

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
AND THE HOMELESS

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Wednesday, June 21, 2023
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTION: 200433

1 - - -

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
3 understand that state law requires
4 that the following announcement be
5 made at the beginning of every remote
6 hearing as follows:

7 Due to the current public
8 health emergency, City Council
9 Committees are currently meeting
10 remotely. We are using Microsoft
11 Teams to make these remote hearings
12 possible. Instructions for how the
13 public may view and offer public
14 testimony at public hearings of
15 Council Committees are included in
16 the public hearing notices that are
17 published in the Daily News, Inquirer
18 and Legal Intelligencer prior to the
19 hearings and can be found on
20 PHLCouncil.com. I now note that the
21 hour has come.

22 Cydneya Shearlds, will you
23 please call the roll to take
24 attendance. Members that are in
25 attendance will please indicate that

1 you are present when your name is
2 called. Also, please say a few brief
3 words when responding so that your
4 image will display on screen when you
5 speak.

6 THE CLERK: Vice-Chair Jones.

7 (No response.)

8 THE CLERK: Councilmember
9 Gilmore Richardson.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: Good morning, Madam
12 Chair. Good morning, colleagues. I
13 am present.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
15 morning.

16 THE CLERK: Councilmember
17 Bass.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
19 morning, everyone. I am present.

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember
21 Squilla.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good
23 morning, Madam Chair and colleagues.
24 I'm present.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

1 morning.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember
3 Brooks.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Good
5 morning. I'm present.

6 THE CLERK: Councilmember
7 Driscoll.

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
10 Councilmember Driscoll, are you
11 there?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you. A quorum of the Committee has
15 been established and this hearing is
16 now called to order.

17 This is the public hearing of
18 the Committee on Housing,
19 Neighborhood Development and The
20 Homeless regarding Resolution No.
21 200433.

22 Ms. Shearlds, will you please
23 read the title of the resolution.

24 THE CLERK: Resolution No.
25 200433, authorizing the City Council

1 Committee on Housing, Neighborhood
2 Development and The Homeless to hold
3 hearings on the role and
4 responsibilities of Philadelphia's
5 Landlord-Tenant Officer position; the
6 policies and procedures it manages in
7 the eviction process, particularly
8 around writs of service; and
9 clarifying oversight, ethics, and
10 public accountability for the
11 Landlord-Tenant Office.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Before
13 we begin to hear testimony from the
14 witnesses we have for today, everyone
15 who has been invited to the meeting
16 to testify should be aware that this
17 public hearing is being recorded.
18 Because the hearing is public,
19 participants and viewers have no
20 reasonable expectation of privacy.
21 By continuing to be in the meeting,
22 you are consenting to being recorded.

23 Additionally, prior to
24 recognizing Members for the questions
25 or comments they have for witnesses,

1 I will note for the record at this
2 time that we will use the chat
3 feature available in Microsoft Teams
4 to allow Members to signify that they
5 wish to be recognized. In order to
6 comply with the Sunshine Act, the
7 chat feature must only be used for
8 this purpose.

9 And I want to acknowledge the
10 presence of Councilmember Driscoll.
11 Good morning.

12 Before we begin, I would like
13 to make a few remarks about the
14 legislation before this Committee
15 today. We are gathered here this
16 morning to shine some light on the
17 Landlord-Tenant Officer, a private
18 unelected individual turning a profit
19 by catapulting residents out of their
20 homes.

21 Philadelphia is the only city
22 in the Commonwealth that empowers a
23 private citizen to execute evictions.
24 And because the Landlord-Tenant
25 Officer pockets the profit, each time

1 a resident is evicted by one of her
2 deputies, she is incentivized to keep
3 prices lower and serve writs faster
4 than the Sheriff's Office. So it's
5 no wonder an overwhelming majority of
6 landlords use the Landlord-Tenant
7 Officer's services.

8 There is no written contract
9 between the Municipal Court and the
10 Landlord-Tenant Officer. There is no
11 public bidding process. No standard
12 for how to execute evictions. No
13 mandatory training or law enforcement
14 certification for deputies and no
15 accountability and oversight.
16 Evictions conducted by the Landlord-
17 Tenant Officer and her deputies
18 follow a harmful formula that
19 traumatizes neighbors without
20 life-saving resources when they need
21 them the most.

22 Here's how evictions are
23 typically executed here in the City
24 of Brotherly Love and Sisterly
25 Affection. A contractor armed with a

1 gun shows up at the tenant's door
2 without a uniform and without
3 warning. The contractor commands the
4 tenant to grab whatever they can
5 within 10 minutes before they are
6 locked out of their homes forever.

7 Families desperately run
8 around grabbing medication,
9 identification and other essentials.
10 If they have time, they feed their
11 pets and call their loved ones to
12 figure out where they will sleep that
13 night. After 10 minutes, the armed
14 contractor and landlord change the
15 locks and depart without giving the
16 family a single resource or telling
17 them where they can go for help. The
18 contractor moves on because time is
19 money. And the more evictions they
20 complete that day, the more they
21 profit.

22 When I first heard a
23 constituent recount this process, it
24 left me thunderstruck. And while
25 there are many flaws with how the

1 Landlord-Tenant Officer executes
2 evictions, the one that gives me the
3 most pause is that unlike other
4 cities, the families become evicted
5 without warning. This means
6 evictions almost always happen many
7 months after the last communication
8 between the court and the tenant. So
9 when the deputy landlord-tenant
10 officer knocks on their door, they
11 are completely caught offguard.

12 Similarly, we have no
13 guidelines in place that institute a
14 standardized eviction procedure or
15 policies requiring deputy
16 landlord-tenant officers to complete
17 firearm safety training,
18 de-escalation training,
19 harm-reduction training or any sort
20 of commonsense law enforcement
21 certifications our first responders
22 participate in.

23 And it was in this context
24 that an armed security contractor
25 showed up at Angel Davis' door

1 shortly after 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday,
2 March 29th. Angel had spent months
3 in court with her landlord over major
4 repair issues and unpaid rent. Her
5 mother told us Angel requested an
6 extension on her eviction and was not
7 expecting to be locked out. And
8 Angel's live-in partner remarked that
9 they had no idea what was going on
10 when the armed contractor showed up
11 unannounced that terrible morning.

12 Confusion ensued. And a few
13 minutes later, the deputy landlord-
14 tenant officer shot Davis in the head
15 in her own home. After days in
16 critical condition, Angel Davis
17 thankfully survived. But she
18 continues to suffer from serious
19 brain injuries and is not healthy
20 enough to be with us here today.

21 City Council has an obligation
22 to examine the cause of this
23 inexcusable tragedy and to make sure
24 that it never happens again. That is
25 why Councilmember Brooks and I have

1 spent the last few months taking a
2 deep dive into how Philadelphia
3 conducts evictions. What we have
4 found is a violent, traumatic and
5 dangerous system that demands reform,
6 because structural issues with the
7 Landlord-Tenant Officer began long
8 before the shooting of Angel Davis.

9 In fact, the resolution to
10 authorize this hearing was passed by
11 City Council three years ago after we
12 heard widespread concern about the
13 behavior of the Landlord-Tenant
14 Office. Regrettably, the pandemic
15 delayed the hearing. And before
16 Councilmember Brooks and I even took
17 office, Mayor Kenney's Task Force on
18 Eviction Prevention and Response
19 critiqued the Landlord-Tenant
20 Officer's refusal to notify tenants
21 about their eviction ahead of time
22 and called for reform.

23 Simply put, all of us, the
24 City, City Council and the Court have
25 been complicit in allowing this

1 deeply flawed and deeply harmful
2 institution to operate for far too
3 long. It is past time that we show
4 our residents that we are listening
5 by substantially reforming how we
6 execute evictions. I applaud
7 President Judge Dugan and Judge Wolf
8 for beginning an internal process to
9 reform the Landlord-Tenant Office.

10 City Council and the Court
11 worked hand-in-hand to create the
12 nationally acclaimed Eviction
13 Diversion Program, which continues to
14 keep thousands of residents in their
15 homes. I look forward to expanding
16 our partnership to include
17 transforming how we execute evictions
18 in our City. And I hope this hearing
19 proves to the public that City
20 Council is committed to
21 seeing (inaudible) take place. We
22 will not allow economically violent
23 evictions to turn physically violent
24 again.

25 I see Councilmember Brooks

1 would like to make some opening
2 comments as well.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
4 you so much, Chair Gauthier, for
5 hosting this meeting.

6 Forcing a person from their
7 home is an area of grave public
8 concern that will have lifelong
9 impact on tenants, their children and
10 their communities. If an eviction
11 must take place, it must be done in a
12 manner that is safe, well-regulated
13 and accountable to the public,
14 transparent and integrated with the
15 delivery of City services.

16 Before we delve into what
17 reforms are needed, I want to address
18 the big underlying question as we
19 discuss lockouts and why doesn't
20 everyone leave before the lockouts,
21 before the locks are changed. There
22 are two main reasons for this
23 question: First, for many the answer
24 is that they do not even know that
25 the court has ordered their eviction.

1 We will hear today about
2 tenants who are paying their rent and
3 thought they were current, who
4 believe they were on a payment plan
5 and who thought their eviction was
6 postponed where a private security
7 officer certainly shows up to their
8 home and forces them out. The only
9 notice Angel Davis might have
10 received that she was going to be
11 evicted after five months of a court
12 battle was a simple letter in the
13 mail, if she received that at all.

14 These are not tragic outliers.
15 This is a systemic problem. The
16 Mayor's Eviction Task Force found
17 that half of illegal evictions in
18 Philly were a result of a default
19 judgment which happens when tenants
20 are not present for a hearing. This
21 bears repeating, half of all
22 evictions in Philadelphia are by
23 default.

24 A report from the Sheller
25 Center of Social Justice at Temple

1 University School of Law analyzed 430
2 petitions from Philadelphia tenants
3 who lost their cases because they
4 missed their hearing. 1 in 5 cite
5 the fact that they hadn't received a
6 notice for the hearing. The second
7 reason is that folks do not leave
8 their homes before the lockout, is
9 that there's simply nowhere to go.

10 While it had once been known
11 for low-income renters to find
12 another apartment a month or two,
13 this is no longer the case. Rents in
14 our City have skyrocketed and
15 paychecks and Section 8 have not
16 caught up yet. There are simply not
17 enough beds in the shelters for those
18 who need them, and this crisis is
19 even more pronounced from many of the
20 folks we're going to hear from today.
21 Those with disabilities, those with
22 medical needs and the elderly need to
23 be able to go to a place that meets
24 their basic needs.

25 If we want to ensure that what

1 happened to Angel Davis never happens
2 again, if we want to address the
3 dangerous, traumatic and deeply
4 harmful way that evictions are
5 conducted in this City, there are a
6 few standards we must meet: If an
7 eviction must take place, it must be
8 done in a way that is, one, safe;
9 two, well-regulated and accountable
10 to the public; three, transparent;
11 and four, integrated with the City's
12 delivery of services.

13 The first one, evictions must
14 be safe. Tenants and their
15 attorneys, health care aides and
16 social service workers need to know
17 when they will be locked out of their
18 apartments. As we will hear, tenants
19 in other cities across Pennsylvania
20 and across the country know what day,
21 even what time their eviction will
22 take place, and Philadelphians
23 deserve the same.

