you for
15 the question. We have deployed our
16 transportation unit to our facility
17 grounds. They patrol 24/7 365 now.
18 So if you come to the prisons, you
19 will see prison transportation
20 vehicles with lights activated
21 stationed in certain areas and then
22 they do roving patrols.

23 We've just completed the
24 installation of a network of

1 perimeter cameras around the jails.
2 We have actually drone cameras that
3 we're installing on the facilities
4 that will take a bird's eye view of
5 our campus. We're working with OIT
6 to develop an integrated camera
7 system. So because of the age of
8 our facilities, the different
9 facilities have different cameras
10 and they operate on different
11 systems. We want to get one system
12 that will integrate all of those,
13 replace our older cameras and make
14 sure they all work on one platform.
15 We're also investigating
16 the possibility of outfitting our
17 staff with body-worn cameras. So
18 we've also implemented a Security
19 and Intelligence Unit working with
20 the District Attorney's Office to
21 monitor phone calls, monitor
22 visits, gather intelligence on
23 security threat groups, interdict
24 contraband that's coming into the

1 facilities, and that unit has been
2 highly successful.

3 We have identified
4 certain individuals, staff,
5 visitors and contractors to the
6 District Attorney's Office for them
7 to take the appropriate action. So
8 I think --

9 COUNCILMAN JONES:
10 Locks?

11 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
12 All locks have been fixed.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
14 you. I'm going to turn it over to
15 Member O'Rourke and then Member
16 Harrity.

17 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Let me just jump right
20 into these questions again. Thank
21 you both to the District Attorney
22 as well as to the Commissioner for
23 being here today and for sharing
24 your testimonies.

1 Commissioner Resnick, I
2 want to briefly start by making
3 sure that I understand a few points
4 about why we can't close the
5 Detention Center. First, 60% of
6 PDP's population is in closed
7 custody. Meaning, they have
8 serious charges and we need to
9 house them separately.

10 Secondly, the Detention
11 Center, among other important
12 things, houses folks who are
13 incarcerated over less serious
14 charges. If those things are true,
15 is it fair to say that if we
16 continue to reduce admissions for
17 the less serious charges, we'll
18 have less of a need for the
19 Detention Center's nonspecialized
20 beds?

21 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
22 Well, to start off, Councilman,
23 PHSW is at the Detention Center so
24 that is a full medical and mental

1 health hospital. There's about 50
2 or 60 inmates at any given time
3 there. So if I were to close the
4 facility, I'd have to find another
5 healthcare facility to house those
6 individuals.

7 But essentially, your
8 paraphrasing is correct. 60% of or
9 a little over 60% of our population
10 are what we classify as closed
11 custody that you would think
12 maximum security, so they need to
13 be housed in our most secure
14 facilities, the three that I
15 mentioned, CFCF, PICC and RCF.

16 While I still have about
17 500 medium, minimum and community
18 custody inmates like, example, all
19 of our outside workers, they're
20 housed at the Detention Center.
21 They're the inmates that can work
22 around the facilities out on the
23 grounds. They're housed there.

24 As I think I said in my

1 testimony, our population tends to
2 be cyclical. We're at 3700 and
3 change today or 3800 and change
4 today. My fear is that if the
5 processes we've put in place do not
6 maintain and we do not address the
7 further issues of length of stay
8 and process, the population will do
9 what it does every spring and
10 summer and rise.

11 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

12 Heard. And so, just to put a pin
13 on what you said, essentially the
14 issue in terms of closing that
15 particular spot is a facilities
16 issue that you have an important
17 component that is one place. If we
18 moved it, we could potentially be
19 able to close that down. I just
20 want to make sure that I'm clear
21 about that.

22 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

23 If I moved it.

24 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: If

1 that happened?

2 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

3 If that happens.

4 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

5 Thank you very much, Commissioner.

6 And again, I appreciate your

7 willingness to be here and to

8 collaborate and do look forward to

9 the continued partnership. Let me

10 just move on.

11 Out-of-cell time is a

12 basic necessity for health, safety

13 and rehabilitation in jails.

14 Without it, people are forced into

15 near total isolation which worsens

16 mental health, increases tension

17 and violence and makes re-entry

18 into the community even harder.

19 That's why the Remick settlement

20 required the City to provide at

21 least five hours of daily out-of-

22 cell time by 2022 or late 2022.

23 However, the latest

24 federal monitor report found that

1 no housing unit at CFCF or PICC
2 averaged at least six hours of
3 out-of-cell time. 29% of CFCF
4 housing units averaged less than an
5 hour a day. The City remains
6 noncompliant with this basic
7 constitutional requirement.

8 So the question is, the
9 next federal monitor report is
10 coming out at the end of the month.
11 And I think I learned recently that
12 even that's a little late or
13 delayed or what have you. That
14 having been said based on recent
15 improvements, which we do
16 acknowledge, will the data show
17 that the City is finally meeting at
18 least partial compliance with the
19 out-of-cell requirement?

20 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
21 So, Councilman, the monitor's
22 reports are based on data collected
23 and visits that have occurred
24 months previous. So this report

1 that comes out now will give a
2 snapshot of what the conditions
3 were several months ago. Since the
4 last monitoring visit, we've
5 deployed more correctional staff
6 and our population is down.

7 So -- and I don't mean
8 to get too much into the weeds with
9 this, but let's say I close the
10 Detention Center and I moved those
11 500 inmates throughout the
12 facilities that exist that we have
13 left. The population on those
14 housing units would rise. Right
15 now with the population lower on
16 those units, I can open those units
17 with one officer. I don't need two
18 officers. So the number of
19 officers that I have now allows me
20 to open those units fully.

21 In the past what we were
22 doing was opening the bottom unit
23 for a couple of hours a day,
24 locking them in, opening the top

1 unit for a couple hours a day,
2 because I had too many inmates on a
3 housing area with just one officer.
4 Now that the population has been
5 reduced, I can open up entire units
6 with just one officer. These are
7 labor agreements we have with the
8 union based upon staffing.

9 So with the population
10 where it is, that allows us to open
11 up -- Deputy Commissioner Nash, who
12 is my new Deputy Commissioner for
13 Operations, is working with the
14 wardens to develop daily
15 operational schedules that will
16 allow us to open up those
17 facilities at least six, seven,
18 eight hours a day. So I think as
19 our staffing continues to rise and
20 if the population level holds, I'll
21 be able to open up units for the
22 better part of the day.

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

24 Okay. Mr. Krasner, thank you again

1 for being here. I wanted to ask
2 about the newly-launched emergency
3 bill here. Before I do that, you
4 mentioned something earlier in your
5 testimony. Just for the record,
6 what percentage of cases does the
7 DAO request that 999,999 number
8 amount for?

9 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

10 KRASNER: That is a good question
11 to which I don't have the answer at
12 this time, but I can certainly let
13 you know. I can tell you we don't
14 have a quota or particular percent
15 or a particular number, but it
16 relates very directly to the nature
17 of the charges, the history of the
18 defendants, and also if they have a
19 long record of never showing up for
20 court, that is also considered, but
21 primarily relates to those factors.

22 So what you would see
23 now, contrary to what I saw for 30
24 years as a criminal defense

1 attorney when I used to go to the
2 prisons, what you will see now is a
3 different and much smaller
4 population in custody than before.
5 That's a good thing. They are
6 different in that there's a higher
7 portion of felonies because we got
8 a lot of the people on dumb
9 misdemeanors out. They are
10 different because of the nature of
11 prosecution of homicide cases,
12 which can often take two, three
13 years to conclude. People on
14 homicide cases are in before trial
15 with few exceptions.

16 So it is a group charged
17 with more serious offenses. It is
18 a group charged with more felonies.
19 That is certainly an indication
20 that a process of trying to
21 separate out the wheat from the
22 chaff is functional. And I'm not
23 saying it's perfect. Don't get me
24 wrong. We have our agreements and

1 our respectful disputes with the
2 judiciary at times over particular
3 cases. That's the nature of the
4 work. That's just what we do. But
5 I think that we can talk about
6 early bail review, which is a
7 positive thing and has been
8 adjusted and expanded. We can talk
9 about that, but I never want to
10 lose sight of the reality that what
11 government often does is they set
12 up programs. And when those
13 programs need to be changed, they
14 come up with a new program. They
15 don't go back and fix the first
16 one. They come up with a new one.

17 There are things that
18 could be done today at the initial
19 bail process -- maybe not today,
20 but they could be done soon at the
21 initial bail process that would
22 shorten that list of early bail
23 review because stuff would get
24 handled right the first time. That

1 could happen. I'm dedicated to
2 working with the partners to see
3 what we can do.

4 I'd be thrilled to see
5 that prison population come down
6 further despite the fact that
7 Commissioner Resnick correctly
8 notes which is that there has
9 always been, probably will always
10 be, a correlation between criminal
11 activity and when it's warm
12 outside. That's just how it is.

13 So as we head into the
14 summer, there certainly will be a
15 likelihood of more criminal
16 activity and more arrests made, all
17 of them coming in for bail
18 hearings. But none of that is to
19 say we cannot work toward having a
20 county prison system that is
21 extremely rehabilitative while
22 people are waiting. It is such an
23 opportunity to be as rehabilitative
24 as possible in terms of job

1 training, in terms of treatment of
2 different types, in terms of trying
3 to explore the underlying issues.

4 And this is no shade on
5 the system or the Commissioner.
6 But when you have adequate staffing
7 and when you have the technology
8 you need and the place becomes
9 secure and the criminal activity
10 shuts down, you have options for
11 much more educational programming.
12 You have the ability to allow that.

13 There are places in the
14 country where it has occurred.
15 There's no reason it cannot occur
16 here. That of course is a longer
17 term goal than an immediate one,
18 which is to get things stabilized
19 and get them steady. But this is
20 where we should be heading because
21 people who come out of that system
22 don't come back around.

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

24 Yeah, sir. I think that the work

1 being done by the honorable Judge
2 Karen Simmons and the FJD, your
3 office, the Defender's Association
4 just reiterates that we can address
5 overincarceration while the City
6 continues to become safer.

7 And you kind of already
8 answered it a bit, but I'll just
9 ask and be done so I can pass it to
10 my colleagues. Given the impact of
11 these hearings, is your office
12 committed to continuing them beyond
13 the initial phase? And are there
14 any plans to expand or improve the
15 process to ensure more people
16 benefit from timely release?

17 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

18 KRASNER: Well, if I may quote a
19 certain junior high football coach,
20 we are committed 110%, that's bad
21 math, but it's good football. We
22 are totally committed to that and
23 we are hopeful that we can really
24 do some cutting-edge modern things

1 in Philly, even if it takes a
2 while, that we can do some really
3 cutting-edge modern things because
4 we've seen that a lot of these
5 innovations that we've come with
6 collectively are functional.
7 They're positive. They do good
8 things. So we are all in to work
9 with our partners to try to reduce
10 prison population, take the strain
11 and burden off correctional
12 officers, expand rehabilitative
13 possibilities because that's how
14 you keep driving public safety in a
15 good direction, and it's also how
16 you keep freedom going in a good
17 direction.

18 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

19 Thank you, Mr. DA. Thank you,
20 Mr. Commissioner, and thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman, for the time.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
23 you, Member.

24 In the spirit of my

1 colleague's question, and I'm going
2 to turn it over to Member Harrity,
3 will you continue to work with
4 maybe a committee to look at that
5 bail review process that might be
6 aided to adjust a bit?

7 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

8 KRASNER: Yes, 100%, Councilman.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: All
10 right. So that's what I wanted to
11 know.

12 Member Harrity.

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All
15 right. Good afternoon -- good
16 morning I think still, right.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

18 Good morning.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

20 Good morning, everyone. I just
21 have two questions for each of you
22 and I'm going to ask both
23 questions. That way you see where
24 I'm trying to go with it.

1 Mr. Krasner, first what criteria
2 does the DA's office use to
3 prioritize case for prosecution,
4 particularly in terms of nonviolent
5 offenses?

6 And the second part of
7 that question is, are there any
8 initiatives to review or revise
9 sentencing guidelines to promote
10 alternatives to incarceration for
11 certain offenses?

12 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

13 KRASNER: Thank you for the
14 question. I'll answer the second
15 one first. The Sentencing
16 Guidelines Commission is not within
17 our control. There has been a
18 recent revision of the sentencing
19 guidelines. I think the jury is
20 out on whether it's much of an
21 improvement. But the truth is that
22 most sentencing guidelines in most
23 states are not scientific. They're
24 not. They are a bunch of people

1 sitting out around a table
2 explaining how they feel, and that
3 is the history of the sentencing
4 guidelines in Pennsylvania.

5 It is not an answer to
6 say that they're consistent, if
7 they're consistently bad and if
8 they're consistently unscientific.
9 I will say consistency can be a
10 virtue, but not when you
11 consistently treat everybody badly
12 or when you oversentence in certain
13 categories and undersentence in
14 other categories. So that is the
15 story with sentencing guidelines,
16 which are a statewide commission
17 and they do what they do.

18 As for how do we
19 prioritize for prosecution, certain
20 cases, when it comes to, you know,
21 the way I see this and there's a
22 bunch of scholars who kind of see
23 it similarly, there's certain kinds
24 of offenses that I think everybody

1 can agree regardless of politics
2 rip apart society. And those
3 offenses include: Rape, gunpoint
4 robbery, shootings, homicides,
5 those sorts of things. Obviously a
6 bigger category than that, but
7 that's a pretty good start.

8 We all recognize those
9 as terribly harmful for society,
10 things that are worthy of vigorous
11 prosecution and that are also
12 worthy of consequences that are
13 appropriately serious while never
14 taking away the notion of
15 rehabilitation, because it's always
16 possible that there could be some
17 rehabilitation.

18 Then there's a different
19 category of offenses that the
20 United States fell in love with
21 prosecuting. And in many
22 instances, they should have been
23 addressed with a public health
24 approach or they should be

1 addressed in appropriate cases with
2 a level of mercy, with giving
3 people treatment and opportunities
4 for accountability that don't
5 damage their ability to participate
6 in the economy.

7 A lot of misdemeanor
8 offenses, especially the nonviolent
9 ones for people who don't have a
10 lengthy record, are in that
11 category. It's stuff that we want
12 to stop. It's stuff that we don't
13 like, but we have to be very
14 careful and judicious about which
15 ones we're going to put in
16 diversion, which ones we're going
17 to charge at all, which ones we're
18 going to go to the hoop on and try
19 to get a conviction in those
20 particular cases.

21 For me those are two
22 very different categories. They
23 imply different things. And before
24 we had the rise of mass

1 incarceration, we were focused on
2 the stuff that tears apart society.
3 It then became we're just going to
4 focus on everything we don't like.

5 Next thing we know it's
6 2025. I'm reading what a jacked-up
7 U.S. Supreme Court has to say and
8 they'd like to lock up homeless
9 people. Really, really, that's
10 where we are now? We're going to
11 go that far backwards and we're
12 going to take everything we don't
13 like after we demolished a mental
14 health system that used to serve
15 them and we're going to blame them
16 for having mental health that we
17 don't treat, we're going to blame
18 them for not having housing? That
19 is just unacceptable to me.

20 So that is a long way of
21 getting at this point: It really
22 involves a very individual
23 analysis. There is a difference
24 between someone who's been arrested

1 for retail theft many times and has
2 a variety of underlying issues and
3 we have to deal with the mess that
4 we have here, and someone who has
5 engaged in retail theft for the
6 first time and is your typical
7 young thrill-seeking person
8 opportunistically doing something
9 they shouldn't do.

10 Yes, there should be
11 accountability for both of them,
12 but that accountability needs to
13 take different forms if we are to
14 be safe. And everything that we
15 want to do, everything that we do,
16 diversion, prosecution, not
17 charging cases, depending upon what
18 it is, everything has to be
19 directed at how do we get safer.
20 We definitely don't get safer by
21 taking law-abiding people and
22 making them unemployable when they
23 make a mistake. We definitely
24 don't get safer by taking people

1 who like to shoot people and
2 saying, sure, hit the street. That
3 doesn't make us safer.

4 But everything we do
5 should be directed at that. Also,
6 valuing freedom as much as we can
7 have our safety and have our
8 freedom too, that's what we need to
9 do.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

11 And, Commissioner Resnick, just
12 real quick, with the increased
13 budget for the medical care, will
14 you be able to hire more health
15 care staff to return to a
16 functional vacancy rate? And then
17 the second part is, is healthcare
18 staff divided between inmates with
19 substance abuse issues versus
20 nonsubstance abuse issues or are
21 the positions interchangeable?

22 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

23 I'm sorry. I didn't get the last
24 part of that, Councilman.

1 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Is
2 the healthcare staff divided
3 between inmates with substance
4 abuse issues versus nonsubstance
5 abuse issues or are the positions
6 interchangeable, in other words --

7 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
8 So our vacancy rate currently is
9 8%. Given the overtime that has
10 been worked and given the way that
11 we've been able to structure some
12 of the scheduling, our functional
13 vacancy rate, meaning the hours
14 that we're able to provide care for
15 are more than the hours that we
16 have budgeted. So we actually have
17 a negative functional vacancy rate.
18 We're doing more with the
19 individuals that we have. Our
20 contract for medical care has been
21 increased several million dollars
22 to provide more staffing.

23 The second part of your
24 question, we do have individuals

1 who are specializing in addiction
2 medicine and we have a medical-
3 assisted treatment program that has
4 been called a national model. So
5 people who come into our facilities
6 are evaluated if they score --
7 what's the score?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

9 BEAUFORT: Less than 0, more than
10 10.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: State
12 your name for the record please.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

14 BEAUFORT: I'm sorry. First Deputy
15 Commissioner Xavier Beaufort.

16 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
17 What's the test called though?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

19 BEAUFORT: It's called the COWS
20 test, Clinical Opioid Withdrawal
21 Scale.

22 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
23 So anybody who scores even the
24 lowest score on that evaluation

1 will be started in our MAT program
2 and be provided with Suboxone.

3 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: So
4 it's Suboxone. You did mention
5 another one --

6 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
7 Oh, it's Brixadi. So that's a
8 30-day injectable and we provide
9 that for individuals who divert
10 their Suboxone. So they save it
11 and they give it, sell it to other
12 inmates who shouldn't have it, part
13 of the black market. So we provide
14 that as an alternative to Suboxone.

15 I will also say that we
16 are in the process of piloting a
17 medical monitoring system so that
18 every inmate that comes into our
19 custody for the first five days
20 will be on a medical monitoring
21 device. It looks like a big Apple
22 watch and it monitors for
23 respiration, blood pressure, heart
24 rate, movement. So if there is a

1 medical emergency that occurs,
2 somebody's heart rate plummets,
3 their blood pressure spikes,
4 officers will be alerted, medical
5 will be alerted and we'll be able
6 to respond to these emergencies
7 immediately rather than happen upon
8 them the next time someone does a
9 tour.

10 It does not mean that we
11 will have no deaths in custody.
12 But what it does mean is we will be
13 able to respond to emergencies much
14 faster, provide interventions much
15 faster. And before I finish, I
16 don't know if I'll have an
17 opportunity to address it, but your
18 chart, 2024, we've had six
19 in-custody deaths. So I just
20 wanted to put that on the record.

21 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

22 Okay. I think that's good for me.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank

1 you.

2 Member Phillips, I'm
3 going to ask you to defer to Member
4 Lozada because she's speaking on
5 the same line of questioning of
6 Member Harrity. Thank you so much
7 for your indulgence.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

9 Okay.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES:

11 Member Lozada.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

13 Thank you. Thank you,
14 Councilmember Phillips. And thank
15 you, Councilmember Jones.

16 Just very quickly, you
17 mentioned the medical unit, the
18 pilot program that you all are
19 looking to move forward to. Can
20 you tell me what's the cost of that
21 pilot?

22 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: I
23 believe the initial startup phase
24 is 1.2 for the acquisition of all

1 the devices, all of the hardware
2 and all of the systems required to
3 communicate between the devices and
4 our medical and the officers
5 monitoring stations. That was paid
6 for through the Remick sanctions
7 funds. The monitors gave us
8 authority to do that.

9 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

10 And how long is that pilot?

11 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

12 We are going to pilot it at PICC
13 first for the females because it's
14 a smaller population. Once we
15 prove concept, we will expand it to
16 all male intakes at CFCF, all
17 female intakes at PICC and anybody
18 who our medical staff determines
19 needs to be on consistent
20 monitoring given their medical
21 condition.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

23 And District Attorney Krasner
24 mentioned something earlier that I

1 completely agree with, right. I
2 mean, I think that we need to make
3 sure that we are doing the things
4 that we're doing with this
5 population in a safe and
6 responsible way, right. And if
7 they don't need to be incarcerated,
8 then they shouldn't be. I'm sure
9 that everyone here in chambers and
10 at home know that I have been
11 pushing for enforcement in the
12 Kensington community since I
13 arrived, right.

14 And so, I share the same
15 concerns that some of the residents
16 share and, that is, that we don't
17 want anyone to come in contact with
18 our systems and find themselves
19 never walking out again, right.
20 And so, I had the pleasure of
21 touring the prisons with that
22 Deputy Commissioner Beaufort and
23 the last Administration, learned a
24 great deal of the system itself.

1 At that time, I learned
2 that 60% of the prison population
3 was substance-abuse dependent. Is
4 that still the case? How has that
5 changed? And what are you all
6 doing to ensure that the population
7 that is there and is substance-
8 abuse dependent, that they are safe
9 so that we don't have the incidents
10 that we've had in the past year?

11 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
12 So I'm happy to hear that you
13 toured our facilities. I would
14 invite you to come back and I would
15 invite all of your colleagues to
16 come and tour the facilities. I
17 don't have a specific figure. Your
18 figure sounds about right of the
19 number of inmates that come into
20 our system who are substance
21 abusers. Many of them are dual
22 diagnosed with substance abuse and
23 mental health issues.

24 I think we are probably

1 the largest mental health treatment
2 facility in the city of
3 Philadelphia and we should not be,
4 but what we do as part of our
5 intake process is we do do the COWS
6 assessment. We do a complete
7 medical examination, blood and
8 urine. And if somebody is
9 substance abuse, we provide them
10 with the MAT program, they're
11 immediately enrolled in our MAT
12 program and placed on Suboxone.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: So
14 where do the stories come from, and
15 we've heard them often in our
16 office, right, that whether it's
17 medication related to substance
18 abuse disorder or just regular
19 medication, inmates tell us often
20 and their families tell us often
21 that they are not afforded their
22 medication in the way that it's
23 supposed to be dispensed. Where
24 does that come from?

1 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

2 General accusation, Councilwoman.

3 I could not tell you. I would need
4 specifics as to who the individual
5 was when this occurred for me to
6 look into it. Our medical unit, as
7 I said, we have over 300 medical
8 providers of various levels. We do
9 medication three times a day. They
10 come to the units. They hand out
11 the medication. It's important to
12 me to ensure that our population
13 receive the health care that
14 they're required to get and that
15 we're obligated to provide. I
16 think we do an outstanding job
17 assessing individuals.

18 Many people come to the
19 prison system and find out that
20 they have a chronic disease for the
21 first time and we're the ones that
22 put them on medication, treat them
23 and provide them with linkages to
24 the community for treatment once

1 they're released. So I don't want
2 to guess. If you were able to
3 provide me with specifics, we could
4 look into those situations.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

6 Have you guys done an assessment
7 upon your arrival there -- did you
8 do an assessment? I'm sure this is
9 not the first time you hear this,
10 right. So have you done an
11 assessment of the stories that we
12 are hearing and what the actual
13 reality of --

14 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

15 Part of the performance measures
16 and the quality and care assessment
17 of our medical team is the
18 timeliness of our medical
19 appointments, the timeliness of our
20 prescriptions and administration of
21 medication. We do evaluate those
22 things. And as far as I know from
23 the data we've received and the
24 reports, we don't have a problem

1 with that.

2 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

3 Okay. Part of what we've talked
4 about in the past as we work
5 towards reducing the prison
6 population, how are we preparing
7 our inmates to reintegrate into
8 society, right. My office is
9 working with a group of returning
10 citizens who spent some time in our
11 system and came out in the middle
12 of the night apparently And have
13 zero documentation, right.

14 They have no birth
15 certificates, no socials, no
16 driver's license, absolutely
17 nothing to help them stay on the
18 path to be contributing citizens to
19 our city. And if we want these men
20 and women to be successful, we need
21 to set them up in a way that they
22 can be, right. So what is the
23 prison and your partners, what are
24 you all doing to ensure that when

1 these individuals are released,
2 that they're released with all of
3 these important documents, that
4 that every citizen should have the
5 right to have, right, and if
6 they're in our custody and we know
7 that they're leaving, are we
8 preparing them to be able to find a
9 job, to be able to rent an
10 apartment, to find work?

11 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

12 Sure. Thank you for that question,
13 Councilwoman. So I always look at
14 our system as sort of the social
15 service of last resort, right.
16 People come to the prison system
17 because the educational system, the
18 medical system, the mental health
19 system, housing drug and alcohol,
20 their families have failed them, so
21 they wind up in the criminal
22 justice system and ultimately the
23 Philadelphia Department of Prisons.
24 And then we are expected to perform

1 miracles to ensure that when people
2 are released, they don't
3 recidivate.

4 And again, we are not
5 responsible for deciding who comes,
6 the conditions under which they
7 stay, how long they stay, when or
8 how they get released. We don't
9 decide any of that. But
10 understanding that, on average the
11 people in our population have been
12 there four, five, six, seven times
13 in the past. Clearly, what we have
14 been doing in the past wasn't
15 working and we need to do something
16 different.

17 So in that regard, I
18 hired a Deputy Commissioner of
19 Restorative and Transitional
20 Services, Morgan Jaco, who has
21 worked with large state departments
22 of correction, doing re-entry work,
23 doing that sort of work to prepare
24 individuals when they are released,

1 that they do not recidivate.

2 Now, we are different
3 from the Department of Corrections
4 because we don't have people
5 generally for long periods of time.
6 We're a city jail, a county jail
7 system. Our length of stay should
8 be much, much shorter but still we
9 have about 475 people.

10 About 12% of our
11 population are sentenced and we do
12 have people who stay pretrial for a
13 decent period of time. So what I
14 would like to do and what Morgan --
15 what Deputy Commissioner Jaco has
16 been tasked with doing is taking a
17 total reassessment of our programs
18 and services that we offer,
19 starting from intake. Re-entry
20 should start at intake, and we need
21 to do comprehensive need
22 assessments of individuals when
23 they come through our door.

24 And then we need to

1 provide them with the services, the
2 education, the counseling, and all
3 of the things that our assessment
4 says that they need while they are
5 with us. And then we need to
6 provide them with linkages into the
7 community so those services can
8 continue.

9 And to that end, we've
10 obtained a huge mobile trailer, the
11 Philadelphia Department of prisons
12 Re-entry Center, which we are going
13 to man with our RTS staff, staff
14 from the City's Office of Re-entry
15 Partnerships and community
16 providers, and everybody who gets
17 released will be taken to the
18 trailer. I can't force you to take
19 the services, but the services will
20 be offered.

21 We'll be offering City
22 IDs there when people get released.
23 We'll be offering linkages to
24 community partners based upon your

1 assessment and work that you've
2 done in the facility. We're also
3 working to bring in additional
4 vocational services. We have home
5 health aides, we have CDL.

6 We are exploring the
7 possibility of bringing in a
8 welding program. We have a
9 facilities maintenance program in
10 addition to the vast array of other
11 programs that we have. So I want
12 us to take a whole comprehensive
13 look at what we're doing to make
14 sure that, as I said, re-entry and
15 assessment start at the very, very
16 beginning, and we're providing the
17 services needed while someone is
18 with us and then providing those
19 important linkages to the community
20 once they're released. So that's
21 what we're doing.

22 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

23 KRASNER: Councilmember, I seldomly
24 do this, but may I just support and

1 build on what the Commissioner just
2 said there. You hear what he is
3 saying. He's saying re-entry
4 begins when you first get to jail.
5 And that's commendable. That's
6 exactly how we need to think about
7 it.

8 But I got another
9 thought. How about it begins when
10 you're arrested? How about before
11 you even get to jail with a bail
12 you cannot pay --

13 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: I
14 run the jail. No, I'm just
15 kidding.

16 DISTRICT ATTORNEY
17 KRASNER: How about we're doing
18 this in the bail process, which
19 I've already said has its virtues
20 but it has its problems, and then
21 we're also doing it for the people
22 who are up in custody be --

23 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
24 mean, I understand and I agree. To

1 respond to the Commissioner, no,
2 it's not the prison system's
3 responsibility but there are a lot
4 of people in government that are
5 doing the work, doing more work
6 than it is their responsibility,
7 right. And you have them. Let us
8 start with them not being there to
9 begin with and be able to respond
10 to these things, totally get it.
11 But when they are there, I read
12 somewhere that the stay is 200-plus
13 something days --

14 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
15 260 days is our average length of
16 stay, Councilwoman.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
18 260 days. I mean, in 260 days we
19 can at least -- these people as
20 they're being released they have to
21 have a release plan, right.
22 There's a release address. We can
23 at least help them with let me
24 apply for your birth certificate,

1 let me apply for your Social
2 Security and have it sent to your
3 next place of shelter, right. Let
4 me get you a municipal ID so that
5 at least you walking out and you
6 have an ID that is going to put you
7 on the right path.

8 Some of these guys that
9 come into my office have absolutely
10 nothing and they've spent months
11 and months and months in jail. And
12 so, I'm just trying to figure out
13 how do we better prepare these
14 individuals when they are in our
15 systems to be able to walk out and
16 have a true opportunity in
17 succeeding? We can't tell somebody
18 go get a job, go back to school, go
19 get your GED and the person doesn't
20 have any identification, doesn't
21 have a relationship with their
22 families in order to be able to get
23 that information and --

24 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

1 We do have a service.
2 Councilwoman, we have a contract
3 but the name of the entity escapes
4 me. But they do assist our
5 incarcerated population in
6 obtaining their birth certificates
7 and their Social Security cards
8 while they're with us. I forget
9 the name of the entity.

10 And just to go back to
11 your initial question about
12 medication, sometimes we do get
13 individuals who are on a particular
14 medication in the community. Our
15 formulary might be different. And
16 while we might not have Medication
17 A, formulary is the list of
18 medicines that we are approved to
19 provide. So we might not have
20 Medication A but we have medication
21 B, which is essentially the same
22 thing. It may be a generic, it may
23 be a different manufacturer, but
24 it's for the same condition. It's

1 just a different name. So when
2 people say they didn't have my
3 medicine, maybe we don't, but we
4 have something else that's the
5 same.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

7 Thank you very much. I
8 appreciate -- like I said to
9 Chairman Jones, I'm going to end
10 with this: I recognize that we
11 need to do everything that we can
12 possibly do, which is why we had a
13 conversation about diversions some
14 time at the beginning of the week
15 to figure out how we prevent people
16 from actually getting to your
17 space, right. But when they are in
18 your space, how do we prepare them
19 in a way that we can get them out
20 and that they're successful?

21 I worked in the District
22 Attorney's Office when the
23 MacArthur grant was starting to
24 run. It was great, right, that we

1 were able to reduce the prison
2 population in the way that we were,
3 but what I recognized is that we
4 released a lot of people that just
5 weren't ready, that we didn't
6 allow -- we didn't prepare to be
7 ready to reintegrate. And so, just
8 want to figure out how we continue
9 to reduce the population but
10 prepare people so that we don't see
11 them back on your doorsteps.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
14 you. Those were pointed
15 conversations. I'm going to let
16 Member Phillips, who has been very
17 patient, get his questions in.

18 But I want to come back
19 to what you said about that help
20 piece and it's not just your burden
21 alone. We get a lot of people that
22 get paid a lot of money to provide
23 these kinds of service that should
24 be working with you.

1 Member Phillips.

2 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

3 Thank you, Chairman Jones. I won't
4 be long.

5 I just wanted to ask
6 Commissioner Resnick a couple
7 questions, most that will connect
8 District Attorney Krasner. You
9 mentioned that 43% of the inmates
10 that come to your correctional
11 facility leave within two weeks.
12 And so, the question I have for you
13 is what particular case processing
14 reforms would you recommend to make
15 sure that these people that are
16 there for only two weeks and they
17 probably shouldn't have been in
18 there for two weeks so we don't
19 have to -- that can help us with
20 population issues?

21 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:

22 The number comes from, Councilman,
23 when we take a look at a monthly
24 snapshot of everyone who was

1 released during that month, we age
2 how long they were in population.
3 And 43% of them are only there for
4 the first 14 days. They're
5 released within the first two
6 weeks.