24 Extensive and frequent
25 training is another basic requirement

1 for a safe eviction. In the rest of
2 the Commonwealth, constables who
3 conduct evictions receive 80 hours of
4 training, including on use of force
5 and firearms before they conduct
6 evictions. In Pittsburgh, for
7 example, those who do evictions need
8 certification for firearms and annual
9 training. In Philadelphia, there's
10 no requirement for the
11 Landlord-Tenant Officer or any
12 contractors they hire to undergo
13 training of any kind. There is no
14 specific training on the use of force
15 or certification for the use of
16 firearms.

17 Second, the eviction system
18 must be accountable to the public and
19 well-regulated. The Landlord-Tenant
20 Officer and their contractors act
21 under the authority of their
22 government and receive millions of
23 dollars in payments for conducting
24 the grave public act of removing
25 someone from their home. And yet

1 there is no written contract
2 governing their actions. There's no
3 standard of how they will conduct
4 their evictions and there's no
5 defined method to hold a Landlord-
6 Tenant Officer or their contractors
7 accountable to the public.

8 There is no fixed budget or
9 salary for the Landlord-Tenant
10 Officer. And so, the private entity
11 has a financial incentive to conduct
12 as many evictions as possible and as
13 quickly as possible. In
14 Philadelphia, a single Landlord-
15 Tenant Officer conducts all evictions
16 that are not done through the
17 Sheriff's Office and localities
18 across the country, including
19 Pittsburgh and New York, where there
20 are several options of organizations
21 that conduct evictions, all under the
22 umbrella of numerous regulations and
23 standards. Having multiple options
24 is what makes people accountable.

25 Third, an eviction process

1 must be transparent to all. New York
2 City has a 236-page manual for those
3 who do evictions. Allegheny County
4 has a 77-page manual. Philadelphia
5 does not have any written guidelines.
6 Cities like New York City and
7 Pittsburgh have many rules and
8 regulations specifically concerning
9 situations where the tenants have
10 disabilities, medical needs or
11 children. This allows tenants, their
12 advocates, health care workers and
13 families to know and plan for an
14 eviction.

15 Last, the eviction process
16 must be integrated with the City's
17 delivery of services. Evictions are
18 violent, traumatic and destructive
19 for tenants, for their children and
20 for their communities. If people are
21 going to be forced from their home
22 under the power of the government, we
23 must also connect them to services
24 that our City provides for them.

25 As you will hear, in New York

1 City social workers are informed of
2 evictions of those with needs in
3 advance, and the social workers are
4 there when the eviction takes place.
5 In Philadelphia, a social worker
6 should accompany those who do the
7 lockouts so we can ensure that
8 families are connected to all the
9 resources that are available to them
10 in the moment, especially at a moment
11 of great need.

12 I want to commend President
13 Judge Dugan and Judge Wolf for
14 starting a process to reform the
15 Landlord-Tenant Office. I look
16 forward to working with the Court to
17 create a program that becomes a
18 national model, just as we did with
19 the Eviction program that saves the
20 homes of thousands of Philadelphians
21 each year.

22 I want to thank the tenants,
23 the advocates and Angel Davis and her
24 family who have all done so much to
25 push for reform. I want to thank all

1 the testifiers today. And I know how
2 devastatingly hard it is to share
3 personal stories about losing a home,
4 and we also appreciate the trust of
5 Xavier Carpin and Mark Person to
6 share their words about what the
7 experience was like.

8 Thank you so much, Chair
9 Gauthier.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
11 you, Councilmember.

12 Are there any other members of
13 the Committee that would like to give
14 opening remarks?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
17 With that, Ms. Shearlds, would you
18 please call the first panel of
19 witnesses we have to testify this
20 morning.

21 THE CLERK: The first panel is
22 Xavier Carpin, Sherry Thomas, Mark
23 Person, Shamus Brennan and Jacob
24 Speidel.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Xavier

1 Carpin, are you there and connected?

2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Do we
4 know if we have Xavier on?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
7 Sherry Thomas, are you there and
8 connected?

9 THE CLERK: Councilmember,
10 somebody will be reading Xavier's
11 testimony on his behalf.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
13 Is that person ready?

14 THE CLERK: Yes. It's Nora
15 Kasper.

16 MS. KASPER: Hi.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hi,
18 Nora. Thank you so much for being
19 here. Can you please state your name
20 for the record and proceed with
21 Xavier's testimony.

22 MS. KASPER: Yes. So my name
23 is Nora Kasper. I'm a law student
24 and I summer intern with AIDS Law
25 Project of Pennsylvania. I'm going

1 to going to be reading Xavier
2 Carpin's testimony. He's a client of
3 AIDS Law Project who was unable to
4 attend today, and a written copy of
5 the testimony has been circulated to
6 the Committee.

7 So I will begin reading: This
8 February I was locked out of my
9 apartment in Philadelphia where I had
10 been living for four years and eight
11 months. I was at home on a Monday
12 morning when there was a banging on
13 my apartment door. When I answered,
14 a large man was there with the
15 building manager. He was an officer
16 serving me with eviction papers.

17 And as he yelled out loud, you
18 are being evicted, here's a copy of
19 the order, and you've got 10 minutes
20 to gather some things and get out.
21 And you have 30 days to get all of
22 your things out of here, but you must
23 leave now. I did not understand why
24 this was happening. I'd been working
25 with my property manager to get

1 caught up on my rent and did not have
2 any warning that this was coming.

3 Because I was completely
4 unprepared for this situation, I was
5 in a state of shock filled with so
6 much confusion, I immediately started
7 trying to put out food and fresh
8 litter for my cats. I did not know
9 this was coming and was worried they
10 would be locked inside for a long
11 time. I had no time to gather my
12 belongings and just grabbed what I
13 could. I felt a constant pressure to
14 move quickly.

15 While the officer did not
16 touch me, he did come very close to
17 me and constantly reminded me that I
18 only had a few minutes left. After
19 they changed my locks, I waited for
20 my friend to drive back from the
21 Northeast to help me because I had
22 nowhere to go. I've been living in
23 my friend's basement since then
24 trying to get myself organized and
25 ready to find a new place, and it's

1 been hard finding a new place with my
2 fixed income unless I rent a room in
3 one of these illegal houses.

4 That same day I contacted a
5 lawyer and they explained what had
6 happened. I had been to court in
7 January 2022 and made a payment plan
8 with the landlord's lawyer.

9 Apparently I was given a notice in
10 March 2022 that I was being locked
11 out, but I was still paying my rent
12 and there did not seem to be an issue
13 with the landlord until December.

14 I thought the only payment
15 plan was done and I was trying to
16 work it out with the landlord. If I
17 had known they were going to lock me
18 out, I could have been better
19 prepared to fix this matter with them
20 or find another apartment. Thank
21 you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
23 you so much for the testimony. And
24 please share our gratitude with
25 Xavier for sharing his story with us.

1 Sherry Thomas, are you there
2 and connected?

3 MS. THOMAS: Yes, I'm here.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please
5 state your name for the record and
6 proceed with your testimony.

7 MS. THOMAS: Sherry Thomas
8 with the Legal Clinic for the
9 Disabled. Thank you for the
10 opportunity to submit testimony today
11 regarding Resolution 200433. I
12 submit this testimony in my capacity
13 as the Director of Housing at the
14 Legal Clinic for the Disabled,
15 otherwise known as LCD. LCD is a
16 direct legal services agency serving
17 low-income individuals living with
18 physical and mental health
19 disabilities and is a partner in the
20 Philadelphia Eviction Prevention
21 Project.

22 If you could imagine with me
23 for a minute the last time you moved
24 homes. Think of everything you
25 needed to do to make the move go

1 smoothly. You likely spend
2 significant time managing your things
3 over the course of days or weeks.
4 You might have hired movers. You may
5 have enlisted friends or family to
6 help and rented a truck.

7 Even with ample time,
8 resources and predictability, moving
9 is a stressful event. Now, imagine
10 doing all of those things while also
11 managing the fragile medical health
12 of yourself, a spouse or a child, not
13 knowing the day or time that the move
14 will happen and not knowing who will
15 be coming to your door. For a
16 significant number of renters in
17 Philadelphia, this is not a fictional
18 scenario but one which they have
19 experienced.

20 Forceful removal from one's
21 home is a distressing event for
22 anyone. But for someone living with
23 a disability, the challenge is
24 multiplied. Someone with a
25 disability may have durable medical

1 equipment, such as a wheelchair, a
2 walker or a commode that must be
3 transported with them. They may be
4 confined to a hospital bed, which
5 requires extra care when moving out
6 of a property. Taking multiple
7 prescription medications is the norm
8 if you live with a chronic condition,
9 and those medications are necessary
10 and must come with you if you are
11 moving.

12 If you are not living with a
13 disability, you might not think about
14 these things. But from our
15 experience with the Landlord-Tenant
16 Office, it is not transparent or
17 predictable what the office's
18 policies or procedures are when
19 handling a tenant with a disability.
20 This lack of transparency and
21 predictability from the
22 Landlord-Tenant Office is acutely
23 felt by those with disabilities.

24 So little information is
25 shared by the Landlord-Tenant Office

1 on how they do business, so what I
2 share today is information gathered
3 from our clients who have experienced
4 eviction firsthand as well as what
5 LCD attorneys have seen from our own
6 interactions with the Landlord-Tenant
7 Office. This lack of transparency
8 and predictability is most glaring
9 with the internal policy that the
10 office will not share the date or
11 time a lockout is scheduled despite
12 the medical needs or special
13 circumstances of the tenant.

14 On multiple occasions, we have
15 presented facts, specific
16 circumstances to the Landlord-Tenant
17 Office to get a date or time for the
18 lockout so we may prepare our clients
19 to leave the property with everything
20 they need. For someone with a
21 disability, leaving the property does
22 not just mean physically removing
23 themselves and their equipment, but
24 it also means arranging a safe way
25 for that equipment to be transported

1 or stored once they are out of the
2 property. We take for granted that
3 someone will be able to physically
4 carry whatever they need on their
5 person when they are evicted.

6 I represented a tenant who was
7 locked out her property without
8 medical equipment. She had double
9 knee replacements and was getting
10 around her home very slowly with the
11 assistance of a walker and an
12 assisted rolling chair. She had two
13 cats. One morning after she had just
14 woken up and while still in her
15 pajamas, she heard loud banging at
16 her door. When she answered, she was
17 confronted by the Landlord-Tenant
18 Officer who told her that she was
19 being evicted and that she had 10
20 minutes to get her things. She had
21 no idea what was going on.

22 It turns out that her landlord
23 got a default judgment against her
24 without her knowing. He told her she
25 did not need to attend her hearing

1 because he would be withdrawing her
2 case. Instead he took a default
3 judgment and continued to collect
4 rent from her while he scheduled a
5 lockout. She not receive any writs
6 until the day that an officer showed
7 up at her door and she did not know
8 there would a lockout.

9 She had no choice but to leave
10 with the clothes on her back. She
11 did not have time to gather her
12 equipment and she was aided out of
13 the home by nearby neighbors who had
14 seen everything unfold from her
15 porch. Her cats were put out and she
16 still does not know what happened to
17 them. That day was the last day that
18 she saw her pets. Thankfully, she
19 had someone who was able to drive her
20 to a hotel. For weeks, she stayed at
21 an extended stay hotel without her
22 walker and chair because the landlord
23 then refused access without
24 additional payments. It was only
25 after she got a lawyer that she was

1 able to return to the property.