7 So a decision has been
8 made by the criminal justice
9 system. I don't know which
10 particular individuals, I guess
11 it's a combination, that this
12 individual does not present a
13 danger to public safety and they
14 are likely to return to court to
15 participate in their matter. And I
16 agree with the DA. Whatever that
17 process is that got them to be
18 released, whatever we're doing, why
19 can't that be done a week sooner,
20 10 days sooner so those people
21 don't have to come at all or if
22 they do, they're there for a much,
23 much shorter stay, because coming
24 to the jail disrupts an

1 individual's livelihood.

2 It interferes with their
3 ability to earn a living. It
4 interferes with their family. It's
5 traumatic. It's just very
6 disruptive. And for us, it's a
7 huge upfront cost to do an intake.
8 It's a complete medical evaluation.
9 It's a custody evaluation. We do
10 social services evaluations, mental
11 health evaluations. If we could
12 avoid all of those costs because
13 those individuals just don't come
14 that would be a win. But to
15 specifically answer your question,
16 I don't know enough about why each
17 one of those individuals is
18 released to say that it is this
19 process that should be changed, so
20 we could do a deeper dive into
21 that.

22 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

23 Yeah, that's probably one of the
24 most poignant things you said

1 today. And I think because that is
2 our everyday aunts and uncles and
3 family members who are put in some
4 system and it's like over and over
5 again it's happening and they're
6 not even supposed to be there. And
7 so, I would try to implore you to
8 figure out maybe you can set up a
9 team that can really figure this
10 out with the courts and also with
11 maybe the District Attorney's team
12 to figure out how do we not spend
13 that money because that seems like
14 a headache too.

15 Then I just have two
16 more questions. Is it possible for
17 you to show -- well, let me just
18 say this: You know most residents
19 in the city of Philadelphia are
20 very visual people, which is why
21 the Mayor has put together this
22 plan that's very visual in terms of
23 all of her initiatives.

24 And people can't see the

1 correctional facilities improving
2 because they're not taking the
3 tours, they're not there, right. I
4 know you can't get everybody's
5 pictures in it. Is there a way
6 that maybe through social media or
7 press conferences or something
8 visual that you can literally show
9 pictures of the before and the
10 after of some of the facilities to
11 show that that humane treatment
12 that you say is happening is
13 happening?

14 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
15 We do have a social media presence.
16 I have several -- I have -- what's
17 Mitchell's title?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

19 BEAUFORT: Communications --

20 COMMISSIONER RESNICK:
21 He's our Communications Director,
22 so they are responsible for getting
23 out our good word. But
24 unfortunately, Councilman, and I

1 forget whether it was Councilman
2 O'Rourke or Chairman Jones who said
3 it in the beginning of the remarks,
4 bad things are what make the news.
5 Good stories don't. So you will
6 not read in The Inquirer that our
7 inmate population is down and that
8 our employee, our correctional
9 staff, is up and there's more time
10 out-of-cell and we're spending more
11 on medical and maintenance and the
12 facilities are getting better.
13 They just don't publish that story.

14 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
15 You're right. And I think this is
16 where your team could potentially
17 take a little bit more of a lead,
18 because you have a lot of work to
19 do already. But I think the idea
20 may be is your team has to start
21 creating the news for yourself.
22 Because at one time, the
23 Philadelphia Parking Authority was
24 known as the worst enemy in the

1 city of Philadelphia. Now, we have
2 about 40% --

3 COMMISSIONER RESNICK: I
4 thought you were going to say now
5 it's me.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
7 mean, no. I mean, no, I don't
8 think so. But people, you know, we
9 can make a difference, right. But,
10 yeah, they were. But Rich Lazer
11 and his team have now done all of
12 this great quality-of-life work and
13 people are like, yeah, Parking
14 Authority, Parking Authority. It's
15 still some people upset about
16 tickets, but there's a good
17 percentage of them really happy
18 about them.

19 And I think now it's
20 like me, how do you become the
21 biggest cheerleader to talk about
22 all of these stuff. I didn't know
23 those staff improvements happened,
24 right. So now, it's like how to

1 use a communications team, I need
2 to get this out here, there's too
3 much negative out here, right,
4 because that's going to change
5 people's narrative, perception of
6 your department just from our
7 perspective for what I'm hearing
8 from you to help out.

9 And my last question is,
10 I'm just very curious about --
11 well, I guess it still ties into,
12 oh, District Attorney Larry
13 Krasner. When we're talking about
14 these pretrial diversion programs
15 and mental health intervention
16 programming, Commissioner Resnick
17 talks about ways to keep
18 individuals outside out of the
19 prison and I know you mentioned a
20 lot of your programs.

21 But is there a way in
22 which we can find a way to do
23 something for the retail theft
24 program? Yes, you don't want to

1 incarcerate the first person that
2 steals the pack of chewing gum from
3 the store. However, we got to --
4 in order to prevent them from doing
5 that again is there a way we can
6 put them into a community program
7 that is almost that kind of shows
8 them the dangers of what they're
9 doing so that they don't have to go
10 back and do that again? So it's
11 like immediately that is your
12 repercussion, you have to go into
13 this program that is almost like a
14 scared-straight program.

15 Because the idea is that
16 they may do it for the second,
17 third or fourth time and then
18 they're working -- and in
19 Commissioner Resnick's correctional
20 facility after a while. So I think
21 we should try to hit on the first
22 time hard. What if that diversion
23 program has a really hard diversion
24 program so it doesn't happen again?

1 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

2 KRASNER: Well, thank you for the
3 question, Councilmember Phillips,
4 and I am picking up what you're
5 putting down here. The reality is
6 that most diversionary programs
7 require more of a defendant than a
8 sentence of incarceration, which
9 usually means sit in your cell and
10 don't go anywhere. So there is
11 accountability in these programs.

12 I think the aspect that
13 you're talking about is something
14 that in a meeting with the courts
15 we could talk about incorporating
16 into AMP, the Accelerated
17 Misdemeanor Program, which already
18 exists as a diversionary program
19 for low-level misdemeanors.
20 Obviously the police diversionary
21 program -- and I say this with
22 respect and love, I'm not
23 criticizing it -- but it has taken
24 a lot of the people who used to be

1 arrested for misdemeanors and has
2 put them into other treatment
3 programs. So it's probably worth
4 talking to the police department as
5 well.

6 I understand right now
7 they're stepping back from PAD or
8 at least I hear they're stepping
9 back from PAD for retail theft.
10 But I will say that's the kind of
11 thing on an evidence basis it
12 works, that could be incorporated
13 into things we already have. It's
14 a much easier lift than creating a
15 completely new program. It's
16 certainly something we could do
17 right away. And then if we wanted
18 to build towards a different
19 program, fine. But I do believe
20 that AMP is a positive program.

21 I think there are a lot
22 of other specialty diversion
23 programs that address specific
24 needs. For example, Drug Court

1 isn't just diversion. It's also
2 conviction and it's also people
3 having special conditions due to
4 significant mental health needs,
5 that sort of thing. I think the
6 suggestion that you're making could
7 be incorporated at a number of
8 different levels and could have
9 benefits.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

11 Thank you --

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
13 you, Member Phillips.

14 So without any other
15 questions, we're going to go to the
16 next panel. But all of these
17 points that you are making, we get
18 a second bite. So if you put them
19 down and we send them collectively,
20 we can get measured progress on
21 each of them. And there's some
22 great suggestions that I'm hearing
23 that might create coalitions. I
24 really love the one about giving

1 people, returning citizens a
2 helping hand and working with some
3 of our stakeholders that get paid a
4 lot of money to do some of this
5 stuff that shouldn't be your
6 primary responsibility. But if we
7 start with people on their first
8 day of incarceration to prepare
9 them for their last day of
10 incarceration and put the pieces
11 together, recidivism goes down and
12 I just see it.

13 Yes, Member Lozada.

14 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
15 appreciate that comment, Mr. Chair,
16 which is why I think it's extremely
17 important that we look at our
18 diversion programs, right, figure
19 out, how do we combine some of them
20 who overlap, some who are not doing
21 what they said they're supposed to
22 do and figure out how we invest in
23 them in a way that we're going to
24 connect our returning citizens and

1 provide the necessary supports,
2 right.

3 I think as we enter into
4 the budget season I mentioned to DA
5 Krasner that we need to look at
6 some of those diversion programs,
7 right, that we need to better
8 utilize AMP court, right, that we
9 need to be able to connect people
10 in a way where we're really giving
11 them an opportunity to be
12 successful so that they don't find
13 themselves in that vicious cycle.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well
15 said.

16 With that, if there are
17 no other questions, we are going to
18 ask Ms. Stack to -- and thank you.
19 Thank you for this input. We heard
20 you and we are going to digest the
21 process and send it back to you.

22 All right. Ms. Stack.

23 THE CLERK: Leigh Owens
24 from the Pennsylvania Prison

1 Society and Dawan Williams from the
2 NOMO Foundation.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: I
4 want to thank everybody for their
5 patience. As we get through this,
6 we have a hard stop that we're
7 going to -- we're going to say more
8 with less words. And if we could
9 summarize testimonies, that would
10 be helpful as well.

11 (Witnesses approached
12 Witness table.)

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Come
14 in, have a seat. I don't know the
15 order.

16 Ms. Stack.

17 THE CLERK: Leigh Owens
18 will be first, followed by Dawan
19 Williams.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can
21 you state your name for the record
22 and please begin your testimony.
23 And we are blessed with the
24 attendance of Rue Landau, our

1 Councilmember for the record.

2 Thank you so much for your
3 patience.

4 MR. OWENS: Good
5 morning, members of Council. My
6 name is Lee Owens, and I want to
7 thank you all for the space and for
8 allowing us this opportunity and
9 also thank you for acknowledging
10 the importance and the severity of
11 this particular issue. So thank
12 you for this again.

13 My name is Leigh Owens.
14 I serve as the Education and
15 Advocacy Director for the
16 Pennsylvania Prison Society.

17 Founded in 1787 by
18 Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin
19 Rush, the Pennsylvania Prison
20 Society is the nation's oldest
21 human rights organization. For 230
22 years, we have protected and
23 promoted the health, safety and
24 dignity of incarcerated

1 Pennsylvanians and their families.
2 We're the only organization in the
3 state with statutory authority to
4 enter any prison or jail and meet
5 with incarcerated people privately.

6 Our staff of 18 and our
7 volunteer network of 250 are on the
8 ground in all 85 state and county
9 correctional facilities bearing
10 witness to prison conditions. For
11 the last several years, we have
12 conducted quarterly walkthroughs of
13 the Philadelphia Department of
14 Prisons, and we publish summaries
15 of what we hear and what we see on
16 those walkthroughs. I'd encourage
17 you all to read them on our
18 website, www.prison.society.org.

19 What we've seen on those
20 walkthroughs is a department with
21 too many people in its custody and
22 too few staff, leading to
23 facilities that are unsafe for
24 people who are incarcerated and

1 unsafe for prison staff.

2 Now, what do we mean by
3 unsafe? Year after year since the
4 pandemic we have more people dying
5 in the Philly jails than die in the
6 New York city jails. More deaths
7 in Philly even though New York is
8 five times our size and
9 incarcerates at half the rate of
10 Philadelphia.

11 In 2024, six deaths in
12 the Philly prisons, including one
13 homicide, something which was never
14 heard of before the pandemic. In
15 2024, Rikers, which houses almost
16 double as many people, had five
17 deaths and no murders.

18 Fatalities are obviously
19 the most extreme symptom of an
20 unsafe facility. What else do we
21 know? Well, on our walkthroughs we
22 have learned that incarcerated
23 people are often left unsupervised
24 on nights and weekends. Rather

1 than spending most of their days in
2 the day room or in programming like
3 before the pandemic, on a good day
4 people are now let out of their
5 cells for three hours, but even
6 this isn't a guarantee.

7 On our most recent
8 walkthrough in December, 50% of the
9 people we interviewed said they had
10 gone more than 24 hours without
11 getting out of their cell. One
12 person we spoke to in December said
13 and I quote, "They don't let us do
14 anything, we shower and they lock
15 us back in." This problem is
16 particularly pronounced on holidays
17 and the days of big sporting events
18 such as Super Bowl.

19 Another person we spoke
20 to in May said and I quote,
21 "Mother's Day we was locked in all
22 day, couldn't call our mothers,
23 daughters, nothing the whole week."
24 Equally troubling is the majority

1 of people we have spoken with who
2 say that it takes over a week to
3 get a response for requests for
4 medical care, and the majority of
5 people we speak with report
6 witnessing fights and overall
7 feeling unsafe.

8 People in Philadelphia
9 custody are not provided enough
10 food to eat. They are not able to
11 make phone calls daily and are not
12 given access to a functioning law
13 library and are not regularly given
14 clean clothing and bedding. This
15 is a problem of too many people in
16 prison for too few staff.

17 Me, myself, I am a
18 former resident of Rikers Island
19 where I spent one year for carrying
20 an unlicensed gun in New York City.
21 What I can tell you about my time
22 at Rikers over two decades ago was
23 this: It was comparatively humane.
24 We were not warehoused like people

1 are in Philadelphia today.

2 Although Rikers has the reputation
3 of being one of the most dangerous
4 facilities in the country, most of
5 my time spent there I felt safe and
6 only witnessed two fights between
7 residents of the facility.

8 We were able to get
9 clean sheets weekly and I never saw
10 one fight or even a nonviolent
11 dispute over phone access, unlike
12 what we know goes on in
13 Philadelphia jails. Most of our
14 days were spent out of the cell,
15 largely working or in classes. I
16 was not locked up during the day
17 hours. I never had trouble getting
18 access to a phone to call my
19 family. It was a different world
20 from what we now have in Philly.

21 While the Pennsylvania
22 Prison Society is delighted to see
23 that progress is being made to
24 onboard new staff and stem staff

1 departure, it will be years before
2 the jail is staffed to save
3 standards. It'll be a decade
4 before there are enough experienced
5 staff to run a system of this size
6 well.

7 Simply put, to safely
8 run this prison system over the
9 next five years, the number of
10 people in custody must be reduced
11 substantially so that one of the
12 four prison buildings currently in
13 operation can be closed and staff
14 can be redeployed to the remaining
15 three prison buildings.

16 Several of the other
17 people testifying today can discuss
18 what can be done to safely reduce
19 the number of people in custody,
20 but what the Prison Society can
21 testify to is that Philadelphia
22 cannot hire its way out of this
23 problem. If we are to ever have
24 jails that had any semblance of

1 safety, let alone programming and
2 sufficient medical care, we must
3 reduce the number of people in
4 custody. So thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
6 you for your testimony. We will
7 hold questions until the entire
8 panel testifies.

9 Please state your name
10 for the record and begin your
11 testimony.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank
13 you. My name is Dawan Williams. I
14 currently serve as the Vice-
15 president of the Division of
16 Restorative Justice for the NOMO
17 Foundation. NOMO is an acronym for
18 New Options, More Opportunities.
19 And I want to start this off by
20 saying thank you to the ladies and
21 gentlemen of this honorable
22 historical City Council here in
23 Philadelphia. Thank you all for
24 having us this morning.

1 Usually when I come and
2 I testify, I do public speaking or
3 doing something of this nature, I
4 go off top, I speak with you on the
5 heart. I don't follow a script,
6 but this issue right here before
7 you today is that serious where me,
8 myself, I had to sit down for a few
9 days, hold my schedule up, put this
10 on paper to make sure that the
11 record reflects clearly. All
12 right. So I'm just asking ladies
13 and gentlemen of the Council just
14 to bear with me for just a little
15 bit. Because me personally, I
16 don't like to sound like I'm
17 reading from something because this
18 issue on mass incarceration, it
19 affects me personally.

20 So I myself, I was
21 incarcerated for 10 years, 6 days,
22 12 hours, 37 minutes and 13 seconds
23 straight. I was released on
24 October 6, 2014 at 8:37 in the

1 morning. I knew absolutely nothing
2 about a cell phone, nothing about
3 an iPhone, nothing about a tablet.
4 When I went away to prison in 2004,
5 none of that stuff was out. No
6 social media, no Instagram, no
7 nothing. Nobody is in the prison
8 teaching that and properly
9 preparing you for that for the day
10 you walk out of prison.