2 Last fall LCD had a senior
3 citizen client who was incredible
4 medically fragile. LCD attempted to
5 connect the tenant to Social
6 Services. However, one of the first
7 questions we were asked was the date
8 or time that the lockout would occur.
9 Despite requests to both the landlord
10 and Landlord-Tenant Office, this
11 information was not shared with us.
12 The tenant stayed in limbo and in
13 fear not able to leave on his own
14 because of how fragile he was, but
15 also not knowing when he would be put
16 out on the street.

17 He did not have good shelter
18 options due to his health and he was
19 vulnerable to scam landlords in
20 desperation to leave the property
21 before an officer showed up. Last
22 week I received a call from a tenant
23 inquiring about when her eviction
24 might be. She has an autistic child
25 and she wants to make sure that she

1 is out of the property before an
2 officer comes to her door and
3 compromises her child's health.
4 Under the Landlord-Tenant Officer's
5 current property she will not be able
6 to get this information.

7 Another client left the
8 property in such a hurry that she did
9 not have all of her prescription
10 medications. By the way, most
11 tenants who have shared their
12 experiences with us have expressed
13 they get approximately 10 to 15
14 minutes to vacate the property with
15 everything they need.

16 Personally I was with a tenant
17 one day when the Landlord-Tenant
18 Officer arrived at her home. I was
19 present with her as she frantically
20 spoke with her husband and children
21 over the phone. She was with me.
22 They were at home while their locks
23 were being changed. I could hear
24 everything that was happening. I can
25 attest that the entire process took

1 about 10 minutes as well.

2 These illustrative examples
3 are people who are home or expect to
4 be home when the Landlord-Tenant
5 Officer arrives. This does not
6 account for people who are not in the
7 home when a lockout occurs. For
8 them, it is impossible to have what
9 they need unless they are carrying
10 all of their equipment, devices and
11 medication all on their person.

12 Someone who needed to leave the home
13 for a medical appointment, grocery
14 shopping or any number of daily
15 activities are then at the mercy of
16 their landlord's schedule and
17 discretion to gain access to get into
18 the home.

19 Simple change into this one
20 policy would increase transparency
21 and predictability, reducing harm to
22 many Philadelphians. It may not be
23 possible to entirely eliminate the
24 harm that comes from the traumatic
25 process of eviction, as it is an

1 inherently violent process to
2 forcibly remove someone from their
3 home.

4 However, there are several
5 ways for the Landlord-Tenant Office
6 or another entity to practice harm
7 reduction, only one of which was
8 highlighted above. Transparency,
9 predictability and accountability
10 through written policies, procedures,
11 consistent and frequent training is
12 possible. Ultimately, this call for
13 transparency, accountability and
14 regulation is to ensure people are
15 still treated with dignity and
16 respect for their humanity,
17 especially when they experience one
18 of the most distressing events of
19 their lives. Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you so much for your testimony and
22 for your work.

23 Mark Person, are you there and
24 connected?

25 MR. PERSON: Yes.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Are
2 you connected on more than one
3 device? That might be the reason for
4 the echo.

5 MR. PERSON: Yes. Good
6 morning, Ms. Gauthier and Ms. Brooks.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
8 morning.

9 MR. PERSON: My name is Mark
10 Person and I was evicted in February
11 of this year. We had fell out due to
12 a lease agreement that was to my
13 advantage and my landlord moved to
14 evict me. I reached an agreement
15 with my landlord to make payments and
16 to get extermination done at the
17 property. It was a really bad
18 infestation after the apartment
19 flooded (inaudible) maintenance.

20 My landlord scheduled an
21 extermination and did not give me
22 notice. I am a senior citizen with
23 disabilities and needed time to
24 prepare for the extermination. The
25 home wasn't fully prepared for the

1 extermination because of that. Based
2 on me supposedly not being prepared,
3 my landlord decided to move forward
4 with the eviction and was given
5 permission by the court to do that.

6 The whole time I thought we
7 were going to work something out, but
8 instead I was evicted. That was on
9 February 6th and I was locked out on
10 February 14th. The day of the
11 lockout I received a message from a
12 neighbor that the Sheriff was coming.
13 He told me they were knocking on
14 doors. And 10 minutes later I got a
15 knock on the door.

16 The big guy said he was a
17 sheriff and I had to leave the
18 premises. He never showed ID, just
19 came in and said what about -- and I
20 said, what about my stuff. And he
21 said, get what you need and go. I
22 was not dressed at the time nor aware
23 they were coming or receiving notice
24 other than from my neighbor that day.
25 As I was trying to figure out what to

1 take, he looked at his watch and said
2 I had 10 minutes and that he had
3 others to serve, and I had to hurry
4 and be out.

5 It was no notice or courtesy,
6 just him standing with his hand on
7 top of his pistol like a cowboy
8 western. He seemed to become
9 agitated when I asked where am I to
10 go. Then a guy came and started
11 changing the locks. He never gave me
12 a time frame after that. He just
13 said I had to hurry up and get some
14 things and get out because he had two
15 other people to serve.

16 So I put on my clothes and
17 grabbed some papers. And me and my
18 son left -- my cat, wondering what
19 our next move was. I'm a senior. I
20 have bad knees and a bad shoulder. I
21 can't move around that easily and he
22 was telling me to get my things and
23 go, but I was flustered and stressed
24 and really had no time to prepare.

25 I didn't know what to take

1 with me. I had to rush out of there
2 and I had to get rid of my cat, and
3 that was the last day I saw him. And
4 basically, that's what happened. And
5 I'd like to thank you for giving me a
6 chance to share this with you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
8 you for sharing your story with us.
9 I'm really sorry that happened. I'm
10 sorry that you were separated from
11 your pet, and we appreciate you
12 coming and sharing your story for the
13 benefit of others.

14 MR. PERSON: Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Shamus
16 Brennan, are you there and connected?

17 MR. BRENNAN: Good morning.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
19 morning. Can you --

20 MR. BRENNAN: Shamus Brennan.
21 I'm a staff attorney for the AIDS Law
22 Project for Southwest Pennsylvania.
23 Thank you for this opportunity to
24 share the experiences of some of my
25 clients and the interactions that

1 they've had with the Landlord-Tenant
2 Officer system. These stories will
3 highlight how tenants are not given
4 useful information and often the
5 information they are given is wrong.
6 Tenants do not know what the
7 Landlord-Tenant Officer is going to
8 do. They do not have any meaningful
9 opportunity to assert their rights or
10 to plan for a (inaudible) lockout.

11 One of my clients was being
12 evicted from the home where he lived
13 with his family. And after the
14 matter was resolved in court, the
15 Landlord-Tenant Officer scheduled a
16 lockout. This lockout was scheduled
17 two weeks earlier and was permitted
18 by the terms of the settlement
19 agreement, the judgment by agreement,
20 that he had reached with his
21 landlord.

22 So I reached out to the
23 Landlord-Tenant Officer who claimed
24 that the court had instructed her
25 "that said eviction can go ahead."

1 And only through the intervention of
2 the plaintiff's attorney were we able
3 to have the Landlord-Tenant Officer
4 follow the terms of the judgment by
5 agreement. Unfortunately, because of
6 the secrecy surrounding the office,
7 there's no way to know what
8 instruction the court provided in
9 this case or why the Landlord-Tenant
10 Officer had scheduled a lockout that
11 would violate the terms of the
12 settlement agreement.

13 This kind of error is not
14 unusual. It was only identified
15 because the attorney checked the list
16 of lockouts scheduled for the
17 following week. That list which is
18 shared with the Managing Director's
19 Office is the main window we have to
20 what the law office is planning to
21 do. It's not widely advertised or
22 widely shared. Tenants who do not
23 have attorneys do not even have the
24 minimal warning that it provides.

25 There was a document that is

1 supposed to give that warning. It's
2 called the writ of possession. These
3 writs are often inaccurate. Every
4 writ of possession I have seen served
5 by a Landlord-Tenant Officer,
6 includes the language "You are hereby
7 notified to vacate the premises, and
8 then it lists the address and you
9 have 11 days of written notice, i.e.,
10 no later than a date that is filled
11 in by (inaudible)."

12 It's important to understand
13 that the 11 days and the date are
14 handwritten. The writs of possession
15 are served by the Landlord-Tenant
16 Officer mechanically. They always
17 list 11 days even when the judgment
18 or the judgment by agreement has a
19 different lockout date. This is
20 particularly a problem where tenants
21 have agreed to a payment plan or
22 other agreement that gives them a
23 possibility of an open-ended tenancy,
24 but it's not a guarantee that this is
25 going to end in a lockout.

1 Because the Landlord-Tenant
2 Office is providing inaccurate
3 information on the writ of
4 possession, they're creating a
5 needless fear and unjustifiable
6 confusion for tenants. This lack of
7 notice is particularly harmful to
8 tenants who need assistance or live
9 with disabilities.

10 I remember one of my clients
11 was being evicted because of a
12 conditions issue in her apartment and
13 she was struggling to pack because
14 she was an amputee and did not have
15 the properly fitted prosthesis. She
16 was on the one hand searching for
17 accessible housing with a self-care
18 voucher and on the other I was
19 begging for more time from the
20 landlord's attorney.

21 Ultimately, a team of lawyers
22 and social workers were supporting
23 her in this, but we were not told of
24 the scheduled eviction until the day
25 of the lockout. On that day the

1 average outside temperature was 32
2 degrees. My client spent the next
3 few days shuffling from agency to
4 agency, often being required to wait
5 outside of shelters while they try to
6 find a long-term placement that
7 accommodated her medical needs. A
8 year and a half later she still lacks
9 permanent housing and is living in a
10 shelter. My client and her supports
11 were only given 24 hours' notice to
12 lockout. If she had had even a few
13 days more warning, she would not have
14 been impacted and had those waits in
15 the cold.

16 The process of physically
17 evicting someone is inherently
18 violent even if no one is injured.
19 And because we do these actions --
20 excuse me. Because we take these
21 actions as a society through our
22 courts, this is a form of official
23 violence. And it really (inaudible)
24 people accountable and transparent.
25 The current system is not any of

1 those things, but it doesn't have to
2 be that way.

3 My practice does extend a bit
4 beyond Philadelphia, and there are
5 better ways. If we had a public and
6 accountable method for executing
7 governance, we could (inaudible) for
8 notice, for accommodating the needs
9 of vulnerable people is simply
10 defining what weather is too severe
11 to leave someone on the street.

12 What we heard in discussing
13 alternatives is there's no option of
14 going to the Sheriff's Office. They
15 couldn't possibly handle it. I don't
16 know if they are the answer. But I
17 have seen them serve writs of
18 possession. Last summer one of my
19 clients was served by the Sheriff's
20 Department. He was taken by surprise
21 because the claim that had been filed
22 against him was not in the name of
23 the landlord that he knew. It was in
24 the name of a company he had never
25 heard of.

1 The deputy handled the
2 situation very professionally and
3 took the time to explain to my client
4 that if he had questions, he could
5 contact the court. That interaction
6 made a lasting impression on my
7 client. He remembers that deputy's
8 name. He knows who served him and
9 who took the time to explain what was
10 happening.

11 It may be that the Landlord-
12 Tenant Officer does the same thing,
13 but I've never heard about it. But I
14 can't help to think the difference
15 between the structures of the office
16 where one is motivated by moving
17 quickly and earning a profit and the
18 other is performing a public
19 function.

20 In Upper Darby, I had a client
21 who was served (inaudible) by a
22 constable. Unfortunately, my client
23 was out of town at the time, but the
24 deputy called him, found his phone
25 number and made the call to make

1 arrangements for a pet that was in
2 the home. Again, I've never heard of
3 a Landlord-Tenant Officer calling a
4 tenant during a lockout.

5 Clearly there are humane ways
6 to handle these situations. We can
7 trust that it will happen in a
8 culture of profit and secrecy. Thank
9 you for the time of the Committee.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
11 you so much for your testimony and
12 for making those important
13 comparisons between the Landlord-
14 Tenant Office and the Sheriff's
15 Office Mr.

16 Jacob Speidel, are you there
17 and connected?

18 MR. SPEIDEL: Yes, this is
19 Jacob Speidel.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
21 you. Please state your name for the
22 record and proceed with your
23 testimony.

24 MR. SPEIDEL: Thank you,
25 Councilmembers, for this opportunity

1 to speak. My name is Jacob Speidel,
2 and I'm the Director of Tenant Rights
3 at Senior Law Center. At Senior Law
4 Center, we seek justice for older
5 adults by using the power of the law
6 (inaudible) advocating on local,
7 state and national levels. We're a
8 nonprofit organization in
9 Pennsylvania whose mission is
10 dedicated solely to providing legal
11 services to older persons.

12 In our work, we assist older
13 people facing evictions and other
14 threats to safe shelter. We also
15 represent low-income older landlords
16 trying to evict tenants who have
17 abused them. We appreciate the
18 Council taking the time to consider
19 how the City's process for locking
20 out tenants during an eviction is
21 working and how it can be improved to
22 better serve tenants, landlords and
23 the community.

24 And I really echo the
25 priorities mentioned by Councilmember

1 Brooks that evictions must be safe,
2 accountable and well-regulated,
3 transparent and integrated with the
4 delivery of services. As an example
5 of what older tenants in Philadelphia
6 are facing, we recently (inaudible)
7 an older tenant, was locked out
8 without his medications.

9 After the lockout, he asked
10 the landlord to let him back into the
11 property to get his medications. The
12 landlord didn't respond. This was
13 causing a significant danger to his
14 health. The Landlord-Tenant Officer
15 should have a policy requiring
16 tenants to be allowed sufficient time
17 to gather their medications at the
18 time of a lockout.

19 We also often get calls from
20 tenants who have been locked out and
21 did not have adequate notice, and
22 this may sound familiar. What I will
23 describe is a different tenant for
24 (inaudible) you've heard previously,
25 but it's a similar problem. So we

1 recently spoke with a tenant who came
2 from one day and had been locked out
3 unexpectedly.

4 It turns out that back in
5 February 2022 this tenant signed a
6 judgment with an agreement for a
7 payment plan. The tenant didn't have
8 a lawyer and the court judgment said
9 the tenant could stay on the property
10 as long as they made payments. On
11 March 23, 2022 that tenant was served
12 with the writ of possession, saying
13 the tenant had to be out in 11 days.

14 These writs of possession are
15 regularly served on tenants who do
16 not actually have to move out because
17 they're making payments as agreed
18 under a payment plan. The landlord
19 told her to ignore the writ because
20 she was making the payments. Then
21 over a year later in April of 2023
22 the tenant came home and had been
23 locked out with no further warning or
24 service of a writ of possession.

25 The tenant didn't have a

1 lawyer so there was no lawyer to
2 check the very limited list that at
3 least some attorneys have access to.
4 The time she was locked out in April
5 2023, again, the last notice she had
6 received a pending lockout was over a
7 year earlier in March of 2022 and
8 said that a lockout would occur in 11
9 days.

10 This is why writs should
11 become stale after a defined time. A
12 landlord should not be able to serve
13 a writ and then sit indefinitely and
14 then schedule a lockout over a year
15 later because they have decided that
16 they now want the tenant out. Now,
17 supposedly this tenant had been
18 mailed affidavit of breach last
19 October six months before the
20 lockout, but she did not receive
21 that.

22 Senior Law Center also
23 represented a bed-bound older tenant
24 who had limited support from family
25 and friends and little access to

1 technology. She had a home health
2 aide who delivered a money order from
3 her to her landlord every month to
4 pay her rent. Then several months in
5 a row the aide stole the money order.
6 The landlord filed an eviction case.
7 We were able to negotiate an
8 agreement where the tenant would pay
9 ongoing rent and have half a year to
10 get rental assistance to cover the
11 back money from when her money was
12 stolen by her aide.

13 Unfortunately, she was unable
14 to pay the rent the next month even
15 though she had the money to pay
16 because there was an issue with the
17 electronic payment system and she
18 couldn't leave her bed to go pay the
19 landlord herself. The landlord filed
20 a breach, scheduled a lockout. Our
21 office was able to petition for an
22 emergency delay of the lockout and we
23 were able to help the tenant with the
24 process of making the payments and
25 prevent the lockout.

1 This case highlights a number
2 of issues with the lockout process,
3 the lack of transparency as to the
4 day and time of the lockout means
5 that medically vulnerable older
6 tenants can't make plans to prevent
7 lockouts. And if they need to move,
8 it is harder to manage that planning,
9 per the bedbound or disabled older
10 tenant managing a move on short
11 notice requires a great deal of
12 planning. Many older tenants have
13 medical devices that require special
14 handling and they are reliant on
15 friends or family or especially
16 moving companies to take time to
17 arrange.

18 The Landlord-Tenant Officer
19 should inform tenants in advance of
20 the actual day and time the lockout
21 to make it more possible for them to
22 move smoothly. And the Council
23 should require the Landlord-Tenant
24 Officer to have publicly-available
25 written policies like other cities do

1 addressing how particular situations
2 will be handled.

3 We would also like to
4 highlight that especially in larger
5 buildings with special entrances when
6 there is the writ of possession
7 served saying you have to be out in
8 11 days, which may or may not be
9 true, that notice is often served by
10 posting. We have seen many cases
11 where a notice is posted at a door
12 that the tenant doesn't use so they
13 have no idea the lockout is scheduled
14 at all.

15 Finally, pets are very
16 important for many of the older
17 tenants we serve, and we have had
18 many cases where an older tenant was
19 locked out and their pet was locked
20 in the home with no food or water
21 available for the pet. We had one
22 case recently where a tenant was
23 locked out. Their dog was removed to
24 an animal shelter. When the tenant
25 made it to the shelter to retrieve

1 their dog, the dog had already been
2 killed by the shelter. Another
3 tenant's cat was left in a locked-up
4 apartment for days until the tenant
5 was able to persuade to let him back
6 in to collect his cat.

7 We urge the Council to
8 consider requiring rules for how pets
9 are to be handled by the Landlord-
10 Tenant Officer. In addition,
11 information about the date and time
12 of a lockout would help tenants make
13 arrangements for their pets. Imagine
14 if somebody showed up at your home
15 and said you had 10 minutes to get
16 everything you need and to round up
17 your pets to get them out of the
18 home.

19 We continue that support, all
20 the proposals that our fellow
21 advocates have brought forward. We
22 hope that highlighting how the
23 current system is especially
24 difficult for older tenants helps the
25 Council craft reforms. Thank you for

1 your time.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
3 you for that important testimony and
4 for your work.

5 Councilmember Brooks, do you
6 have questions for the panel?

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Yes, I
8 do.

9 I have one specific question,
10 and this is open to any of the
11 panelists. In your experience, how
12 have City services been integrated
13 into the eviction process and what is
14 it like for tenants to try to access
15 the much-needed services like housing
16 or medical resources as they go
17 through the eviction process?

18 MS. THOMAS: I'll start.
19 So -- hold on. I'm getting an echo.
20 Hold on one second. Okay. So at LCD
21 our experience has been that they're
22 not very well-integrated. We find
23 that it's difficult to figure out
24 which City agencies are responsible
25 or have the resources available to

1 our clients. I think one of the
2 things that we've run into as legal
3 service providers is that we're legal
4 service providers, a staff of
5 lawyers. We do -- a lot of our
6 agencies are in the process of hiring
7 social workers and having them on
8 staff, but as it sits right now,
9 there isn't a lot of integration
10 between the tenants that we see and
11 the agencies that they should be
12 connected to.

13 We find that it's -- one of
14 the things that it's lacking is the
15 extra help that our clients may need,
16 you know, to fill out paperwork, to
17 get to places in person. There's a
18 few agencies where you must go in
19 person to intake, and we find that to
20 be difficult for other clients. And
21 our attorneys do as much as we can
22 and wear those different hats, but in
23 our experience the integration leaves
24 a lot to be desired.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: (Muted).

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: You're
2 on mute, Councilmember Brooks.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
4 you so much for that.

5 Is Mr. Person still online?

6 MS. THOMAS: He is. Let me
7 just get him on for you. Hold on one
8 second.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Hello,
10 Mr. Person.

11 MR. PERSON: Yes, Ms. Brooks.
12 It's Mr. Person.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
14 Mr. Person, same question, when you
15 were experiencing this lockout
16 eviction, what City services were
17 available to you and who helped you
18 kind of access or gather the support
19 from the City as you were going
20 through this process?

21 MR. PERSON: Well, pretty much
22 the only person I had was Ms. Thomas
23 here because I wasn't allowed, you
24 know, I tried to find different
25 things. I went to my daughter's,

1 which was not enough space for me. I
2 stayed in a van that I rented with my
3 stuff. I actually slept in there. I
4 went to a shelter which was a heck of
5 an experience. But as far as help,
6 there wasn't too much.

7 In fact, the owner, he seemed
8 to have a lot of influence on a lot
9 of things and I ran into a lot of
10 roadblocks. Even now it's been
11 mentally, physically, it's been very
12 trying. And like I said, the
13 resources that I went to there was
14 limited help. I at the time the
15 stuff was going on, I reached out to
16 Councilman Thomas's, Curtis
17 Thomas(sic) is his name, his office.
18 And he helped what he could, but they
19 already had what they were going to
20 do. It was like no help, you know.

21 Like I said, leaving my cat,
22 it's funny. I miss him the most. He
23 went through hell. He ran through
24 that house and tore up and -- I mean,
25 it's hard to explain. I wouldn't

1 wish this on my worst enemy going
2 through this process with nobody to
3 help, turn to. You don't want to put
4 that burden on family members, you
5 know. You really feel alienated, you
6 know.

7 Like I said, I went through a
8 lot of mental stress not realizing my
9 other injuries I had due to this.

10 And my doctor was telling me this is
11 kind of normal because you don't
12 realize like your physical things
13 because of this. I'm just like, you
14 know, if it wasn't for this law
15 office, I don't know what I would
16 have did.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
18 you so much, Mr. Person for sharing
19 your story.

20 Councilmember Gauthier, I
21 don't have any more questions.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
23 you, Councilmember.

24 I have two questions for the
25 legal services partners on the panel.

1 Have we seen anything like this
2 10-minute sort of allowance for
3 people to get their things and move
4 out of their apartments anywhere?
5 Does that happen anywhere else as far
6 as you know?