11 So although I may
12 develop into a successful career
13 over a decade later, that kind of
14 stuff right there held me up six
15 months to a year. So what we all
16 know and what we're hearing about
17 our incarcerated brothers and
18 sisters right now, what they faced
19 over the last five years or so
20 since the pandemic, our honorable
21 Councilmembers and people in the
22 room, I see a lot of people here
23 that is doing boots on the ground
24 work, so we all know how serious

1 this is.

2 It's very upsetting,
3 very upsetting. So I know the work
4 that each one of you do personally
5 and thank you for that. I see you
6 on the ground every day. A lot of
7 our work, to the people in this
8 room and to the honorable members
9 of Council, is geared towards
10 children of incarcerated parents.
11 So if we don't provide enough
12 services to their parents while
13 they're inside, we're not ending
14 the cycle. That means we got to do
15 more to fix State Road. Like the
16 brother just said, it has to happen
17 on day 1, not when you're ready to
18 go out. You have to prepare
19 parents to come home and be
20 parents. All of that stuff have to
21 be going on.

22 One example I want to
23 bring to your attention this
24 morning, the literacy rate for

1 justice-impacted individuals, not
2 only for all individuals in the
3 city of Philadelphia, but
4 particularly for justice-impacted
5 men and women that are sitting on
6 State Road right now that can't
7 even do their timetables, can't
8 even read from a piece of paper
9 right now, these are the people
10 we're talking about open the doors
11 to and letting home, right.

12 The thing on the screen
13 from 2023 says 4700 inmates in
14 custody, right. And I think the
15 Commissioner said it's down to
16 3600, if I'm not mistaken, 3600,
17 3700. So if we let 700 people go
18 tomorrow, where are they going,
19 what are they going to do? Where
20 they going to work at? It's bigger
21 than an ID. It's bigger than my
22 Social Security card, my birth
23 certificate. What am I going to
24 do? Where do I go? After

1 everybody's happy you home, aye,
2 hugs, kisses, fried chicken,
3 Kool-Aid. Now, I'm sitting on the
4 side of the bed, Councilmembers.
5 Everybody went to work. I'm like,
6 damn, ain't nobody leave no
7 transpass money, ain't nobody show
8 me no directions, nobody's allowed
9 to come into the prison to help me
10 on this iPad to walk me through it.
11 Nobody showed me the bus system.
12 Nobody showed me the transit app.
13 It's new buses. When I left, it
14 was the C bus. I come back, it's
15 the 14. Stay on script, y'all.

16 Part of the answer is
17 getting them out, but the second
18 part is what comes next. The
19 biggest question that we need to
20 ask ourselves when it comes to
21 re-entry is what do people have to
22 look forward to when they are
23 coming home. And remember, the
24 Commissioner said it's up to six

1 hours a day now out of your cell.

2 On a good day, we was there -- they
3 barely came to works. A lot of
4 different reasons, a lot of
5 different stuff going on.

6 But people that are
7 coming home have only been outside
8 of a locked door for two to three
9 hours a day. Even if you only been
10 there a week or two, it's
11 scientifically proven that your
12 brain has already began to
13 deteriorate.

14 In the long-term, we
15 need to shift resources away from
16 what isn't working, and we're not
17 here to call nobody out, we're not
18 here to take anybody's paycheck,
19 we're not here to say you're not
20 doing this and you need to be doing
21 that, enough of that has went on
22 like. Like our honorable District
23 Attorney said, enough of that has
24 went on, the finger pointing to

1 this, to that right.

2 Part of that money
3 should be going to returning
4 citizens to help them rebuild their
5 lives and find real careers. When
6 I got out in 2014, the cost for a
7 prisoner was about \$35,000 per debt
8 per year. If you had medical
9 issues or you was over 50 years
10 old, the cost was anywhere from
11 55,000 a year to beyond.

12 Now, we are 11 years
13 into it, and if I'm not mistaken,
14 correct me if I'm wrong, I think
15 it's up to about 50,000 a day -- or
16 50,000 a year or something
17 ridiculous like that. What if we
18 took 30,000 and allocated the same
19 30 that was going there to pay for
20 a bathroom for you to do absolutely
21 nothing, to sit there and just rot
22 and just no disrespect to nobody
23 but just become dumber, I'm going
24 to take that 40 grand that was

1 allocated for you to be locked in
2 the bathroom and nobody comes to
3 work, I'm going to take that 40 and
4 invest that to you so that when you
5 return home, we got people on the
6 ground intentionally doing the
7 work, not saying just go show up
8 there and they're going to get you
9 an ID.

10 No, we got to take
11 brothers down to PennDOT. We got
12 to take them down to where the
13 resource is at. We got to hold
14 them by the hand, take them to the
15 therapist. We got to take them up
16 to the school, introduce them to
17 the principal. We got to sit them
18 down. We got to give them
19 etiquette classes.

20 We need to be able to go
21 into the prison and teach social
22 media etiquette. So when they do
23 drop your bell and you come home,
24 you don't sit on this tablet and

1 laptop and do the same daggone
2 thing. Because we can talk about
3 the resources, but if you don't fix
4 me, I'm not going to no resources,
5 people. My brain won't allow me
6 to.

7 Its resources now in
8 Philadelphia. It's no reason for
9 foolishness. But guess what? I
10 can't read. I can barely count. I
11 don't know my multiplication
12 tables. I can't sit still longer
13 than 10 minutes. I can't stay off
14 of this because nobody came and
15 properly taught me the downfall of
16 that. Where am I going?

17 I can go to any City
18 Council Office in the city of
19 Philadelphia, and most of you, no
20 matter what District a constituent
21 is for, especially you, Curtis
22 Jones, you'll help anybody. This
23 is what we know. This is what --
24 huh?

1 COUNCILMAN JONES:

2 (Inaudible).

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Well, I'm
4 just letting it be known. I say
5 that to say, you guys help anybody,
6 I see you on the ground. But if I
7 don't know to come ask for the
8 help, if I'm not comfortable with
9 coming to ask for the help, if I go
10 to the ER and just sit there and
11 don't tell them why I'm here, how
12 am I going to receive the services?
13 We got to fix this mental health
14 thing.

15 I never even thought I
16 would even be saying that. I was
17 one of the guys on the ground just
18 saying, you got to do right, you
19 got to do right, you got to go to
20 work, you got to go to your
21 program, you got to go get your
22 kids. They're not understanding
23 that no more. That's long gone and
24 out the window.

1 I've seen the importance

2 of this and the research agrees.

3 I've sat down and did some

4 research, ladies and gentlemen. We

5 all know that this makes sense.

6 Without money to support yourself,

7 how can you stay on the right path?

8 Anybody jump in and answer that.

9 If I don't have no money, I got a

10 record long as Broad Street, right,

11 I've been in prison and, remember,

12 the county jail is 50 times worse

13 than state prison -- where my

14 backup at?

15 The county jail is 50

16 times worse than state prison. If

17 I'm coming out with nothing but my

18 ID and my birth certificate, what's

19 really my future, y'all? What

20 training have I really had? Where

21 do I go report to? Who keeps a few

22 dollars in my pocket while I'm

23 getting myself together? I'm in

24 the halfway house and I want to do

1 right, but I can't. I'm almost
2 done.

3 This is already being
4 done in other places, y'all. Okay.
5 The Center of Employment
6 Opportunities distributed 24
7 million during the pandemic through
8 a returning citizen stimulus. And
9 New York is considering a bill
10 which would give guaranteed income
11 up to 2500 a month for six months
12 after release.

13 Now, let me stop right
14 there. Although that might not
15 seem like a lot of money to
16 respected hard-working people in
17 this room right now we know that
18 2500 a month our bills will laugh
19 at us. But getting out of prison,
20 anybody came home from prison
21 before in the room? Anybody hadn't
22 come home from prison before? That
23 25 would have helped you out,
24 brothers?

1 (Yes.)

2 MR. WILLIAMS: \$2,500 is
3 a start. And in New York, they got
4 paperwork on the table right now
5 that'll give a brother or sister at
6 least you got 2500 for six months,
7 and a lot of us can take that and
8 go win with it. We just need an
9 opportunity, right.

10 Researchers at a
11 University of Penn studied similar
12 programs in other states. Here's
13 what they found: They found that
14 this can cut recidivism while
15 improving housing and food
16 security. We need to do this here.
17 Because I got money in my hands, I
18 can go food shopping. I can bring
19 some groceries in the house.
20 Although I can't contribute to.
21 mortgage right now, Councilman, at
22 least I can feed myself. At least
23 I don't have to tap into your
24 little bit that you got saved up.

1 I got car fare now.

2 Let's not forget. It
3 takes anywhere from 80 to 100-plus
4 to live comfortably in
5 Philadelphia. Rent is up there.
6 Cost of living is up there. It
7 takes 80 or above just to keep you
8 here. We ain't talking about
9 splurging and going out. We
10 talking about just to be able to
11 have a place to stay. We ain't
12 talking driving a car or nothing.
13 So if a man or woman returning home
14 from incarceration, if they can't
15 even barely get 2500 for six months
16 until I get right, just help me get
17 right, what are we doing.

18 Not only do returning
19 citizens need income, they need
20 mentorship, supportive services
21 too. So many organizations across
22 the city are working to provide but
23 we need more support to meet the
24 needs of the community. We need

1 for this City Council to
2 aggressively, historically put the
3 money where it's supposed to be.
4 So that way when these men and
5 women are returning home from
6 incarceration, you got 25 people
7 over here, you got 50 over here,
8 you got 20 ready to work around the
9 clock. This ain't just for four
10 hours. This is just not for a
11 couple hours, Councilman. This is
12 ongoing.

13 I've been home now 11
14 years. I just celebrated 10 years
15 successfully completed parole, and
16 that's because of you. That's
17 because of this City Council put
18 programs in place to properly help
19 men and women returning home. They
20 gone now. It's no paychecks, it's
21 no mentorships. That's how me and
22 this brother love met, mentoring a
23 group of young kids trying to keep
24 them out of trouble.

1 I remember a few years
2 back when we did the Kobe Bryant
3 mural, right, in your District,
4 Councilman, when you went and
5 talked to those mothers that were
6 returning citizens and those
7 fathers that was returning citizens
8 and those kids who were the
9 children of the returning citizens.
10 And they said, thank you,
11 Councilman, because without this
12 opportunity I was on my way back.
13 And you felt that, and you said
14 we're going to work vigorously as a
15 community to change this.

16 So for me, whether it be
17 Steps to Success, whether it be the
18 FACT program, Real Street Talk, I
19 can name Unity and Community,
20 everybody that's in here, I see
21 everybody that's in here, we need
22 these programs properly supported
23 because I know what the sisters
24 going to do. I see a lot of them

1 in here. If they're properly
2 supported, when men and women come
3 home, they're going to make sure
4 that they wrap arms around them for
5 six months, right.

6 When returning citizens
7 need mentors that they can trust or
8 talk to about everything from
9 coming home to family, to getting
10 on the computer, to finding a job
11 to I'm stressed out, I'm ready to
12 go back. She ain't answering the
13 phone. She told me I need to bring
14 my son back. Just a whole lot of
15 work in order for the resources
16 that you want to put in place. In
17 order for them to become effective,
18 there's a lot of work that needs to
19 be done.

20 But it's so much more.
21 A lot of the time you don't even
22 know what to ask for. A lot of our
23 brothers and sisters that are
24 coming home, they don't even know

1 what to ask for. They don't know
2 which way is up. Why? A lot of
3 that work needs to start in the
4 prison. So I don't want to be too
5 much longer, right.

6 We need positive
7 momentum to change direction.
8 Right now State Road is denying
9 people their human rights. When
10 they get out, they have to find a
11 way to survive. Please, ladies and
12 gentlemen of this Council, do
13 everything you can do to
14 aggressively, historically -- and
15 when I say historically, that's
16 because I've had the opportunity to
17 travel this country in the last 11
18 years and everywhere we go, my
19 partner Ricky and I, love that
20 brother, everywhere we go,
21 Kentucky, Chicago, Detroit, they're
22 all giving shout-outs to
23 Philadelphia City Council because
24 this was the restorative justice

1 city first. Y'all were the ones
2 first to make it a thing and make
3 it popular.

4 And then not only our
5 District Attorney, who's a historic
6 district attorney, I think together
7 collectively thank y'all for
8 listening to me. Sorry for being
9 long-winded. I'm speaking for
10 300,000-plus returning citizens
11 that are active registered voters
12 in the city of Philadelphia, so I
13 have to make sure that I'm
14 representing them well. We need
15 your help. We need the resources
16 where they are supposed to be so we
17 can end mass incarceration. I'll
18 take any questions.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILMAN JONES:

21 Before I recognize Member Phillips
22 and probably Member O'Rourke,
23 congratulations. We are proud of
24 you coming home and becoming a

1 positive influence in that
2 community. And I see you too, been
3 in rooms with you and I appreciate
4 what you do.

5 I want to thank the
6 Pennsylvania Prison Society because
7 you're the first restorative
8 justice program in the history of
9 this country. That goes from your
10 art programs I know about you.
11 Your Martin Luther King Day
12 celebration is legendary as it
13 relates not just to the holiday but
14 how it applies to us today, so we
15 appreciate it.

16 Member Phillips.

17 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
18 think we found -- thank you, Dawan.
19 I think we found a potential long-
20 term solution for our prisons in
21 your city, and that's working with
22 you, right. And I think
23 honestly -- and I see that. And
24 Commissioner Resnick, is here, and

1 one of the things I'm thinking
2 about is when people leave the
3 prison if they have a partnership
4 that we can have with someone like
5 yourself that can literally we can
6 say, hey, when you leave, there's a
7 gentleman named Dawan Williams or
8 Prison Society, go to there, you
9 can get your ID, you can get food,
10 you know, food stamps, medical
11 care, all that and more, get
12 re-entry services and coach them up
13 on that, right. And that could be
14 something that could be a long-term
15 program so when they leave, it's
16 almost like they're met with
17 somebody as they're leaving as
18 opposed to they're just empty, you
19 know what I mean.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Just
21 empty and they left to figure it
22 out on their own. Plus,
23 Councilman, not only do you have --
24 the 50,000 that was allocated for

1 you in there, the Prison Society
2 has that now. So each person has a
3 bottom line of whatever the number
4 is, 30,000 25,000, whatever it is,
5 when you report to the Prison
6 Society or you report to NOMO or
7 you report to Unity in the
8 Community or any one of our beloved
9 Philadelphia partner programs, they
10 already have the funding because
11 they already knew 10 people getting
12 released this month.

13 So he already got
14 250,000. He's got 10 names, 10 PP
15 numbers, they report there to get
16 their services, and they get money
17 allocated and they already got the
18 mentor signed up with the debit
19 cards and they taking them out,
20 they had PennDOT, they at the suit
21 store, they get a uniform, job
22 interview, soap, deodorant,
23 toothpaste, mentoring, counseling,
24 everything, until that allocated

1 money that you would have been
2 paying for, for a bathroom, until
3 that money runs out. And we can
4 say six months, we can say a year.

5 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
6 would be supportive of if we have
7 the funding to do this in our city,
8 I was supportive of something like
9 providing a debit card for food,
10 clothing and initial shelter.
11 Something like that would be
12 remarkable for our returnees. And
13 so, I just wanted to stress that.

14 And the last question
15 that I have for you is the
16 mentorship programs. Can you name
17 the mentorship programs that exist?
18 I don't know -- I mean, I know FACT
19 is in the prison --

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Fathers
21 And Children Together. No, we're
22 here too. We're here on the
23 streets as well. But again --

24 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

1 Yeah, but why don't they like --
2 what is the disconnect between
3 the --

4 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm about
5 to tell you.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: --
7 prison and then the outside -- why
8 aren't they getting this
9 information, Dawan?

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Here you
11 go, the resources and the funding
12 is not there for me to be a proper,
13 effective mentor program outside of
14 being Dawan Williams from FACT. If
15 we had the proper funding and the
16 proper support and the proper
17 funding process, then, yes, I would
18 be able to name five or six
19 different mentor programs with 25
20 mentors on deck. But until we
21 receive the proper funding and the
22 proper resources and the proper
23 system, that's not really going to
24 be able to happen. So I cannot --

1 no, Councilman, I cannot name an
2 effective on-paper mentor program
3 with statistics and facts and data.

4 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

5 All right. Thank you.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank
7 you.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

9 Thank you, Chairman.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chair
11 recognizes Member Landau.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

13 Thank you so much, Chairman.

14 Thanks to this whole
15 joint panel. Thank you both for
16 your testimony. It was incredible
17 and we hear you loud and clear.
18 There's got to be more programming
19 on the inside to get people ready
20 for the outside --

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes,
22 ma'am.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: --

24 and the second they leave on the

1 outside, they got to have the
2 resources to feel strong and
3 equipped and ready to participate
4 in society. I've been working on
5 issues of re-entry with
6 Councilmember Jones for many, many
7 years. And I do see that we are
8 kind of at a crisis point right now
9 but one that can be fixed.

10 This is the moment where
11 we've got a new Prison
12 Commissioner, we've got a new
13 Administration. We can move this
14 in the right direction with the
15 proper resources, with the proper
16 staffing and also helping to
17 support the funding for folks
18 helping on the inside and coming on
19 the outside. So thank you again
20 for telling your stories and
21 telling your truths, and we hear
22 you loud and clear.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank
24 you, Councilwoman.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
4 you.

5 I would ask you 50 more
6 questions, but we have other
7 panels. I appreciate you sharing
8 and I appreciate you -- let me ask
9 the question, when my member puts
10 together these subcommittees and
11 also some follow-ups, would you be
12 willing to participate to kind of
13 steer us in the right direction?
14 We need your help. We need your
15 lived experiences and your
16 expertise in this area.

17 Member.

18 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

19 Yes. Thank you, Member Jones --
20 thank you, Chairman, excuse me.
21 And again, I want to thank both of
22 these panelists for sharing their
23 professional personal expertise on
24 addressing this crisis. It's

1 always good to see Black men,
2 brothers leading in the way that
3 you're leading. Leigh, it's good
4 to see you in your leadership role.

5 MR. OWENS: You as well,
6 sir.

7 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
8 Dawan, you came here dressed like a
9 champion today.

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Two-time
11 champ, two in six years. Y'all
12 better act like y'all know. Y'all
13 in title town, Super Bowl town.

14 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
15 Somebody say, Go birds in the
16 house.

17 (Go Birds.)

18 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
19 Let me get to these questions.
20 Mr. Williams, I thank you for the
21 point that you made and I just want
22 to make sure that I get it even
23 clearer on the record. What you're
24 saying is that folks who are coming

1 home that you can give them all the
2 programs and things they want to,
3 but if you don't give the people
4 money, then they are going to be
5 behind the eight ball as it relates
6 to trying to get ahead in life; is
7 that accurate?

8 MR. WILLIAMS: They're
9 going to be off the pool table,
10 sir. Not even behind the eight
11 ball. You're not even in the game.
12 You don't have nothing.

13 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
14 Thank you. Thank you. Dr King
15 talked about before they killed him
16 a universal basic income as a
17 basic, basic thing that needs to be
18 provided to folks in society writ
19 large if we're going to address the
20 issue of poverty. But I think even
21 if we don't do universal, if it's a
22 focus on folks who are returning
23 home to putting them back in
24 society, then certainly of all the

1 things that we give them in a
2 capitalist society, we ought to
3 give them some money to be able to
4 play on the board.

5 MR. WILLIAMS:

6 Absolutely.

7 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

8 Mr. Owens, we often hear that due
9 to the great work that has been
10 done to significantly reduce mass
11 incarceration locally, that the
12 folks still left inside "deserve to
13 be there." Does that idea conflict
14 at all with what you're seeing
15 inside and in the data?

16 MR. OWENS: I think it
17 does to an extent. We visit these
18 facilities regularly and what we
19 see, we see people still being
20 arrested for being, frankly
21 speaking, drug addicts, being
22 addicted to substances. We see
23 people incarcerated that just can't
24 make bail, as District Attorney

1 Krasner said earlier.

2 So I think that we're
3 incarcerating poverty to an extent,
4 we're incarcerating drug abuse and
5 we're incarcerating things that
6 there could be alternatives. We're
7 not exhausting the alternatives to
8 incarceration that we know exist,
9 that we know in many cases will be
10 cheaper than actual incarceration.
11 So to answer your question
12 directly, I would say, yes, we are
13 seeing substantial cases as we
14 interview folks that are
15 incarcerated about the reasons that
16 they're there, right.

17 And frankly, we could be
18 doing a lot more whether it's in
19 the courts or prosecutorial and
20 just overall to actually engage in
21 less incarceration on many, many
22 levels.

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

24 Thank you. Thank you so much.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Can I say
3 one more thing before we move on
4 please? I just want to for the
5 record.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES:
7 Please.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: I would
9 love to be a part of anything that
10 the prison system would like to
11 move forward with visually, because
12 what Councilman Phillips said was
13 very important and I abide by that
14 every day. The reason why our
15 program has had a lot of somewhat
16 of success is because the power of
17 social media. People see what
18 we're doing every day. So we want
19 to assemble a media crew that abide
20 by the laws, the rules and
21 regulations of the prison that'll
22 go in, capture some legal stuff to
23 show the before, the after and the
24 process as to what's going on and

1 what people can expect, I think
2 that would help the Mayor and I
3 think that will help the residents
4 of the city of Philadelphia and I'm
5 available for that. Thank y'all.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
7 you. One of the things that we
8 have to do as a follow-up to this
9 Committee is we need to do
10 financial modeling that proves a
11 pound of prevention is worth -- an
12 ounce of prevention is worth a
13 pound of cure, that these programs
14 measure up, and that \$50,000 a year
15 that you talk about, that we can
16 save on that.

17 Because there are two
18 types of elected officials in the
19 United States these days: Those
20 who want to save souls and those
21 who want to save money. Both of
22 them need cost accounting. We have
23 to figure out and prove that by
24 what they do on the streets -- and

1 I said it with the District
2 Attorney -- 39% reduction in
3 homicides is a real, tangible
4 number. How do we do that?
5 Through the investments. We have
6 to model this in a way that proves
7 the theories. Thank you.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank
9 you.

10 MR. OWENS: Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES:
12 Ms. Stack, would you please read
13 the next panel to testify.

14 THE CLERK: Chief
15 Defender Keisha Hudson from the
16 Defender's Association of
17 Philadelphia; Robert Saleem
18 Holbrook from the Abolitionist Law
19 Center; and Sue Meng Ye from the
20 Pennsylvania Institutional Law
21 Project.

22 (Witnesses approached
23 Witness table.)

24 COUNCILMAN JONES:

1 Member Hudson, we're going to stop
2 putting you last. This is the
3 second hearing that you had to wait
4 patiently and I appreciate it. But
5 the next time we have a hearing,
6 you're going first. All right.
7 You have my word.

8 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
9 Always good to be here, Council.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can
11 you state your name for the record
12 and begin your testimony.

13 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
14 Good afternoon. Keisha Hudson,
15 Chief Defender of the Defender
16 Association of Philadelphia. I
17 want to thank Council and all the
18 members for addressing the urgent
19 need to safely reduce the
20 Philadelphia's jail population.
21 The jail of course as Commissioner
22 Resnick said, does not control who
23 is detained, how long they stay or
24 whether they can be diverted to

1 treatment. Those systems rest with
2 the courts and justice system
3 partners.

4 That is why the Defender
5 Association has made it a priority
6 to push for solutions that get
7 people out of jail faster or
8 prevent them from being detained in
9 the first place. Some key
10 initiatives: Preliminary
11 arraignment. If you have not
12 observed our preliminary
13 arraignment proceedings in
14 Philadelphia, I urge you to.

15 Our clients appear by
16 video. The hearings are staffed by
17 the Defender Association 24 hours a
18 day, 7 days a week. We have mere
19 minutes to consult with our clients
20 before they appear for their
21 hearing. And most hearings last
22 around two minutes before bail is
23 set.

24 In 50% of the cases, the

1 DAO is asking for \$1 less than 1
2 million in bail. With support from
3 justice system partners, we are
4 communicating with our clients, but
5 we have to take a look at what
6 happens in arraignment court, the
7 resources that we are deploying in
8 arraignment court and ensuring that
9 our clients get the proper time and
10 process where we are asking clear
11 questions before we make a
12 determination that is going to
13 destroy their lives, their
14 families, their children's lives,
15 their communities, about whether or
16 not this is someone we should be
17 detaining and sending to State
18 Road.

19 The next part of the
20 work we do are early bail review
21 hearings. These hearings, as you
22 have heard, are held within five
23 days of arrest and they allow the
24 court to reassess bail decisions

1 and determine who can safely be
2 released.

3 Last year we staffed
4 4500 early bail review hearings,
5 making sure again that people
6 aren't unnecessarily held in jail.
7 I want to make clear, as it is
8 budget season, and I have had the
9 pleasure of meeting with each of
10 you before me now about my budget,
11 that our MacArthur funding ends on
12 June 30, 2025 and we absolutely
13 need to sustain early bail review
14 if you are to continue our
15 successful decarceration efforts.
16 And that ask, line item ask is
17 \$750,000 to sustain MacArthur
18 funding beyond June 30th.

19 Then we have a new
20 initiative, and I want to thank the
21 courts including Judge Karen
22 Simmons, who has led the efforts on
23 this to do emergency bail hearings
24 but we only do them once a week,

1 and they are staffed by people
2 including me and Andrew Pappas,
3 because we do not have the
4 attorneys to dedicate to this
5 one-day-a-week hearing. We can
6 increase the number of emergency
7 bail hearings we do, but we
8 absolutely need the resources to be
9 able to do that. And to date, we
10 have successfully through early
11 bail hearings gotten 150 people out
12 of our prisons on State Road. FIR,
13 the Forensic Intensive Recovery
14 program, the courts are taking a
15 new look at FIR. The city is
16 redesigning its FIR contract along
17 with our office, along with the
18 prisons, the courts and the DAO,
19 but right now it is taking about
20 two months for our clients to
21 actually get their FIR evaluations
22 where they can now be safely
23 released, so we're taking a look at
24 how we can increase the number of

1 practitioners that work for FIR
2 under PHMC, but we need to really
3 shorten that amount of time that
4 it's taking for FIR, which was put
5 in place to get people safely back
6 into their communities. It's taken
7 way too long for those evaluations
8 to take place.

9 I'm actually going to
10 exchange my seat now really quickly
11 for Elisa Downey-Zayas because in
12 2024 it was with her work at the
13 Defender Association that we for
14 the first time ever in the history
15 of our organization got support to
16 do re-entry work. And then I want
17 to close by talking a little bit
18 about some support that we need to
19 continue to do the work that we do
20 with the Defenders.

21 Ms. Downey-Zayas.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
23 you. Please state your name for
24 the record and begin your

1 testimony.

2 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYAS: Thank
3 you, Councilmembers. My name is
4 Elisa Downey-Zayas. I'm the
5 Director of Alternative Sentencing
6 for the Defender Association. And
7 when I stepped into this role, I
8 told Chief Defender Hudson that it
9 was my dream to grow out of
10 re-entry practice. It's something
11 that we've never done. It's
12 something that has been a glaring
13 problem for some time because
14 there's a lot of re-entry work that
15 goes on in this city, but the lack
16 of predictability and knowledge
17 surrounding when someone is going
18 to get released makes re-entry work
19 hard.

20 You can pour resources
21 into someone in the prison, but if
22 you can't predict or ensure that
23 they're going to be paroled on a
24 set date, you can't do any warm

1 handoffs, you can't connect them to
2 services because you don't know
3 when they're going to get out in
4 order to transition from behind the
5 Whalls to their communities.

6 So part of what we did
7 is we applied for a grant with
8 PCCD. We have a re-entry
9 specialist who's a licensed
10 clinical social worker who works
11 with clients before they're
12 released in order to do a needs-
13 based assessment. She then meets
14 with them several times in order to
15 develop what resources would be
16 appropriate for these clients to be
17 referred to and then contacts the
18 organizations that would
19 appropriately fill their needs.

20 She then schedules
21 appointments along with an
22 administrative assistant and then
23 does up to one year of post-release
24 follow-up with case management

1 services, which is supported by an
2 administrative assistant to follow
3 up to make sure they're attending
4 appointments, make sure they are
5 complying with the conditions of
6 their sentence because what we
7 found is not only do people need
8 support on reentering to better
9 themselves as people, but also they
10 need to understand how to comply
11 with probation. And often the
12 re-entry team and the re-entry
13 partners that are working with
14 these individuals are not always
15 helping them complete the
16 conditions of their sentence.

17 So we have the re-entry
18 specialist work with a lawyer in
19 the office, mainly me, but others
20 who will go through this is what
21 the client needs to do to be
22 paroled, these are the conditions
23 they have to meet upon parole. So
24 this is an area we would like to

1 expand. Right now we have one
2 licensed clinical social worker to
3 work with the entire sentence
4 population. Obviously she's not
5 able to work with anyone. The
6 referral process is very
7 competitive.

8 We also need
9 specialists. People who are older
10 than 65, people speak Spanish,
11 emerging adults, people with mental
12 health issues, those will all need
13 specialists to provide targeted
14 re-entry services. But this is
15 something that we are very proud to
16 have and I think is something that
17 can make connections with community
18 organizations and also take
19 advantage of the City's resources
20 that are already in place in order
21 to provide better parole planning
22 and reduce recidivism.

23 And with that, I'll turn
24 it back to Chief Defender Hudson.

1 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:

2 I was just here last week to talk
3 about the number of our adult
4 population being 44,000 and we have
5 29 social workers for that entire
6 adult population. And Commissioner
7 Resnick says, a quote that I wrote
8 down, that the jails are the
9 social -- the last resort for
10 social services, which is pretty
11 profound in in my book because it
12 shouldn't be.

13 We know this population
14 better than anyone. Many of the
15 people on State Road, we have
16 represented before, whether they
17 were children, whether they were in
18 the dependency system or the
19 delinquency system or the adult
20 system. We know what brought them
21 into the system. And if we can
22 increase supports in all of these
23 areas to safely decarcerate,
24 increase the number of social

1 workers that we have so we can do
2 case management support, increase
3 our ability to do re-entry work, we
4 can make a difference.

5 It is budget season.

6 You know my ask was very, very
7 high. But when I think looking at
8 the other stakeholders in the
9 system and what we are investing
10 in, I think it's a reasonable
11 request that we increase the
12 resources of the Defender
13 Association to support the people
14 on State Road who are there because
15 systems have failed them. Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES:

18 You've been consistent. We were
19 just sharing back in the Kensington
20 Caucus the same need for what's
21 going on in Kensington is the same
22 need for the population in general.
23 And it's 29 new social workers.

24 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:

1 I would love to double my social
2 work population. So if you have 2.5
3 million, I could take the check
4 today happily and run away. But,
5 yes.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
7 are there any questions for this
8 panel -- oh, I'm sorry.

9 State your name for the
10 record and begin your testimony.

11 MR. HOLBROOK: Good
12 afternoon. My name is Robert
13 Saleem Holbrook. I'm the Executive
14 Director of the Abolitionist Law
15 Center. Thank you for convening
16 this important hearing on
17 decarcerating the county jail. I
18 have a bunch of prepared notes, but
19 I don't want to be redundant
20 because I feel like the people that
21 preceded me really touched on the
22 abuses, the trauma, the deaths and
23 ineptitude and in some cases,
24 incompetence of the county jail. I

1 also know that there were some
2 people that testified about the
3 hard work that the staff is doing
4 there, so we recognize everyone
5 that preceded us.

6 What I want to do is
7 talk about some ways that the
8 county, particularly the City,
9 can -- steps that the City can take
10 to decarcerating the county jail.
11 And one thing that we heard, a
12 consistent theme throughout this
13 hearing, is that decarcerating the
14 county jail and public safety is
15 compatible. They work together.
16 They go hand in glove.

17 Despite efforts to
18 increase the staffing in the jails,
19 42% of those positions remain
20 unfilled. This was according to
21 the court's monitoring report in
22 October of 2024. What's even more
23 where staffing has increased in
24 Philadelphia's county jails,

1 conditions have not necessarily
2 improved.

3 Rikers Island, one of
4 the deadliest jails in our nation,
5 has a staff-to-incarcerated person
6 ratio of nearly 1:1, yet remains a
7 dangerous and abusive environment.
8 This isn't unprecedented. The
9 Philadelphia Police Department has
10 1500 vacancies right now, right.
11 The county jail is running at 35%
12 to 40% of vacancy of correctional
13 office despite offering a signing
14 bonus, right.