7 MS. THOMAS: Honestly,
8 Councilmember Gauthier, I do not know
9 how much time folks get in other
10 counties.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Jacob.

12 MR. BRENNAN: No. I would
13 have the same answer that I don't
14 know how much time people have in
15 different jurisdictions. I would
16 also emphasize it's only 10 minutes
17 if you're home when they come to lock
18 you out. If you're out at work or
19 you're out getting dialysis, you're
20 at an appointment, you come home and
21 you are locked out, you have 0
22 minutes to get anything.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 It just seemed incredibly inhumane
25 and like a practice we should outlaw

1 right away. So thank you for that.
2 And I was just wondering about what
3 other people or other municipalities
4 do.

5 My second question is around
6 this sort of writ by judgment. It
7 also sounds like in many of the
8 testimonies that this is being abused
9 to get an eviction ruling with people
10 not even being aware that the ruling
11 happened. Is there some sort of fix
12 we should also make to this process
13 as it relates to how it happens in
14 the courts that would help with this
15 issue?

16 MR. BRENNAN: Thank you,
17 Councilmember. Someone else
18 mentioned earlier the possibility of
19 making the writ stale after a certain
20 period, and that would go a long way
21 towards preventing, just
22 incentivizing landlords from serving
23 writs prematurely. Right now the
24 practice is to seek a writ as soon
25 they are able, writ of possession,

1 that is the first writ, so that they
2 can move forward with a lockout as
3 quickly as possible if they decide to
4 get one. So putting a time limit on
5 how long that first writ is valid
6 would go a good way to make it have
7 less as a part of the practice.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Should
9 there also be -- and this is for
10 anyone on the panel who can answer.
11 Should there also be some kind of
12 reform to the amount of judgments
13 that are sort of placed on tenants
14 because they did not show up at court
15 for whatever reason, whether they
16 could not make it to court or didn't
17 have an -- or were told by someone
18 erroneously that they didn't have to
19 go to court, that this also seems to
20 be a part of what's happening here?

21 MR. BRENNAN: Yes. I think
22 the problem of the high number of
23 default judgments being issued is
24 inextricably linked to the quality of
25 services being provided in

1 Philadelphia. There's one company in
2 particular for which I have seen
3 numerous outright false claims of
4 service being made, personal service
5 being made on people who are
6 incarcerated at the time, people
7 whose descriptions are wildly at odds
8 with their actual appearance, someone
9 who is in their 70s being described
10 as being 20. These are accepted
11 without any second thought by the
12 court. There is no scrutiny of
13 affidavits of service, and the same
14 people who sign those affidavits
15 continue to make them every day.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
17 Go ahead.

18 MS. THOMAS: I would agree
19 with that. Mr. Spiedel highlighted
20 about the writs being able to be
21 posted to doors. Affidavits of
22 service are service that can also be
23 posted. And so, we have received
24 calls from people who said they have
25 not known about the complaint and

1 it's because it was posted on a door
2 that they don't use.

3 I think the other reform here
4 is after default judgment is entered
5 there's a mailing that goes out and
6 that mailing is very nondescript and
7 doesn't really explain what's going
8 to happen. So it's easy for people
9 to see that and not really understand
10 what's going on.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
12 you.

13 Are there any other questions
14 or comments from members of the
15 Committee for this panel?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
18 There being none, Ms. Shearlds, will
19 you please call the next panel to
20 testify.

21 THE CLERK: Kyle Webster, Leah
22 Goodridge, Nikita Salehi-Azhan.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Kyle
24 Webster, are you there and connected?

25 MR. WEBSTER: Yes, I am.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Can
2 you please state your name for the
3 record and proceed with your
4 testimony.

5 MR. WEBSTER: Absolutely and
6 thank you. My name is Kyle Webster.
7 I am the Vice-president of Housing
8 and general counsel of Action
9 Housing. Action Housing is the
10 largest affordable housing nonprofit
11 in Pennsylvania. While we do some
12 work statewide, our footprint is
13 primarily in the Southwestern
14 Pennsylvania region with about 85
15 percent of our work in Allegheny
16 County where Pittsburgh sits due to
17 our being founded by Richard Mellon
18 and David Lawrence, two of
19 Pittsburgh's most historically
20 prominent business leaders and
21 political leaders respectfully.

22 Action Housing is a developer,
23 program administrator, asset manager
24 and property manager. It is in this
25 last category that we are sometimes

1 evictors. As Chief Counsel for the
2 organization, I have oversight over
3 how we handle eviction process and
4 often lead the efforts myself. I
5 think it's notable to say at this
6 point it appears I am the only
7 landlord attorney that is testifying.
8 If that's helpful in any way, I'm
9 happy to speak to that in addition to
10 my expertise in Pittsburgh.

11 I am also actively involved in
12 housing civilization and eviction
13 prevention efforts and had the
14 privilege of being 1 of 5 attorneys
15 asked to sit on the Working Group
16 convened by the Allegheny County
17 Court of Common Pleas five years ago
18 to establish our centralized Housing
19 Court and redevelop our eviction
20 process.

21 I was asked to come here today
22 to discuss how Allegheny County
23 handles orders of possession. I am
24 not an expert in Philadelphia's
25 policies or procedures and I have

1 never been engaged in evictions of
2 any sort in Philadelphia. So I
3 cannot draw parallels but can offer
4 you what we do and hopefully allow
5 you to make comparisons yourselves
6 based upon other testimony today.

7 I want to start by being clear
8 that an eviction, no matter how well
9 executed, is a traumatizing and
10 dehumanizing process for the tenant.
11 It can similarly be traumatizing for
12 the evictor but in our current system
13 where housing, even governmentally
14 subsidized housing, is governed the
15 free market and capitalistic ideals
16 is the only legal cure to breaches of
17 the lease contract most commonly
18 through failure to pay.

19 It is the only civil breach of
20 a contract claim in Pennsylvania
21 where the standard and routine
22 procedure for enforcement involves an
23 armed individual showing up at the
24 person's home and forcibly escorting
25 them out with their belongings.

1 Allegheny County is not perfect in
2 how we handle evictions and lockouts.
3 Mistakes are made, processes can be
4 flawed and inconsistencies exist in
5 how things play out, often depending
6 upon where you are in the county
7 and/or what judge you are in front
8 of.

9 Our process in Allegheny
10 County is as follows: Once an order
11 of possession is issued, the landlord
12 makes payment to the court for
13 execution of the order. At the
14 Magisterial District Court level,
15 this execution is handled by the
16 constable. And if the matter has
17 been appealed to the Court of Common
18 Pleas, it is handled by the sheriff.

19 The constable or sheriff will
20 post on the door of the unit for the
21 external lock entrance of the
22 building in which the unit exists 10
23 days prior to the potential lockdown.
24 This allows the tenant to still pay
25 and stay up until the date of the

1 lockout. Best practice in the County
2 requires proper notice to include the
3 date and time of the anticipated
4 lockout after the 10-day period
5 passes. This does not always happen
6 but commonly does, especially in the
7 district that sees the most evictions
8 and the most lockouts.

9 On the day of the lockout, the
10 Sheriff will arrive in full uniform
11 and the constable is permitted to
12 arrive in plain clothes but must have
13 on their clearly visible badge and
14 must identify themselves. A
15 representative for the landlord meets
16 with the constable or Sheriff and the
17 lockout begins with a knock on the
18 door and a clear identification of
19 who is present.

20 There are also current
21 conversations around offering or even
22 requiring a mental health
23 professional to assist in more
24 complex lockout situations. While
25 this is not currently the practice in

1 Allegheny County, any conversation
2 around making the process better and
3 safer for all involved should
4 consider this much-needed policy
5 addition.

6 The tenant is then asked to
7 leave the property voluntarily by the
8 constable or Sheriff and the locks
9 are then changed and belongings are
10 removed. This scene can be chaotic
11 and stressful for all involved, so
12 our local policy mandates a clear
13 understanding of who is present and
14 what role they play to ensure that it
15 is as safe and orderly as possible.

16 In that regard, the individual
17 typically enforcing the lockout is
18 the constable. The constables
19 undergo extensive training and are
20 held to the standards outlined in the
21 constable handbook, which as was
22 referenced earlier is a 77-page
23 guidebook that clearly outlines
24 expectations across the many tasks
25 they're responsible for in the County

1 to include lockouts.

2 Their mandatory training also
3 includes, amongst other things,
4 de-escalation and proper firearm
5 handling training. Things like
6 proper notice, clear announcement of
7 who a public official is and proper
8 training are easy, obvious elements
9 of a comprehensive local landlord-
10 tenant policy. However, there are
11 many more things that can and should
12 be considered that I'm happy to
13 discuss and would welcome the
14 opportunity to advise on.

15 Evictions are easily my least
16 favorite part of my job, even the
17 most justified situation. I know
18 that I am causing the individual who
19 has the right to housing to
20 potentially face being unhoused.
21 This action should not also
22 imminently risk a tenant's ability to
23 exist due to an improperly handled
24 eviction.

25 I am hopeful that landlord

1 attorneys like myself continue to be
2 brought to the table alongside
3 policymakers and tenant advocates to
4 create comprehensive and humane
5 answers to the complex issues caused
6 by the current reality of evictions.
7 Thank you for the opportunity to
8 speak on this matter.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
10 you so much for coming and sharing
11 with us. As we know, evictions are
12 always going to be traumatic, but it
13 sounds like you all have a lot of
14 model policies that we should be
15 looking to implement here in
16 Philadelphia, so thank you so much.

17 Leah Goodridge, can you please
18 state your name for the record and
19 proceed with your testimony.

20 MS. GOODRIDGE: Hi. I'm Leah.
21 Can you hear me?

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
23 (Nodded affirmatively).

24 MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay.
25 Perfect. Thank you. So I'm Leah

1 Goodridge. I'm from Mobilization for
2 Justice. I'm testifying jointly with
3 my colleague Nikita Salehi-Azhan.

4 Nikita, are you here?

5 MS. SALEHI-AZHAN: Yes, I'm
6 here. Good morning, everyone.

7 MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay.

8 Perfect. So I'll tell you a little
9 bit about Mobilization for Justice,
10 which is the organization where we're
11 from. Mobilization for Justice we
12 envision a society in which there's
13 equal justice for all. With that in
14 mind, we believe that a holistic
15 approach is necessary to disrupt
16 systemic injustices that exacerbate
17 the problems created by poverty.

18 So in sum, Nikita and I are
19 both social justice movement lawyers
20 and we represent one of New York's
21 most vulnerable populations,
22 low-income tenants at risk of
23 eviction. A question we ask our
24 clients, if evicted where will you
25 go. It's often met with a dazed look

1 that reveals the answer nowhere.
2 Evictions are violent in many ways.
3 They are physically violent. Many
4 evictions have resulted in death as
5 seen when a tenant died by gunfire in
6 Seattle. And according to a recent
7 report published by Dr. Russell
8 Weaver at Cornell University, higher
9 rates of eviction correlate with more
10 crime.

11 Evictions are also emotionally
12 and mentally violent as well. As
13 many people have testified from their
14 personal experiences, that is also
15 backed by data and research.
16 Evictions cause depression and
17 trauma, especially in children. I
18 could go on and on and on, but I
19 think that it's clear from the
20 testimony thus far about the impact
21 of evictions.