15 We hear about NFL
16 players getting large signing
17 bonuses. I believe that the
18 signing bonuses for a new
19 correctional officer like 10% to
20 15%, right, and they still can't
21 fill those vacancies. So this is
22 telling us that this is a problem
23 that's larger than just the county
24 jail. Why they can't fill these

1 vacancies, right. It could be a
2 problem with actual people being
3 paid living wages in this country,
4 right. It could be a problem with
5 people don't want to police their
6 own communities because they see a
7 broken justice system every day,
8 whether it's when they step out
9 their front door and they're
10 stepping over someone who's
11 suffering substance abuse on their
12 steps, right, someone from their
13 community that's not getting help,
14 whether it's someone who has a
15 loved one serving extreme
16 sentencing, life without parole,
17 something I was once serving, or if
18 it's someone that had their loved
19 ones snatched, right. And instead
20 of their pain being addressed,
21 instead they're being called out to
22 support more harsher prison
23 sentences, more police in their
24 communities while not addressing

1 the underlying conditions in our
2 community.

3 So these are larger
4 issues than just the county jail.
5 Technical parole violations are
6 something that are a main driver of
7 incarceration in the county jails.
8 And this is a problem I believe
9 that starts with changing the
10 mentality of parole officers.

11 If you look at studies
12 all over the country, many
13 localities have reduced parole
14 violations for technical
15 violations, but I think that the
16 place that we need to start is
17 correcting and changing the values
18 of parole officers and probation as
19 well. All too often probation is a
20 pathway to incarceration and not a
21 pathway off of incarceration.

22 Probation officers do
23 not look at themselves as social
24 workers. As a matter of fact, they

1 tell people on probation, yo, my
2 job is not to get you a job. My
3 job is to make sure you do not
4 violate the terms of your
5 probation. So we need complete
6 wraparound services and a change of
7 mentality in Philadelphia's
8 probation system, and that is
9 something that the City of
10 Philadelphia can address. It
11 doesn't have to wait for Harrisburg
12 to address it, but it's going to
13 take a commitment.

14 So as I said, over 200
15 people are coming into the county
16 jail every month on technical
17 probation violations. Now, mind
18 you, these are violations like
19 missing an appointment, failing to
20 pay fines, traveling out the city.
21 In some cases it can involve dirty
22 urine or misdemeanor offenses.
23 These are burdensome conditions.

24 They disproportionately

1 impact low-income individuals and
2 communities of color and many
3 people lack the resources to comply
4 with the rigid conditions of
5 supervision, which leads many of
6 them to abscond, to roll, to get
7 out dodge because of fear of
8 incarceration.

9 Like I'll be honest with
10 you, if you know that you're going
11 to be violated for missing an
12 appointment or something simple and
13 you're going to be violated and
14 placed in Philadelphia's county
15 jails where our county jails have
16 been the most dangerous county
17 jails in the country since 2020, 9
18 times out of 10 dudes are going to
19 roll. I take my chances on the
20 street than going in that
21 environment, and that's a reality.

22 This in turn fuels
23 further entanglement with the
24 system getting caught up in these

1 technical violations. According to
2 the City's prison reports, most
3 recent of 2024 there were more than
4 200 people each month incarcerated
5 simply for technical violations.
6 This shouldn't happen. So
7 Philadelphia needs to take the lead
8 from jurisdictions that have
9 successfully reformed probation and
10 parole.

11 Camden does not
12 immediately jail individuals for
13 technical violations. Instead they
14 receive a letter informing them of
15 the court date. Now, I know folks
16 are like we're going to send a
17 letter to someone that's on
18 probation. We do that for traffic
19 violations. We did it for running
20 a red light in Philadelphia. You
21 get a letter in the mail. If you
22 if you fail to pay those, you get a
23 letter in the mail.

24 We can do these for

1 people on probation. We could also
2 call them. We can also text them
3 specifically for the technical
4 violations that I'm talking about,
5 the low-level violations that again
6 are not new charges. This is one
7 way that we could stop the intake,
8 stop the flow of people going into
9 the county jail.

10 If Pennsylvania also
11 passed Act 44 that was intended to
12 reform probation, but unfortunately
13 it doesn't address the front-end
14 issues of people coming into the
15 system. And so, this is what I was
16 talking about earlier, that
17 Philadelphia can take the lead in
18 changing the values and mentality
19 of its probation officers and its
20 probation system.

21 Another area is
22 releasing older and medically-
23 vulnerable individuals. I feel
24 like this is really a no-brainer as

1 someone who did 28 years in prison.
2 People who are older and medically
3 vulnerable, they're released --
4 when you release them, they have
5 the lowest recidivism rates of
6 people coming back to prison,
7 right.

8 I tell people all the
9 time crime is a young man's game,
10 right, a young woman's game too as
11 well. So these populations in the
12 county jail can be released. Now,
13 some people say, okay, people are
14 suffering from medical conditions,
15 where are they going to go, where
16 are we going to release them.
17 Well, again this is an issue that's
18 unfortunately larger than the
19 prison system because we have a
20 health care problem in this
21 country, right. We have a mass
22 incarceration. We also have a mass
23 health care problem in this
24 country, right.

1 Council sometimes does
2 not have to try and figure it all
3 out. There are resources out there
4 in the community to help people who
5 are suffering from medical
6 conditions, and again increasing
7 and improving the City's wraparound
8 services will aid this population.
9 So we feel as though starting with
10 this population, people who are
11 suffering from medical conditions,
12 chronic illnesses and are seniors,
13 they should be prioritized for
14 release. And this is something
15 that the City can do. They could
16 be confined to home confinement,
17 and probation officers or even the
18 correctional facilities can call
19 and check in on them.

20 The racial justice
21 issue, I know right now in this
22 political climate we don't want to
23 talk about racial justice no more,
24 right. It almost seems like DEI,

1 talking about how the system
2 disproportionately impacts Black,
3 Brown poor people. That doesn't
4 happen like that, we're in some
5 fairy tale land right now in
6 America. But unfortunately, it
7 happens in Philadelphia. And I
8 appreciate that the City Council
9 and the elected officials are
10 clear.

11 Krasner released a
12 report on racial justice around the
13 system and I was just at a City
14 Council hearing during Black
15 History Month where the City
16 defended its diversity policies as
17 well as acknowledge the historical
18 legacy of racism, not just in
19 Philadelphia but in this country.

20 When we talk about
21 decarceration, we cannot -- or
22 sorry, mass incarceration, we have
23 to talk about the racial
24 disparities baked in our system.

1 Black Philadelphians make up 38% of
2 the prison population but account
3 for 71% of the jail population.
4 They also endure the longest
5 average length of incarceration.

6 Black people are held an
7 average of 249 days, 98 days longer
8 than their White counterparts. And
9 those studies are similar for Brown
10 folks to people as well, Latino
11 community. Although, Councilmember
12 Lozada, I'm sure you're aware that
13 the statistics in Latino
14 communities are sometimes hard to
15 sparse just because of the racial
16 demographics of that group.

17 9 out of 10 people in
18 Philadelphia jails are people of
19 color. Studies show Black
20 defendants are 40% more likely to
21 be detained pretrial than non-Black
22 defendants. The vast majority of
23 those in our county jails are there
24 because we criminalize poverty,

1 homelessness, mental illness and
2 substance abuse. I can tell you
3 that I see more people that I saw
4 inside suffering from mental health
5 abuse living on the subway, living
6 in the subway stations or in the
7 regional rail stations than getting
8 support, right.

9 So criminalizing this
10 group, one, is morally wrong but
11 also you're not addressing the
12 underlining issues. You are
13 dealing with the symptoms and not
14 the disease, because I could assure
15 you that the Department of
16 Correction is sending many, many
17 more, thousands more, the DOC
18 releases close to 20,000 people a
19 year. And a report found that
20 three-fourths of them are suffering
21 from mental health disabilities on
22 the spectrum, so it could go from
23 someone who just was in long-term
24 solitary confinement and has mental

1 health disabilities to someone that
2 is in need of medication, right.
3 So they're coming back to our
4 communities. And if we don't have
5 anything for them but handcuffs,
6 then we're just perpetuating the
7 trauma.

8 And concluding, this
9 hearing is about decarceration.
10 It's more importantly about the
11 thousands of Philadelphians who
12 remain behind bars due to outdated,
13 unjust and ineffective policies.
14 We have the opportunity right now
15 to enact meaningful reforms that
16 will break the cycle of
17 incarceration and wasteful and
18 unjust practices that keep our
19 jails full and move toward a
20 justice system that prioritized
21 rehabilitation over punishment. We
22 know what works. We have seen
23 model success in other
24 jurisdictions.

1 One thing I want to say
2 too is I heard everyone, and even
3 including myself, acknowledge that
4 we have a tough job ahead of us,
5 acknowledge these problems but that
6 we really don't have all the
7 answers, right, and there's nothing
8 wrong with that. We get to those
9 answers by collectively working
10 with each other, right. But
11 there's something that we also need
12 to acknowledge. And that it means
13 that we need a commitment to this.

14 We need a commitment
15 from City Council. And I'm going
16 to be honest with you. We need
17 City Council to have the same
18 commitment and energy that it had
19 dealing with that stadium. We need
20 to see that. That's what we need
21 to see from y'all. We need to see
22 a commitment to addressing this
23 issue. It's a serious issue. It
24 impacts and weaves in and out o the

1 families of every person in this
2 city. Even people who have never
3 been arrested, I can assure you
4 have someone in your family that
5 was impacted by the system. And
6 more importantly, when you step out
7 your house every day if you move
8 around the city of Philadelphia,
9 you're moving around people who are
10 impacted by this unjust system.

11 So that's what we need
12 and that's something I think that
13 we all need to agree on. If we
14 don't have the all the answers, we
15 need to agree that we need a
16 massive commitment from City
17 Council. So thank you for giving
18 me this opportunity to testify.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
20 you for your testimony.

21 Please state your name
22 and begin your testimony.

23 MS. YE: Good afternoon.

24 My name is Sue Meng Ye. I'm the

1 Executive Director of the
2 Pennsylvania Institutional Law
3 Project. I was asked to be
4 available for questions. I'm one
5 of the Council on the class action
6 lawsuit Remick v. Philadelphia,
7 which is the class action seeking
8 humane conditions in the
9 Philadelphia jails that started in
10 2020 that has been referenced
11 earlier today. So I have submitted
12 written testimony for the record.
13 And I will note it was alluded that
14 the court monitor shall be issuing
15 another report.

16 I actually don't know if
17 it will be March 31st. But when it
18 does come out, I want to note that
19 it's publicly available through the
20 court system, but we always post it
21 on our website. That's pilp.org.
22 So the monitor's report is often
23 quite lengthy. The last one was 85
24 pages. So we do a four- or five-

1 page summary that hits the key
2 points. And I just want to
3 acknowledge our co-counsel on the
4 case Abolitionist Law Center,
5 Kairys, Rudovsky, Messing, Feinberg
6 and Lin and Deckart. So I am
7 available for any questions.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: So my
9 LA Ms. Stack is thanking you for
10 providing that written testimony
11 and abbreviated comment. I do have
12 a question. The money that was a
13 part of that court case where is
14 it, how is it being appropriately
15 spent?

16 MS. YE: So in August
17 2024 the court ordered that \$25
18 million as you likely know be paid
19 into a fund that is to be used to
20 address a number of things. So the
21 court order ordered the City of
22 Philadelphia to put \$25 million,
23 which the number comes from funds
24 that were not expended due to

1 understaffing, that's how he
2 calculated needed it. And then in
3 that court order, he listed a
4 number of things that the money
5 should be used towards.

6 So in my written
7 testimony I highlight a few of
8 them. The actual court order is
9 also on our website. But for
10 example, offering double time pay
11 as necessary, hiring an outside
12 recruitment team with proven track
13 records for hiring law enforcement
14 agencies, and I think Commissioner
15 Resnick actually mentioned a few of
16 these in his testimony, creating
17 access to a care team for access to
18 medical care, utilizing telehealth
19 services even if it costs more. So
20 there are a number of things here
21 that the court put that the money
22 should be expended towards.

23 So I believe a number of
24 things may be used. For example,

1 the increase in funding and monies
2 going towards the medical care
3 services, that's also listed in the
4 court order. I don't actually have
5 an exact accounting of what's been
6 spent or not. But I do know that
7 the court through the court monitor
8 has been in touch with the prison
9 system regarding the use of the
10 funds.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: My
12 suggestion to my colleague who
13 authored this resolution is to get
14 an exact accounting of where those
15 dollars are being spent. And if we
16 can do a better job when we start
17 hearing from the people testifying
18 today about wraparound services,
19 about warm handoffs and things like
20 that that you stated are the
21 categories which it can be applied.

22 So, Member Lozada.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

24 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 I just want to say for
2 the record, right, I'm fighting
3 like hell to make sure that the
4 issues in my District are responded
5 to so that we don't have a future
6 population of people going into our
7 systems, right, the prison system,
8 the mental health system.

9 So I'm saying to this
10 panel that when I put in my
11 priority request where I have the
12 Defender's request the expectation
13 is that it's supported, right,
14 because we hear from her all of the
15 work that they're doing. We hear
16 from her the work that others are
17 doing in order to either prevent
18 people from getting into our
19 systems or supporting people that
20 are in our systems that come out of
21 our prison system and don't have
22 the necessary resources to be able
23 to be successful, right.

24 And so, the work that we

1 have to do in the Kensington
2 community is extremely important
3 because they are the future. If we
4 don't respond to them now, they are
5 the future people that will become
6 the defenders, clients, right. And
7 so, we need all hands on deck,
8 right. I'm not going to stop
9 advocating for my community to
10 receive all of these important
11 services, and I'm also fighting to
12 make sure that my office partners
13 with people who can provide those
14 services to people who are coming
15 out of our system because I know
16 it's important.

17 And so, the 15 million
18 that the Defender is asking for is
19 going to help both of these groups
20 of people. And so, I ask this
21 panel to seriously consider my
22 priority request for the Defender's
23 Association to make sure, right,
24 that all of these essential

1 services are delivered to both
2 populations.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chief
5 Defender Hudson keeps a stoic look
6 about her, but she's jumping inside
7 saying yay.

8 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
9 You can't see my feet under the
10 table.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
12 That was a plug for you.

13 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
14 Thank you very much, Councilmember,
15 for your support and thank you all
16 for your support.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES:
18 Member Loz -- Member Landau.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
20 Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

21 Thank you all for your
22 testimony, super important as well
23 and as we keep hearing resounding
24 themes with all of you for how we

1 need to do things differently.
2 What we've been doing has not
3 worked. And I'm a big fan of now
4 being in this position of let's
5 just rip up the playbook and start
6 over and start envisioning a new
7 way of doing things.

8 I'm kind of curious --
9 I'm sorry that I had to miss the
10 testimony of the Prison
11 Commissioner before I got here.
12 But I'm curious if we started to
13 promote the vacant positions in the
14 prisons more in a sense of social
15 work, helping, let's fight
16 recidivism way versus just a
17 criminal justice, prison justice
18 way, if that could help fill the
19 vacant positions and have people
20 charged with the mandate of what
21 we're looking for, which is to
22 provide the services in the prison,
23 to make people certainly following
24 a court order mandate and to

1 certainly make the conditions as
2 humane as possible and get people
3 out as quickly as possible and
4 let's get them right back into
5 society.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. HOLBROOK: With all
8 due respect, I think that would be
9 a bait-and-switch scheme the City
10 is running to the people that are
11 coming in. Because as soon as they
12 get into the Philadelphia county
13 jail, they are going to see the
14 conditions that they're subjected
15 to and the City has not yet put a
16 program in place that covers all
17 these wraparound services. So they
18 basically are coming in to do three
19 things, care, custody and control,
20 right.

21 So I see where you're
22 going with it. And if we had these
23 systems in place that was actually
24 treating incarceration for social

1 workers, right, and dealing with
2 the trauma, the therapy and all
3 that comes with it, I think that
4 would be approached. But you sell
5 that to someone and they come into
6 Philadelphia county jail and people
7 are locked down 20 hours a day,
8 they're getting food pushed to
9 their cells, they're seeing the
10 reports that older prisoners are
11 getting killed and people are dying
12 from drug overdoses, they're
13 understaffed, they're going to be
14 like, man, I'm out -- actually,
15 they're going to do what people are
16 doing already, why there's a 45%
17 rate. And I think that someone
18 even said that the retention rate
19 for new people is very low. I
20 don't have that off the top of my
21 head, but I could give it to y'all.
22 But they're going to roll. They're
23 going to leave.

24 So if the City makes a

1 commitment to address the prisons
2 from a health and safety issue,
3 then that could be pitched. But if
4 you pitch it, right, with the
5 conditions that we have and the
6 commitment of the City, it's going
7 to be like that old saying, you
8 know -- well, I'm not going to say
9 it, but it's putting sugar on, you
10 know, you know what I mean. So
11 we're going to have to change our
12 mentality of how we view the
13 prisons.

14 It's like a probation
15 officer who would come in thinking
16 that they're going to do social
17 work, and the first thing that they
18 told us, yo, it ain't your
19 responsibility to find them a job.
20 It's not your responsibility to
21 find them substance abuse
22 treatment. You give them this
23 paper right here that has the phone
24 numbers for them to call. They do

1 it. Your job is to make sure they
2 don't violate the terms of the
3 probation, that you make sure that
4 they're checking in. And if they
5 violate it, then you make sure that
6 there's consequences and they go
7 back. So that's our problem and
8 that's what I talked about earlier.
9 We need a complete overhaul of the
10 values and the mentality that's
11 driving our carceral system in
12 Philadelphia.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are
15 you done?

16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
17 Yes.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Chair
19 recognizes Member O'Rourke.

20 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Just want to thank you
23 all for being here and the work
24 that you do on behalf of our city's

1 most vulnerable. The folks have
2 been on the wall for some time and
3 I appreciate your leadership and
4 the bright spot that you are in our
5 city.

6 To Defender Hudson, I
7 know work has been done, even very
8 recently, to improve FIR, Forensic
9 Intensive Recovery program. As we
10 all know, substance abuse and
11 mental health treatment slots are
12 critical in your testimony here.
13 Are there any subsections of the
14 population you see having
15 particular barriers to treatment?

16 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
17 Yes. I want to underscore again
18 that we are -- the Philadelphia
19 prisons, we are sending people
20 there who come in with very, very,
21 very complex drug and substance
22 abuse and mental health issues that
23 the prisons are going to have a
24 challenge and have had challenges

1 addressing and cannot address. And
2 our clients are there for short
3 stays and they're going to come
4 back to communities without those
5 really important connections to
6 medication, to treatment, to
7 housing and services.

8 I think -- I agree. If
9 you remember last year, I made a
10 bold statement during my City
11 Council testimony about the number
12 of people I think the Defender
13 Association and then the prison we
14 can safely release to close the
15 Detention Center. I still hold
16 that belief. I still think that we
17 need to look at the vulnerable
18 populations there, including the
19 people who are older. Having done
20 this work for 23 years, I will tell
21 you as someone who represented
22 clients on death row for 10 of
23 those years where my clients were
24 in their 50s and 60s and 70s,

1 people age out. The population is
2 not going to be a threat to public
3 safety and they can safely come
4 home.

5 I know the narrative in
6 the media when you see charges,
7 people rarely see the person behind
8 those charges. And so, when you
9 read a headline and you see rape or
10 you read a headline and you see
11 carjacking, armed carjacking, those
12 are alarming and they're concerning
13 and we should be alarmed and we
14 should be concerned. But Defenders
15 work with the people behind those
16 headlines and those charges and
17 these are individuals who Netflix
18 cannot write the script for how
19 they got to where they got, right.
20 They don't have any writers in
21 their Netflix writing room to write
22 these scripts for our clients.

23 They're human beings and
24 they're a multigeneration of

1 poverty and trauma and criminal
2 justice system involvement and
3 dependency involvement and driven
4 alcohol system involvement. And
5 there's a reason they're here. But
6 they're more than a file and
7 they're more than the charge,
8 they're more than that headline
9 which reads like it's terrifying,
10 but we know who they are. And I've
11 not in 23 years met a single one
12 not worthy of redemption and mercy,
13 whether it's in or out of our
14 carceral system.

15 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

16 Not a single one --

17 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:

18 Not a single one.

19 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: --

20 in two decades not worthy of mercy.

21 The people say amen.

22 Ms. Ye, did I say your
23 last name correctly?

24 MS. YE: Yes.

1 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: I
2 apolo -- thank you very much. As
3 co-counsel for the plaintiffs, what
4 trends are you seeing, what is your
5 assessment of the state of overall
6 compliance with the settlement in
7 contempt of order?

8 MS. YE: So your
9 question about the state of
10 compliance, I will note that since
11 2020 there have been dire
12 conditions in the Philadelphia
13 jails. The settlement was reached
14 in 2022 where we have been
15 receiving regular reports from the
16 court monitor, and all of them have
17 had major issues with compliance.

18 There have been slight
19 improvements, I want to acknowledge
20 that. But as an overall matter,
21 the last report of October 2024
22 still reflected serious issues of
23 noncompliance. And I want to
24 highlight just a few you can look

1 at, which is specifically out-of-
2 cell time, but especially for
3 people in segregation and
4 behavioral health services and
5 mental services for people in
6 segregation.

7 So in particular, people
8 who were visibly decompensating,
9 people who had very serious issues
10 of swallowing sharp or toxic items,
11 which clearly shows that there are
12 issues. So it's many years and I
13 don't think that with the efforts
14 that are being made, things will
15 turn overnight. And just from my
16 perspective, we haven't yet
17 received the data about the last
18 few months. The reports are a
19 little behind. But I'll just say
20 that from our clients'
21 perspectives, and this is
22 anecdotal, I'll admit things have
23 not dramatically improved.

24 I look forward to seeing

1 the data, but I do really look
2 forward to the day and I hope we
3 can get there but we're not there
4 yet, when people who walk through
5 our door say, hey, things are
6 better. And so, I think there
7 needs to be continued attention. I
8 really appreciate this hearing
9 regarding the conditions of the
10 Philadelphia jails.

11 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

12 And thank you for that. And a lot
13 has been said today. It is
14 certainly a shared desire to see
15 the day where all of us, and I'm
16 sure all the folks who have been a
17 part of the panels would agree,
18 that we can get to a point where
19 we're saying things are better
20 there. Amen on that front.

21 I have no more questions
22 for this one, Mr. Chairman. But I
23 will just say I do know that the
24 hour is drawing later and this is

1 getting longer than folks may have
2 planned for. After this, we will
3 as it relates to public testimony
4 for folks who have come, I'm
5 certain that we're losing folks, we
6 will have, if we are unable to get
7 through folks' public testimony,
8 space open in the caucus room where
9 we will hear the remainder of the
10 testimonies for those folks that
11 have come. We thank you so much
12 for being here.

13 Obviously, your voices
14 matter. That's what democracy
15 looks like, when you can come into
16 the space, give your testimony, it
17 can be heard and perhaps acted on.
18 So I want to make sure that we
19 allow the time for that. I do know
20 that this hearing is abutting up
21 against another one afterwards, so
22 we again have reserved the Caucus
23 room across the hall in the event
24 that we're unable to get through

1 all the public testimony, but we
2 will continue to hear those after
3 this hearing has adjourned.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
6 you, Member.

7 With that -- we're good?
8 All right. Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
11 Thank you. Thank you, everyone.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES:
13 Ms. Hudson, you are consistent if
14 nothing else.

15 CHIEF DEFENDER HUDSON:
16 Yes, I am. Thank you, Councilman.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: All
18 right.

19 Ms. Stack.

20 THE CLERK: Jody Dodd
21 from the Philadelphia District
22 Attorney's Office, Reverend
23 Dr. Donna L. Jones from the
24 Metropolitan Christian Council of

1 Philadelphia and Restorative Cities
2 Initiative.

3 (Witnesses approached
4 Witness table.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
6 I'm going to ask this panel,
7 recognizing the time it is not your
8 fault, it is mine, but we need to
9 summarize your testimony in order
10 to comply with the next hearing
11 that is scheduled in this chamber.
12 And for those who are here for
13 public testimony as Member O'Rourke
14 has stated, will be across the
15 hall.

16 Thank you and please
17 state your name for the record and
18 begin your abbreviated testimony.

19 MS. DODD: Hi. Good
20 morning. My name is Jody Dodd.
21 I'm the Restorative Justice
22 Facilitator at the District
23 Attorney's Office. I'm going to
24 summarize this. I had so much more

1 to say but time got away. I'm
2 going summarize this real quickly.

3 We've been running
4 restorative justice diversion for
5 three years since 2021. Here's the
6 thing you need to know: People
7 that go into the criminal system,
8 the recidivism rate is 61%. People
9 that go through restorative justice
10 it's 26% and that's without the
11 wraparound supports.

12 As importantly, the
13 juvenile program that we've had up
14 and running for three years, some
15 of the facilitators are here, zero,
16 zero youth have gone through
17 restorative justice have been
18 adjudicated delinquent subsequently
19 versus 61% of juveniles that go
20 through the criminal system. I'm
21 going to just say I'm just the
22 facilitator. You need to know the
23 people doing this work that are in
24 our community and you need to fund

1 their work. Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Right

4 to the point. All right. Thank

5 you for your testimony. And we

6 would like to get a copy of that

7 that you have on there. Thank you.

8 Could you give it to the Clerk?

9 MS. DODD: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

11 Thank you.

12 REV. DR. JONES: Thank

13 you, Jody. So my name is Reverend

14 Dr. Donna Jones. Good to see you,

15 Councilman Jones --

16 COUNCILMAN JONES:

17 Always a pleasure.

18 REV. DR. JONES:

19 -- Councilman O'Rourke, I can't see

20 that far, but our other sister

21 Council -- Councilperson, thank

22 you, Rue Landau. Thank you. Thank

23 you for having this hearing. It's

24 very important.

1 I'm the Executive
2 Director of Metropolitan Christian
3 Council and I also collaborated on
4 this response with one of our
5 colleagues from Collective Climate,
6 Kayla Warwick, and I just want to
7 lift that up. Both of us have
8 provided within our communities,
9 restorative justice services that
10 were referred to us through the
11 District Attorney's Office, but we
12 also do this work in general in the
13 community.

14 We operate with
15 transformative justice. And
16 transformative justice is a
17 political approach that aims to
18 address violence and harm by
19 building community support and
20 accountability rather than relying
21 on punishment. It's a way of
22 creating justice together and it
23 can be thought of as restorative
24 justice plus social justice.

1 I want to say that
2 because transformative justice
3 means we are not under contract
4 with the District Attorney's
5 Office. When I say we receive
6 referrals, I'm saying as the
7 community our District Attorney
8 through the wonderful work that is
9 done by people like Jody Dodd, they
10 refer cases to us in collaboration,
11 not in (inaudible).

12 We're the community that
13 walks beside our District
14 Attorney's Office. We're the
15 community that walks beside the
16 Defender's Association. We're the
17 community that walks beside
18 individual attorneys like, I think
19 he's still here, Troy Wilson. So
20 we are community. We are not an
21 agency. And as community, what
22 we're doing is restorative
23 practitioners throughout
24 Philadelphia collaborating together

1 across nonprofits.

2 Collective Climate is

3 one of them. There are other

4 nonprofits in this room, Every

5 Murder is Real, other nonprofits.

6 We also collaborate with community

7 members. Yes, regular

8 Philadelphians who are equal

9 partners in providing restorative

10 healing circles and resolutions of

11 conflicts and things like that in

12 the neighborhood.

13 Our goal is to cover our

14 city. Right now to do the funding

15 of my organization, MCCP, that's an

16 independent nonprofit, we funded

17 the first three years of the

18 Restorative Cities Initiative and

19 we did that out of pocket. Okay.

20 We're a Black-led philanthropy

21 investing in our own community. So

22 when our philanthropy was engaged

23 with training with people in this

24 room, the DA's Office and many of

1 our nonprofits, we pulled together
2 a collaborative and we funded it
3 ourselves because we weren't able
4 to get funding because we didn't
5 have a track record. Now, we have
6 a track record. Hallelujah. But
7 we don't want the funding. We want
8 everybody else to get the funding.

9 The goal is that our
10 restorative justice practitioners
11 in our city of which there are over
12 100, over 140 we trained. And
13 we're collaborating together
14 through the Wisdom Circle, through
15 all the means we can to provide
16 that safety net.

17 What MCCP doing is we're
18 putting together a structure for
19 that work. We're forming a social
20 service co-op so that work can
21 continue fueled by the community
22 itself in partnership with the
23 School District, the District
24 Attorney, DHS, whoever wants us,

1 but we've got the infrastructure in
2 place.

3 So our foundation funded
4 the first three years of the
5 infrastructure. Guess what? We
6 don't have no more money. Okay.
7 We funded the first three years of
8 an infrastructure to contribute
9 greatly to this recidivism rate.
10 Guess what? We don't have no more
11 money. Guess who needs --
12 Metropolitan Christian Council of
13 Philadelphia. Oh, our budget
14 was -- don't go by our budget
15 because we were underpaying our
16 facilitators. So I don't want to
17 say our budget because we really
18 didn't have a budget. Some people
19 in this room are some of our
20 facilitators.

21 MS. DODD: If I had
22 time, I would have told you
23 restorative justice is about \$8,000
24 a year per person that goes through

1 that process, and that's soup to
2 nuts. And that's looking at how
3 much our office invests, the PD's
4 office might invest and also the
5 restorative justice practitioners.

6 REV. DR. JONES: Yeah.

7 And from a standpoint of worker
8 justice, that's why we're doing the
9 cooperative because we were only
10 able to put out 250 per person to
11 adjudicate or whatever we were
12 doing to -- Jody has the language
13 for that, 338 cases that were
14 referred to us from the DA. And
15 these were felony cases, things
16 from carjacking, things like
17 burglary and we have continued to
18 have the recidivism rates that
19 we're talking about. And this is
20 community-driven. This is not
21 driven with a whole lot of extra
22 support. So imagine what these
23 numbers would look like if we had
24 the ability to fund the nonprofits

1 that do this work.

2 Lastly, I've revised my
3 written response while sending the
4 revision of the written response,
5 but I want to at least share a
6 personal story. I am a mother, I
7 am a wife, and I am a pastor. And
8 I have raised four children, three
9 Black boys who are now Black men.
10 And I've been false -- my husband
11 and I have been resource parents
12 for one, two, three, four, five --
13 five young Black teenagers.

14 And of that number of my
15 sons that were raised from the
16 wound until this day, one of them
17 was impacted by incarceration. Of
18 the young men that came to live
19 with us for Black young men, one is
20 deceased, not by gun violence,
21 hallelujah, but one is deceased and
22 one was incarcerated.

23 I know as a parent, I
24 know as someone who raised children

1 that restorative -- there's a
2 personal cost analysis that has
3 been done that no one's mentioned
4 yet. My brother from NOMO
5 mentioned the \$50,000 per inmate,
6 but another organization did a cost
7 analysis for families in
8 Pennsylvania, a cost analysis and a
9 survey with inmates. And the
10 inmates reported that maintaining
11 close family connections while
12 incarcerated lowers the likelihood
13 of recidivism, that 1 in 3 families
14 goes into debt paying for phone
15 calls and visits to jail.

16 Women of color are most
17 likely to be responsible for
18 incarceration and court-related
19 costs. I'm a witness. We had to
20 come out of our pocket for bail so
21 that those young men didn't have to
22 be waiting for a year or more
23 incarcerated, both my son and our
24 foster son.

1 So the median weekly
2 transportation costs to visit in
3 Pennsylvania, that might not be
4 related directly to State Road so
5 much, but the median weekly cost is
6 \$45 a week, necessary food, hygiene
7 and other personal products have \$1
8 surcharge at the prison commentary.

9 96% of the survey
10 respondents reported relying on
11 loved ones to financially support
12 them while incarcerated. I'm a
13 witness. 71% of those surveyed
14 reported weekly prison costs of
15 over \$50,000 a week. And 84% of
16 the respondents say there were
17 times they couldn't afford to even
18 call home.

19 The survey participants
20 that participated most of them,
21 their income was less than \$24,000
22 a year, but they were contributing.
23 My own son almost lost his wife
24 after three months of

1 incarceration. And my other foster
2 son, my foster son, he was
3 incarcerated for six months, but
4 the probation period caused him to
5 be incarcerated for 14 months
6 because of stupid probation
7 violations that had nothing to do
8 with his offense. It had to do
9 with other stuff. And then he was
10 sent up to Upstate Pennsylvania.

11 So there's a financial
12 burden. And when we look at the
13 respondents, yes, restorative
14 justice often reports much higher
15 victim satisfaction rates compared
16 to retributive justice. The
17 studies show that a majority of
18 victims feel positive about their
19 experience with restorative
20 practitioners and recidivism rates.