22 So what Nikita and I want to
23 do is compare in essence
24 Philadelphia's eviction process to
25 New York. We are in New York. And

1 so, we want to just also kind of
2 frame the conversation by saying that
3 our job is to prevent evictions, so
4 we in no way, shape or form are
5 saying that New York's eviction
6 process or that there should be an
7 eviction process, number one, but
8 that New York's eviction process is
9 perfect or something to be modeled.
10 Our ideal is that there be no
11 evictions entirely because they're
12 just a violent process.

13 However, that being said, we
14 don't want for people to get harmed
15 or die. And so, we would like to
16 provide a little bit about how New
17 York's eviction process goes, the
18 marshal process, and just provide
19 some insight into things that tenant
20 advocates have advocated for
21 successfully to change, to make the
22 process better and some pitfalls
23 along the way. So I'll let Nikita go
24 forward.

25 MS. SALEHI-AZHAN: Hi. Good

1 morning, everyone. Thank you for
2 that introduction, Leah. Good
3 morning. My name is Nikita Salehi-
4 Azhan. I'm a housing attorney and
5 tenant advocate at Mobilization
6 Justice, Inc. in New York City. And
7 as Leah stated, I'm going to be
8 comparing and contrasting the
9 different policies and procedures
10 surrounding the lockout processes in
11 Philadelphia and New York.

12 Through this side-by-side
13 analysis, I will be exposing the
14 shortcomings that are inherently
15 present in both processes, but are
16 noticeably more prominent in
17 Philadelphia and having contributed
18 to the recent eviction-related crimes
19 in the City. As a tenant advocate I
20 believe as some of the other
21 panelists have mentioned, I also
22 believe that any lockout system
23 should be, one, publicly accountable
24 with meaning for regulation; two,
25 transparent with clear, public and

1 written policies; three, predictable;
2 four, involve rigorous and frequent
3 training; and five, be resource-
4 driven. So the lockout process
5 should be integrated within the
6 City's delivery of services for those
7 who are displaced.

8 Now, some of the specific
9 differences that should be noted
10 between the New York City and
11 Philadelphia lockout processes
12 include clear notice of eviction. So
13 in Philadelphia, many tenants report
14 that they don't even know that they
15 had an eviction case filed against
16 them, let alone that they lost the
17 case by default, let alone that they
18 will be locked out.

19 By contrast, New York does
20 require clear proof of eviction by
21 conspicuous placement on the tenant's
22 doorstep. I know that is not always
23 followed through in a lawful manner,
24 as many of our clients would contest,
25 but that is our policy. With regards

1 to window of lockout timing, in
2 Philadelphia the lockout often
3 happens many months after the writ of
4 possession is served as some of the
5 other panelists have explained. And
6 tenants who do not have an attorney
7 who can call the Landlord-Tenant
8 Office have no way of knowing when
9 this will even be. Even when a
10 tenant's attorney calls the Landlord-
11 Tenant Office, they often do not get
12 any useful information about when the
13 lockout will occur.

14 Now, one of the biggest
15 contrasts is in New York the eviction
16 can happen any time in the next month
17 while the warrant is still valid, and
18 tenants and tenant advocates can call
19 the City Marshal that is assigned to
20 them to see where their place is in
21 the queue for the following day.
22 This short notice that is available
23 to the tenant has been shown to
24 (inaudible) impact on the City
25 Marshal's safety, as I want to

1 stress.

2 With respect to written
3 guidelines, Philadelphia has not
4 written policies of any sort for the
5 Landlord-Tenant Officers to follow or
6 for tenants to refer to. Conversely,
7 New York City has a 236-page
8 Marshal's Handbook, which might not
9 be very easy to find on the
10 Department of Investigation but is
11 there, including clear policies about
12 what to do if there are any children
13 in the home, if there are any elderly
14 or disabled people, et cetera.

15 With regards to level of
16 integration services such as APS,
17 there is no coordination between
18 services and lockout processes in
19 Philadelphia. However, in New York
20 City we do have the policy stating
21 that the City Marshal must inform APS
22 or other appropriate social welfare
23 agencies providing assistance to the
24 occupants at least 24 hours in
25 advance of the new eviction date so

1 that the social welfare agency may
2 send a representative to meet the
3 Marshal at the eviction site to
4 provide assistance to the occupants.

5 So in conclusion, although New
6 York City and Philadelphia's city
7 marshal policies have many gaps and
8 gray areas that arguably need
9 improvement for a more accountable
10 lockout process, as a tenant advocate
11 we believe that Philadelphia has more
12 heavy lifting to do to ensure that
13 the process is afforded to its
14 citizens with safety, dignity and
15 transparency. Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
17 you so much. It's so valuable to
18 hear you make that comparison in a
19 very detailed way between what's
20 happening in New York and what's
21 happening in Philadelphia. And I
22 agree with both of you that we should
23 be trying to avoid evictions and
24 prevent evictions.

25 But to the extent that they

1 have to happen, people should be
2 treated humanely. It's not okay to
3 treat people like they are disposable
4 just because they don't own property
5 or land. So thank you so much, and I
6 look forward to incorporating a lot
7 of these policies and how we move
8 forward as a city.

9 Councilmember Brooks.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
11 you so much, Chair Gauthier.

12 And thank you, Leah and
13 Nikita, for sharing how you guys are
14 doing it, right, and how we can get
15 better and there are some lessons
16 learned. So I just want to thank you
17 for that.

18 But my question is for
19 Mr. Webster: As a landlord, how do
20 you view the regulations and
21 transparency that are baked into
22 Allegheny County's eviction process?

23 MR. WEBSTER: It is helpful.
24 I will say it's not perfect. So the
25 best practices to name a date and

1 time often, we'll find that a
2 constable can be late. The constable
3 can sometimes even call us, like
4 he'll say 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday and
5 then 3 o'clock rolls around and they
6 call us and say, actually I'm not
7 going to get to it until tomorrow,
8 which we can work with but it does
9 mean that we have a staff member who
10 was there all day waiting for the
11 constable, which can be a drain on
12 our resources of trying to do other
13 things around -- housing evictions is
14 not our primary thing. It's
15 providing housing. So it's not
16 perfect.

17 I will be honest. It sounds
18 like in Philadelphia the landlord
19 doesn't have to meet the person for
20 the lockout, which seems odd because
21 the locks are generally changed and
22 the landlord is who would initiate
23 that happening, so that is a little
24 confusing to me. But it would
25 also -- I just couldn't imagine

1 dealing with that scenario honestly.

2 We need to know when we're
3 supposed to be there because we need
4 to be a part of that lockout. That's
5 part of landlord accountability. And
6 also, we want to ensure that the
7 property is maintained in the lockout
8 as best as possible. The timing also
9 has made it so that we have had the
10 privilege of being able to contact
11 family and friends of a tenant if
12 there's a unique health crisis or
13 other issue that we're concerned
14 about to try to ensure that they can
15 be present to assist.

16 So I think it is a much more
17 advantageous thing to be able to have
18 at least a ballpark of when the
19 timing is. The most it's ever
20 delayed is generally 24 to 48 hours
21 notice. Though that's rare. It also
22 does sound like you all incentivize
23 overpacking your schedule with the
24 Landlord-Tenant Officer. That's not
25 how it works with the constable,

1 which I think is also advantageous.

2 So we've had the constable
3 sometimes where there is a clear
4 mental health crisis where the
5 constable will hang out with us for a
6 couple of hours as we try to make
7 sure that the tenant's safety is
8 achieved in the context of the
9 lockout. And if we have to engage
10 mental health experts, if we have to
11 resolve crisis situation, et cetera,
12 the constable will gladly stay and
13 see the eviction to its conclusion
14 regardless of what length of time it
15 takes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
17 you so much, Mr. Webster, for sharing
18 how it's done in Allegheny County and
19 kind of shedding the light on how we
20 definitely need to improve the way
21 services are here in Philadelphia.

22 Madam Chair, that's the end of
23 my questions.

24 MS. GOODRIDGE: If I may --
25 oh, sorry.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Go
2 ahead.

3 MS. GOODRIDGE: I just want to
4 briefly also add New York's process
5 with marshals has evolved over time
6 after a series of unfortunate
7 incidents. So for example, two of
8 the more notable ones are where two
9 Black women died separately, one many
10 years ago, Eleanor Bumpers, who was
11 in City housing, the Housing
12 Authority or public housing agency,
13 and a second, Debra Danner, which was
14 in 2016, and both of them had mental
15 health issues.

16 And so, it's so critically
17 important that during these processes
18 there are resources because evictions
19 are violent and even people without
20 struggling with mental health
21 processes will react very
22 differently. And so, what many
23 tenant advocates have fought for is
24 for in these processes to have there
25 to be the adult protective services

1 for people who are well, you know,
2 well-advised and well-trained in
3 dealing with people who are going
4 through a mental health crisis and
5 also clearly who won't further bias,
6 right, because these are Black women
7 and it was very pretty clear, at
8 least from the tenant advocacy
9 perspective, that perhaps the
10 violence would not have been the same
11 if the tenant had mental health
12 crises but were, for example, White.

13 And so, these are all the
14 things that tenant advocates and the
15 tenant movement have fought for, to
16 have, first of all, no evictions.
17 But if we were to, then at least to
18 provide resources for folks to be
19 better-trained to do so.

20 And I just want to end by
21 thanking Councilmember Brooks for
22 inviting us here. We really
23 appreciate it for reaching out to
24 have our perspective. We really
25 appreciate it. Thank you.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: You're
2 quite welcome.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Can
4 you clarify? Did you say that the
5 mental health professional currently
6 is sort of a part of the process?

7 MS. GOODRIDGE: You know, if
8 there's a tenant, part of the New
9 York City eviction process which
10 again came as a result of tenant
11 advocates pushing for this, is if
12 there's a tenant and there is
13 awareness that they have mental
14 health issues, then what's called
15 APS, the Adult Protective Services,
16 will get involved. We call them and
17 they will get involved. That means
18 that they will be part of the
19 eviction process.

20 And again, these agencies are
21 not perfect. So anyone listening to
22 us in New York will -- none of these
23 agencies are perfect that I've
24 mentioned, but I guess what I'm
25 saying is these are at least the

1 minimum to think about.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

3 And that's if a tenant -- if

4 someone --

5 MS. GOODRIDGE: It's physical
6 or mental health actually because
7 we've actually had a lot of tenants
8 who they are literally like, you
9 know, scheduled to get evicted and
10 they physically are disabled and
11 they're like where am I going to move
12 all of my furniture to, I can't go
13 anywhere, I'm homebound. And so, the
14 Adult Protective Services will enter
15 for those issues as well. So
16 basically to prevent ableism in the
17 eviction process.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: And
19 who makes that assessment on whether
20 a tenant would need help with mental
21 health during an eviction?

22 MS. GOODRIDGE: A few players.
23 One is the tenant will have gone
24 through court and sometimes when
25 they're interacting in court with

1 either the court attorney or the
2 court personnel or the judge, they
3 might make that assessment if the
4 tenant has an attorney or has met
5 with an attorney to represent them,
6 that attorney or advocate or
7 paralegal might make that assessment
8 and call APS, and then APS will take
9 it from there, which again they're
10 not -- I want to stress they're not
11 perfect.