21 Research suggests that
22 restorative justice programs can
23 lead to a significant decrease in
24 recidivism rates compared to

1 traditional punitive approaches.

2 Offender perception, studies
3 indicate that offenders often
4 receive restorative justice
5 programs as fairer and more
6 satisfying than traditional
7 criminal justice systems.

8 And there's a lot of
9 statistics, but basically 85% of
10 participating people who've been
11 harmed -- I don't like the term
12 victims, but I was reading someone
13 else's data -- 85% of people who
14 have received restorative justice
15 support have reported satisfaction,
16 that's people who've been harmed.
17 We've talked a lot about the person
18 in jail, but I'm talking about the
19 people who've been harmed.

20 Lastly, we just finished
21 a very high profile situation where
22 the persons were already
23 incarcerated for life as juveniles
24 for terrible, terrible murders and

1 they were average age 16, 17. And
2 we had the opportunity to go inside
3 at the County. We had the
4 opportunity to meet with them and
5 meet with both mothers, mothers of
6 the person who was murdered and
7 mothers of the people who were
8 incarcerated and to allow a human
9 process for folks to be able to
10 talk about the simple question, to
11 hear a mother of a person
12 incarcerated and a mother of a
13 person whose child was murdered
14 both answer the same question, what
15 in the world were you thinking when
16 you did this. And to be in a room
17 with these young meant it was
18 transformative.

19 So this work is work
20 that keeps people out.
21 Organizations like NOMO, I really
22 appreciate what Brother Williams
23 said. We got to do the work on the
24 inside. I agree that we have to

1 tear -- I don't want to say tear
2 down in our current political
3 environment because that's not what
4 we're talking about. But it's time
5 to transform, and that's the work
6 of transformative justice. We want
7 to transform.

8 And there are community
9 partners out there that are
10 championing, some of the folk that
11 you have heard that are organizing
12 as community organizers that we
13 learned as part of POWER, I just
14 needed to say that and part of Live
15 Free so that all of us together --
16 because that's the principles of
17 transformative justice. All of us
18 together create the change that we
19 know our community deserves. We
20 know that we can do better the.
21 Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Wow.

24 MS. DODD: You saved the

1 best for last.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: You
3 are -- you must have been listening
4 to us talk about the conversation
5 sidebar, that one of the things we
6 can never forget are those harmed
7 by crime, not victims, but harmed
8 by crime. And you gave me a
9 flashback in a testimony where I
10 was in a courtroom. It was a
11 homicide case and the accused
12 family was on one side of court,
13 the victim's family was on the
14 other. And that judge said
15 something that was tattooed on my
16 heart and profound.

17 He said, there's only
18 victims here, that everybody here
19 is a victim of this, and that, you
20 know. When he said that, I looked,
21 we have to do something different,
22 we have to do something better. We
23 have to do something to change this
24 paradigm. And I really appreciate

1 you bringing up those who have been
2 harmed. Appreciate it.

3 Are there any questions?

4 Member O'Rourke.

5 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

6 It's incredibly inspiring to hear
7 the promise of and the proof
8 supporting the expansion of
9 restorative and transformational
10 justice practices. Thank you both,
11 Ms. Dodd and Dr. Jones, for the
12 work that you do around these
13 matters.

14 Dr. Jones, can you just
15 put on the record what level of
16 funding would be required to
17 substantially increase the use of
18 restorative and transformative
19 justice --

20 REV. DR. JONES: Over \$4
21 million a year.

22 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

23 Say it one more time.

24 REV. DR. JONES: Over \$4

1 million, roughly \$4 million a year.

2 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: So
3 what we need in order to expand
4 that and get it to be effective is
5 a little bit north of \$4 million
6 per year --

7 REV. DR. JONES: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
9 Not \$8,000 per person per year,
10 right?

11 REV. DR. JONES: Yes.

12 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
13 Thank you very, very --

14 REV. DR. JONES: And the
15 funds is not -- they go to the
16 people who are doing the work.

17 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
18 Gotcha.

19 REV. DR. JONES: So
20 remember who we're talking about.

21 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
22 Absolutely. All right. Thank you
23 very much.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Any

1 other questions -- okay. Oh, we've
2 been here a while.

3 I want to thank you so
4 much for your testimony and for
5 those who had the patience to wait
6 through this. But we were getting
7 so much good feedback, so much good
8 information that my colleagues have
9 committed to entering into the
10 discussion over budget so that this
11 hearing will be a continuation of
12 seeking those answers to the
13 questions posed today. So thank
14 you for your testimony.

15 REV. DR. JONES: You're
16 welcome. I just need to make a
17 correction. That number of 4 is
18 directly related to the work that
19 we've been doing specifically with
20 the District Attorney's Office.
21 There's restorative justice work
22 being done in our School District,
23 being done in our health care
24 systems, Temple University,

1 University of Pennsylvania. So if
2 City Council is considering the
3 network of restorative work that is
4 being done in the city. I
5 recommend you do a study of the
6 costs. And I know the costs are
7 going to be better than what they
8 are without restorative justice.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
10 you. Thank you again.

11 We will now proceed to
12 go next door to talk to anyone who
13 wants to talk to us in public
14 comment. This concludes the
15 business of the Joint Committee --

16 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
17 (Inaudible).

18 THE CLERK: (Inaudible).

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: All
20 right. Let's start. We're going
21 to ask those who are interested in
22 public comment -- was there a list,
23 Ms. Stack?

24 THE CLERK: Yes.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can
2 you call the list.

3 THE CLERK: If everyone
4 could just raise their hand if
5 they're still in the room. I have
6 Nigel Bowe, Kate Mackey, LaTrista
7 Webb and Chris Snyder, if those
8 four can approach.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are
10 they here? Two, okay. Come on up.

11 (Witnesses approached
12 Witness table.)

13 THE CLERK: (Inaudible).

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
15 this will conclude the official
16 part of this hearing of the Joint
17 Committee on Public Safety and
18 Legislative Oversight because our
19 stenographer needs a break. So we
20 will listen to the testimony right
21 here. We'll start here. Thank
22 you. Thank you all for your
23 participation. And you can
24 continue.

1 We might as well sit
2 right where we are. State your
3 name now.

4 MR. BOWE: Good
5 afternoon. My name is Nigel Bowe.
6 I'm the Vice-president of Diversion
7 and Re-entry Services for JEVS
8 Human Services. Thank you,
9 Councilmember O'Rourke and all the
10 members of the Joint Committee on
11 Public Safety and Legislative
12 Oversight, for the opportunity to
13 speak today.

14 Our diversion program at
15 JEVS Human Services offers a
16 research-proven alternative to
17 incarceration. We've been hearing
18 about it all day. The program is
19 called The Choice is Yours, also
20 known as TCY.

21 For more than 10 years
22 we've been working in partnership
23 with municipal courts, judges, the
24 District Attorney's Office and the

1 Defender's Association to divert
2 first-time felony drug offenders
3 from prison. Individuals
4 graduating from this program are
5 also eligible to have their cases
6 expunged if they go one year
7 without a new arrest or conviction,
8 and this is how we have directly
9 impacted on reducing the prison
10 population in the city.

11 We divert individuals
12 from incarceration and then we help
13 connect them to career pathways,
14 high-quality employment training
15 and the support they need to
16 sustain a job, which again we've
17 been hearing about all morning.

18 For those who do not
19 graduate from high school, we also
20 offer the opportunity to earn a
21 high school diploma, not a GED.
22 Last year our diversion program
23 supported more than 150
24 individuals. With more support, we

1 could help more individuals which
2 why we want to expand this program
3 to other types of offenses. This
4 would open the door for us to
5 dramatically impact the number of
6 individuals going into prison.

7 We recently submitted a
8 proposal to PCCD that would support
9 expanding this program to
10 individuals with firearm-related
11 offenses. I'm happy to say that we
12 were awarded that grant and we will
13 start the program asap.

14 Last year just 11% of
15 our individuals who participated in
16 our program were re-arrested
17 compared to the national recidivism
18 rate of 60% or 61%. Our programs
19 work and it saves the City money.
20 It costs about \$5,000 per year per
21 participant for our diversion
22 program. According to Vera
23 Institute, the average cost to
24 incarcerate an individual in

1 Philadelphia is around \$40,000,
2 could be a little more.

3 Finally, reducing the
4 current prison population requires
5 addressing the barriers to
6 successful re-entry, which we've
7 heard a lot about this morning as
8 well. For successful re-entry,
9 it's vital that individuals have a
10 strong support system in place.

11 Our re-entry program is
12 part of this support providing
13 critical services to overcome
14 barriers to re-entry, such as
15 stable housing, employment,
16 education and training. We
17 currently run a program called Get
18 Ready, Get Set, Get Out at CFCF.
19 It is through the Second Chance
20 Act. It's a federally-funded
21 program. We serve individuals that
22 are between 80 to 180 days of being
23 released that have been identified
24 as medium risk of recidivating,

1 that have had medium offenses and
2 charges.

3 We provide post- and
4 prerelease services so individuals
5 that are released are able to come
6 to our program and choose from four
7 tracks, employment, apprenticeship,
8 credentialing and academic upsell,
9 both our re-entry and diversion
10 programs work to reduce the prison
11 population and with greater
12 support, as mentioned earlier,
13 there's an opportunity for us to do
14 more. So I want to thank you for
15 an opportunity to speak today on
16 behalf of the items on your agenda
17 but also on behalf on behalf of
18 JEVS Human Services.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
20 thank you. Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Please state your name
23 and begin your testimony. We will
24 conclude after these two because we

1 have to -- yeah, we have to go
2 across.

3 MS. WEBB: Okay. Hi,
4 Councilman Jones. Hi, everybody.
5 My name is LaTrista Webb. I am the
6 founder and Executive Director of
7 the Elevation Project. We are a
8 re-entry program housed in the 4th
9 District, but we serve all of
10 Philadelphia.

11 I heard a lot of people
12 say a lot of things, but I'm going
13 to wake everybody up and I'm going
14 to start with this. 60% to 65% is
15 the recidivism rate for
16 Philadelphia prisons and state
17 prison system in Pennsylvania.
18 They all both fall between 60% and
19 67%. The Elevation Project has a
20 4% recidivism rate.

21 I heard somebody say we
22 couldn't give numbers. I make sure
23 that we track our data. We track
24 our people from the moment they

1 leave our program. We started
2 tracking data in 2022. We've been
3 around since 2015. The data
4 collection didn't become really
5 important to me until 2022. So
6 from 2022 until date, we have a 4%
7 recidivism rate. We serve about
8 100 people a year. We run a
9 transformative business center
10 where men can come to start and
11 maintain their own business. We
12 take men coming home from state
13 prison as well as State Road.

14 What sets us apart and
15 what I think sets apart every
16 organization that's here, what sets
17 us apart from the DA's Office, the
18 Defender's Association and the
19 prison is that I think all of our
20 programs build relationship. And
21 so, we can talk about closing
22 prisons and we can talk about all
23 this work that we want to do, but
24 if you don't have the ability to

1 build relationships with men and
2 women who are coming home, it's
3 impossible to help them.

4 I heard my brother Dawan
5 talk about giving them a check.
6 But if you still haven't built
7 relationships, most people will
8 wind up down at Sugar House or
9 whatever it's called now and the
10 check will be gone. They will find
11 a way to get it off of that debit
12 card that Councilmember Phillips
13 spoke about. So I'm not saying
14 that you shouldn't put money in the
15 hands of the people, but if you
16 don't connect them to organizations
17 like the Elevation Project that are
18 able to build relationships with
19 people that help them to stay home.
20 Because we talk a lot about keeping
21 people home, but we don't know what
22 it requires for a person to stay
23 home.

24 I am not justice

1 impacted. I've never been to
2 prison. I've never been to jail,
3 never been in handcuffs. Knock on
4 wood I may get out of here. Okay.
5 But my partner has been, right.
6 And so, I think that's what sets us
7 apart from other programs, is that
8 we have that real-life experience.

9 In January -- and I'll
10 end with this. January 18, 2025 we
11 had the opportunity to host the
12 biggest event that the Elevation
13 Project has ever had at Overbrook
14 High School. We had over 800
15 people there, over 250 people meet
16 with a lawyer. And when that event
17 was over, a week later, a week
18 later, a parole agent decided that
19 he was going to violate my partner
20 who had done everything in his
21 power to help the community because
22 of me, and he missed the date to
23 meet with his agent and the agent
24 violated him and they put him on a

1 house arrest bracelet for 30 days
2 after he had served the community.
3 I'm real-life experience
4 that it took everything, I begged
5 him, please just go down there. He
6 said, it's a warrant out for my
7 arrest, you're telling me to go and
8 turn myself in to go to State Road.
9 And I said, I promise you won't go
10 to jail. He said, Trista, you
11 don't know that I'm not going to go
12 to jail. I said, I promise you
13 won't go to jail. But in the back
14 of my mind I really didn't know.
15 But I knew that if he went on the
16 run, life was going to be real hard
17 when you're a public figure and
18 everybody knows where to find you.
19 So he went, he went on
20 house arrest. But those are the
21 issues that people face in the
22 system. And if you don't have a
23 relationship with the organization
24 that can say, it's okay. I tell

1 all my clients, I'm their
2 privilege. Maybe you can't go
3 speak at Council meetings, maybe
4 you can't call Councilmembers,
5 maybe you can't call the Chief
6 Defender, but I can. I'm your
7 access. I'm your privilege, and
8 that's the relationships that
9 organizations build. And that's
10 how the City has a 60% recidivism
11 rate and I have a 4% one because my
12 people can call my phone and I
13 answer. Thank you for your time.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I
16 want to thank -- before you go, I
17 want to thank JEVS. I've been down
18 to South Philly to see what that
19 program meant to the participants.
20 And it is the real deal. They were
21 given skills. They were working on
22 construction skills to be able to
23 have a real life after probation
24 and parole.

1 To you, colleagues, I
2 have yet to see another program --
3 no disrespect to anybody else --
4 better than that. She mentioned
5 Overbrook which is my alma mater.
6 I was there and they were servicing
7 people. But before that, you were
8 in the park on Parkside Avenue
9 during the summer months and there
10 were 300 people.

11 Every time they have a
12 block party -- even before that on
13 Noble Street, every time they have
14 this event, it is 300 people and
15 they can't get to the 301st person
16 because there's not enough lawyers
17 to actually process some of the
18 papers that they had. And these
19 are people that came up to me and
20 I'm like, well, why are you here,
21 are you here for the burger? No,
22 I'm here for the expungement. And
23 I'm like, you know what I mean.

24 And these are pastors,

1 these are neighbors, these are my
2 cousins that I'm like, why are you
3 here. And you didn't know that
4 about them. So when I tell you
5 that there are diamonds out there,
6 it's acres of diamonds, if you
7 would. This is one of them.
8 That's another one. But I've seen
9 an up, close, touch and knew the
10 people that they were helping. And
11 I want you to keep up doing the
12 good work. You don't know this,
13 but I put you in as my budget
14 priority.

15 And I'm hoping that it
16 will be your budget priority.

17 And thank you. Thank
18 you for what you and your partner
19 do. Is he okay?

20 MS. WEBB: He's okay.
21 They took it off yesterday on his
22 birthday.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: I met
24 him as well. They are genuine

1 people and I vouch for them.

2 MS. WEBB: Thank you,
3 sir. I appreciate it.

4 MR. BOWE: Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES:
6 Member Harrity, just in time to say
7 goodbye.

8 All right. Thank you
9 all. Thank you for your patience.
10 We'll be across the hall.

11 (Joint Committees on
12 Public Safety and Legislative
13 Oversight concluded at 1:28 p.m.)

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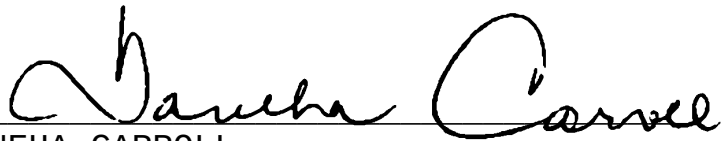
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, hereby certify that the proceedings
and evidence noted are contained fully and
accurately in the stenographic notes taken by
me in the foregoing matter, and that this is
a correct transcript of the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Taneha Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Taneha" and the last name "Carroll" clearly distinguishable.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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transcript does not apply to any reproduction
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direct control and/or supervision of the
certifying reporter.)

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