12 But it is something at least
13 to think about, you know, for
14 evictions because it's -- otherwise
15 then you have folks who do have
16 disabilities and there's a high -- we
17 don't want a high likelihood of them
18 being harmed or even worse killed.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
20 Thank you.

21 And I have a question for
22 Mr. Webster. From a landlord's
23 perspective, do you think that there
24 are benefits to landlords that are
25 derived from having a process that is

1 more transparent and more humane for
2 tenants as compared to what you've
3 heard in Philadelphia and what would
4 you, you know, how would you describe
5 those benefits, if so?

6 MR. WEBSTER: Absolutely. And
7 I want to give the same disclaimer
8 that Leah gave. Pittsburgh is not
9 perfect. It is far from perfect. A
10 lot of people that I work with would
11 cringe to know that I am testifying
12 in favor of our process. That being
13 said, from a landlord perspective
14 landlords care predominantly about
15 money, profits, et cetera. From an
16 efficiency standpoint, having a
17 predictable process is more efficient
18 and therefore generates less staff
19 time, generates less overhead on our
20 part.

21 Being candid, when we talk
22 mental health crises or other issues,
23 a tenant who is forcibly removed has
24 the potential to cause substantial
25 damage to our property, has the risk

1 of putting our staff at potential
2 harm. And so, having a predictable
3 process that also integrates mental
4 health resources can also protect our
5 property. It can protect our staff.
6 It can ensure that it is an
7 advantageous process for everyone as
8 best as possible given how
9 problematic the process is in a
10 baseline.

11 So, yes, I do think that
12 there's some substantial benefits.
13 It protects the property. It
14 protects the individuals, and it also
15 just allows for better and more
16 predictable planning.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
18 you so much.

19 Are there additional questions
20 or comments from members of the
21 Committee for this panel?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 There being none, Ms. Shearlds, will
25 you please call the next panel to

1 testify.

2 THE CLERK: Andre Del Valle
3 and Mark Zucker.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Andre
5 Del Valle, are you there and
6 connected?

7 MR. DEL VALLE: I am. Good
8 morning, Councilmember.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
10 morning. Please state your name for
11 the record and proceed with your
12 testimony.

13 MR. DEL VALLE: Sure. Good
14 morning, Councilmember Gauthier and
15 members of Housing, Neighborhood
16 Development and The Homeless
17 Committee. My name is Andre
18 Del Valle. I'm the Vice-president of
19 Government Affairs for the
20 Pennsylvania Apartment Association
21 representing just under 285,000 units
22 and 300 property management companies
23 across the Commonwealth. Locally
24 here in Philadelphia we represent
25 over 38,000 units and 49 property

1 management companies.

2 I'd like to thank the
3 resolution sponsor Councilmember
4 Kendra Brooks and her team for their
5 willingness to engage with our
6 association for having an open
7 dialogue on the resolution before you
8 today. We greatly appreciate that
9 opportunity to testify today and look
10 forward to cross-collaborating.

11 It should be known that our
12 apartment owners and managers do not
13 seek out opportunities to evict
14 residents, which is why the
15 Pennsylvania Apartment Association
16 practically worked on policies like
17 the nationally recognized Eviction
18 Diversion Program here in
19 Philadelphia and even joined the
20 White House Eviction Reform Summit as
21 we all work to prevent housing
22 instability across the Commonwealth
23 and our country.

24 Many of our members prior to
25 and during the pandemic proactively

1 met with residents who were facing
2 financial hardships and began
3 creating and to this day continue to
4 make payment plan agreements. And
5 once the American Rescue Plan funds
6 were made available, those very same
7 housing providers urged tenants to
8 apply for these funds made available
9 by President Biden's Administration.

10 These emergency rental funds
11 assisted landlords who had not
12 received payments in over two years
13 while also assisting tenants by
14 assuring their arrears were paid off.
15 Last budget cycle we advocated
16 alongside several City departments
17 and groups like Community Legal
18 Services and the Philadelphia Bar
19 Association for local rental
20 assistance funds to be made available
21 and were successful in getting \$45
22 million in local rental assistance,
23 which benefits both tenants and
24 housing providers to prevent housing
25 instability across the City of

1 Philadelphia.

2 As we know, the eviction
3 process is both costly and
4 protracted, and there's no economic
5 incentive for these owners and
6 managers to file for an eviction
7 except as in last resort when a lease
8 or contract is breached. It's simply
9 bad business to have vacant units or
10 high rates of evictions in our
11 buildings and industry, which is why
12 nationally we're running at a 96 to
13 98 percent occupancy rate among our
14 multi-family housing industry.

15 Evictions are often saw in
16 cases of nonpayment of rent,
17 instances when a resident is
18 jeopardizing the safety of others or
19 disrupting other residents through
20 nuisance behavior. Today's hearing
21 examines the specific issue of
22 evictions and the role of the
23 Landlord-Tenant Officer. And let me
24 be clear, evictions are a troubling
25 experience for all parties involved.

1 However, they are a necessary part of
2 managing an apartment community.

3 Rental housing providers
4 engage in the eviction process as
5 their only legal remedy to remove a
6 resident that has breached a lease
7 and lawfully regained possession of
8 their property. Here in Philadelphia
9 evictions occur after a housing
10 provider has already tried to
11 negotiate with the resident and now
12 legally must go through 30 days of
13 mediation with third-party mediators
14 through the Eviction Diversion
15 Program trying to find common ground
16 to prevent an eviction.

17 There are notices sent for
18 mediation, notice of rights, writs
19 and a number of other outreach pieces
20 to the resident all prior to an
21 eviction being carried out. Now,
22 we're not here to speak on behalf of
23 the Landlord-Tenant Officers, the
24 courts, the firms. However, I can
25 say that many housing suppliers

1 across the City do rely on the
2 Landlord-Tenant Officers who are not
3 sworn enforcement officers and unlike
4 other Pennsylvania jurisdictions as
5 mentioned before, the courts allow a
6 private attorney appointed by the
7 President Judge known as the
8 Landlord-Tenant Officer to enforce
9 the eviction order summoned from
10 these cases.

11 This is due to expedited
12 processes, reduced calls in
13 comparison to City departments.
14 While other counties have sheriffs,
15 deputies and constables that perform
16 evictions in certain orders in these
17 cases, Philadelphia primarily relies
18 on these Landlord-Tenant Officers or
19 the Sheriff's Department.

20 Many housing providers across
21 the City of Philadelphia have shared
22 several concerns about the potential
23 increased calls, process delays and
24 other challenges of the eviction if
25 the process -- on the eviction

1 process if the intent was to transfer
2 this process through the Sheriff's
3 Department due to staffing shortages.
4 Obviously based on today's hearing,
5 there are growing concerns with the
6 landlord-tenant officers and their
7 current process as you've heard from
8 previous speakers.

9 The Pennsylvania Apartment
10 Association welcomes any opportunity
11 to continue to work with this
12 Committee and all stakeholders who
13 would be impacted by any potential
14 changes to the existing structure,
15 whether that is local with
16 Councilmember Brooks and yourself,
17 Chairmember, as well as the state
18 level with Senator Nikil Saval and
19 Senator Street who have also
20 expressed concerns.

21 Today's and what I hope will
22 be future conversations does not have
23 to be an either-or but rather an and
24 conversation on how we can all work
25 with housing suppliers and find

1 innovative solutions within the
2 current infrastructure all while
3 protecting the residents across the
4 City of Philadelphia, a goal we all
5 share.

6 We do believe there are
7 tangible solutions that do not add
8 further cumbersome requirements to
9 the landlord-tenant officers, the
10 courts that will increase the cost on
11 housing suppliers who in the end need
12 to go through an eviction process all
13 while also protecting residents. We
14 appreciate the opportunity to testify
15 today and look forward to working
16 with this Committee in the future to
17 find innovative solutions.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
19 you, Andre. We appreciate you being
20 here today and we appreciate your
21 partnership on initiatives like
22 eviction diversion and look forward
23 to a partnership on this process as
24 well and making it better and more
25 humane for people.

1 Mark Zucker, please state your
2 name for the record and proceed with
3 your testimony.

4 MR. ZUCKER: Thank you, Chair
5 Gauthier and Councilperson Brooks. I
6 am Mark Zucker as you noted. And as
7 Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar
8 Association, I express the
9 Association's gratitude for the
10 opportunity to participate in today's
11 hearing.

12 As you know, our Association
13 was founded in 1802 and is America's
14 first chartered metropolitan Bar
15 Association and Pennsylvania's
16 largest local Bar Association. Our
17 mission is to serve the legal
18 profession and the public by
19 promoting justice, professional
20 excellence and respect for the rule
21 of law. In so doing, the Association
22 strives to foster understanding of,
23 involvement in and access to the
24 justice system. And it is in that
25 context that we served as convener of

1 the stakeholders relating to this
2 dispute.

3 As you no doubt are aware,
4 until 1970 the service of writs of
5 possession and the implementation of
6 lockouts in Philadelphia eviction
7 cases were performed by constables
8 under a uniform system applicable to
9 counties throughout the Commonwealth.
10 That changed as of February 10, 1970
11 when the Office of Constable was
12 abolished in Philadelphia.

13 Since 1970 as authorized by
14 statute, the President Judge of the
15 Philadelphia Municipal Court has
16 contracted as you've said with a
17 private entity known as the Landlord-
18 Tenant Office to serve writs of
19 possession and perform lockouts in
20 eviction cases. Also by statute, the
21 President Judge of the Philadelphia
22 Municipal Court has the authority to
23 appoint and remove landlord-tenant
24 officers and writ servers.

25 While concerns about the

1 Landlord-Tenant Office entered the
2 public consciousness as a result of
3 the shooting of Angel Davis on March
4 29, 2023, these issues have been a
5 focus within the public interest
6 community for years. The operation
7 of the Landlord-Tenant Office is of
8 paramount concern to members of our
9 Association and has occupied a
10 significant amount of our time as we
11 seek to ensure that all stakeholders'
12 voices are heard.

13 As you know, our Association
14 includes judges as well as attorneys
15 and other legal professionals. Those
16 attorneys include counsel to tenants,
17 landlords, public interest entities
18 and counsel to the Landlord-Tenant
19 Officer herself. The procedures and
20 protocols followed by Municipal Court
21 and by those entrusted with carrying
22 out evictions and lockouts has been
23 the subject of prior resolutions of
24 our Association, including one in May
25 of 2019 as well as several meetings

1 between the Judiciary and our access
2 to Justice Task Force, our other
3 sections and committees as well as
4 legal services organizations.

5 It is an ongoing process and
6 one which we take very seriously.

7 Most recently after a resolution for
8 consideration by our Board of
9 Governors was drafted in the wake of
10 the Angel Davis incident, various
11 sections and committees convened
12 meetings with members voicing a
13 multiplicity of perspectives to
14 address that resolution. These
15 meetings were intense and they were
16 heated. Rather than simply
17 proceeding with debate on the
18 resolution, we chose a different path
19 with a goal of achieving meaningful
20 progress and minimizing acrimony.

21 We invited President Judge
22 Dugan, Landlord-Tenant Officer Marisa
23 Shuter and representatives of
24 landlords and tenants to speak at our
25 Board meeting on April 27, 2023.

1 Through initial discussions prior to
2 the Board meeting and presentations
3 at the Board meeting, it became
4 apparent that our efforts were best
5 directed at bringing all stakeholders
6 to the table to address areas of
7 common ground and potential reform of
8 current procedures and protocols.

9 In particular, we chose to be
10 forward-looking and to focus on the
11 categories of transparency,
12 accountability and training rather
13 than sorting through the facts
14 surrounding the shooting of Angel
15 Davis, which itself is the subject of
16 an ongoing investigation and
17 litigation.

18 As a result of our Board
19 meeting, the President Judge agreed
20 to convene a meeting of all
21 stakeholders, and that meeting
22 occurred on May 23rd of this year.
23 At that meeting each participant
24 aired their respective concerns.
25 President Judge Dugan asked

1 Supervising Judge Wolf to continue
2 these discussions.

3 Judge Wolf in turn convened a
4 meeting on May 31st of this year and
5 announced an intention to continue
6 those discussions in conjunction with
7 a Pew grant dedicated to promoting
8 reforms in the Municipal Court. We
9 are heartened by these developments
10 and fully support the Court's
11 initiative in seeking ways to
12 maximize the three aforementioned
13 goals of transparency, accountability
14 and training.

15 Included within those goals is
16 the necessity of written protocols
17 that would guide the hiring,
18 supervision and training of deputy
19 landlord-tenant officers in the field
20 and likewise provide opportunities
21 for de-escalation and guidance to
22 those seeking to hold the Landlord-
23 Tenant Office accountable for its
24 actions. Along the way, our hope is
25 that additional resources can be

1 allocated for access to social
2 services, homeless services and
3 mediation in order to avoid
4 disruptive displacement and provide
5 alternate pathways of those caught in
6 the eviction process.

7 We have every expectation that
8 the stakeholders are motivated to
9 move forward constructively and we
10 stand ready to assist them in this
11 process. Our hope is that meaningful
12 progress can be achieved in the next
13 several months. Likewise we hope to
14 partner with City Council to act as a
15 resource in advancing the common goal
16 of a fair, safe and effective system
17 in which landlord tenant issues can
18 be addressed. Thank you again for
19 this opportunity. I would be most
20 grateful to answer any questions you
21 may have.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
23 you so much for being here today, and
24 thank you for your role in acting as
25 a facilitator and a convener for

1 these important conversations. It
2 was also good to hear you speak
3 broadly about sort of the topic areas
4 that you would want to see the
5 stakeholders focus on.

6 But I did want to ask based on
7 your participation in these
8 conversations, do you have any
9 specific reforms that you would
10 suggest or recommend?

11 MR. ZUCKER: I'd rather not
12 get into specifics for a few reasons:
13 One, the resolution is still out
14 there and I want to leave open the
15 opportunity for members of our Board
16 to drill down on those. And
17 secondly, we're convinced by the
18 sincerity of Judge Wolf's approach to
19 this that he will be looking not only
20 at the suggestions of those around
21 the table, but also the best
22 practices that have been alluded to
23 in some of the testimony today. And
24 so, we don't want to limit reforms to
25 what we might imagine without looking

1 at those best practices.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Again,
3 that's fair. Thank you. And again,
4 thank you for your role in this work.

5 I have the same question for
6 Andre. Based on what you've seen
7 through your membership base and the
8 testimony that you've heard today
9 both from tenants and legal service
10 professionals, particularly from
11 other places that have described how
12 evictions work in places other than
13 Philadelphia, do you have thoughts on
14 how this process should be reformed
15 or changed?

16 MR. DEL VALLE: Yeah, and I
17 appreciate the question,
18 Councilmember. I would echo similar
19 sentiments to Mark here. Because we
20 do rely heavily on both the Sheriff's
21 Department and the Landlord-Tenant
22 Officer, I wouldn't want to misspeak
23 or add our perspective on a process
24 that is handled by a firm. I would
25 say if we're truly committed to this

1 process, which obviously us
2 testifying today we are, we would
3 just encourage the opportunity to
4 bring all the stakeholders together,
5 including landlord-tenant officers,
6 the courts to really figure out what
7 these best practices are.

8 And what I will
9 say is we're committed to looking at
10 other areas. Because we are a
11 statewide association, we will be
12 happy to look at other areas and come
13 back with those best practices. But
14 I wouldn't want to speak on behalf of
15 the courts or any other groups here
16 today.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
18 Thank you.

19 Are there additional questions
20 or comments for this panel from other
21 members of the Committee?

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Chair
23 Gauthier, I just wanted to thank the
24 panel for coming to participate in
25 this hearing. And I really am

1 hopeful that some of the takeaways
2 will be taken into consideration
3 towards future planning about the
4 eviction process here in Philadelphia
5 and reform to the Landlord Tenant
6 Court.

7 I was really pleased to hear
8 some of the things that we're doing
9 in other parts of the Commonwealth as
10 well as things that they're doing in
11 New York. And I would love for our
12 process to mirror that and even
13 better, because we talk about housing
14 as a human right and I do realize
15 that here in Philadelphia we have
16 worked closely on various tenants
17 rights issues with Andre Del Valle
18 and his organization, and I would
19 love for this process to continue to
20 move forward so we don't have another
21 incident like what happened to Angel
22 Davis and the other unspoken
23 incidents that may have been
24 unreported.

25 So thank you for being willing

1 to show up to this hearing today and
2 I look forward to working very
3 closely with you both on implementing
4 some real changes.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
6 you so much. That concludes panel
7 testimony for this resolution.

8 Ms. Shearlds, do we have
9 anybody registered to provide public
10 comment?

11 THE CLERK: Yes.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: We
13 will now take a brief break to
14 connect those individuals who are
15 registered to provide public comment
16 to the hearing.

17 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: Hey,
18 Madam Chair. We do not need a break.
19 Actually we can call them in as soon
20 as possible.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
22 Great. Thank you.

23 Ms. Shearlds, will you please
24 read the name of the first person
25 registered for public comment.

1 THE CLERK: Asantewaa Nkrumah-
2 Ture.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
4 Asantewaa --

5 MS. KING: Hello?

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hi.
7 Can you please state your name for
8 the record and proceed with your
9 testimony.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This is
11 Ms. Rosa King. This is not
12 Asantewaa.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
14 Is Asantewaa Nkrumah-Ture here with
15 us?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, she
17 has a different number. I can give
18 you her number.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
20 Council Support, do we need to do
21 something to get Asantewaa on for
22 public comment?

23 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: Yeah --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
25 Ms. Rosa King is also signed up for

1 comment.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
3 understand. I'm just trying to make
4 sure that we go through our list,
5 that everyone who wanted to be heard
6 is heard. So just one second,
7 please.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All
9 right.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
11 Council Support, do we have to do
12 anything to get Asantewaa on?

13 MS. KING: I got to go to
14 work --

15 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: We can
16 get Asantewaa in at this time
17 (inaudible). Hold on one second.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
19 Darien, are you there?

20 COUNCIL SUPPORT: Yes. Can
21 you hear me?

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.
23 Do we need to do anything to get
24 Asantewaa on for public comment?

25 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: Yeah,

1 we can call Asantewaa in now. Our
2 list was in a different order so it
3 had Rosa at the top and we called
4 that order. Sorry.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
6 We'll move on to Rosa while you do
7 that.

8 Rosa King, can you please
9 state your name for the record and
10 proceed with your testimony.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.
12 Go ahead. You're --

13 MS. KING: Hello?

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hello.
15 We can hear you. Please state your
16 name for the record and proceed with
17 your testimony.

18 MS. KING: Okay. My name is
19 Rosa King and I understand y'all
20 talking about the evictions. I've
21 been victed five times in the City of
22 Philadelphia and neither one of
23 them -- none of the evictions were
24 legal evictions because they were all
25 slum landlords. I should have never

1 been put in Landlord Tenant Court.

2 And one particular landlord
3 had did an illegal eviction, locked
4 out and confiscated all me and my
5 children's belongings. I also
6 experienced having been put out by
7 the Sheriff's Department. You know,
8 they came and put us out in the
9 street in front of all of our
10 neighbors. So, you know, I'm a
11 little bit confused why I got evicted
12 by Landlord Tenant Court anyway
13 because the law says that landlords
14 are not able to put out people when
15 their houses are in substandard
16 conditions. In all of those
17 properties that I was allowed by
18 Landlord Tenant Court to have to
19 leave were all in substandard
20 conditions, okay, all of them.

21 And my name is in the system
22 of Landlord Tenant Court and they
23 refuse to let my name go. They put
24 mud on my name. I want my name out
25 of there. And I want to make a

1 comment on Angel Davis. She
2 shouldn't never got shot in the head.
3 Instances like hers, she should be
4 compensated financially by the
5 Landlord Tenant Court or her landlord
6 and the Sheriffs that put her in that
7 position. She should be made whole
8 again. I feel as though I should be
9 made whole because all them just led
10 me up to mental health housing I'm in
11 now, which I wouldn't have been if
12 the laws were handled properly for a
13 tenant like myself and herself. So I
14 believe in people being held
15 accountable.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
17 you so much for --

18 MS. KING: Yes, ma'am --

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Sorry.
20 Were you finished or not? I didn't
21 mean to cut you off.

22 MS. KING: That's it. I just
23 want to see some accountability held
24 even if we have to go back in time,
25 you know. And restore me and restore

1 Angel and make us whole even if
2 that's financial compensation.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
4 you so much. I'm really sorry to
5 hear about your experience, but also
6 really appreciate you coming here to
7 share your story and to speak up so
8 that we can make some important
9 changes to the system.

10 MS. KING: Okay. I do
11 appreciate sympathy, but I'll
12 appreciate even more laws being
13 followed.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
15 understand. Thank you for --

16 MS. KING: So you don't have
17 to have sympathy for me and other
18 people don't have to have sympathy.
19 Just follow the laws. Okay. And
20 citizens like me will not suffer.
21 Have a good day. God bless you.
22 Jesus loves y'all.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
24 you, Ms. King.

25 MS. KING: Mm-hmm. Bye.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Is
2 Lizzie Hefney connected?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: We're
5 calling her in currently.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
7 Can you let me know when we have them
8 and when we have Asantewaa on.

9 MS. HEFNEY: Hello. This is
10 Lizzie.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hello.
12 Thank you for joining us. Can you
13 please state your name for the record
14 and proceed with your testimony or
15 proceed with your comment.

16 MS. HEFNEY: Yes. This is
17 Lizzie Hefney. I should begin?

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes,
19 please.

20 MS. HEFNEY: Okay. I'm
21 speaking today as a housing justice
22 organizer, a law student and a
23 Philadelphian. It was my involvement
24 in organizing work in Philly that led
25 me to sit by Angel Davis' side in the

1 days and weeks following the shooting
2 bearing witness to her trauma. She
3 experienced and I observed the chaos
4 of trying to seek a safe space to
5 recover after such a horrible act of
6 injustice.

7 The people stepped up to
8 enroll her in public benefits to try
9 to stabilize her life to raise funds
10 to support her, find new, safe,
11 certain housing, they weren't
12 professionals. They were just
13 everyday people. There was beauty in
14 that, but it was also terrifying.

15 Where were the resources and once we
16 could identify them, why were they so
17 hard to integrate. How could we ever
18 expect someone who suffered such a
19 trauma to navigate so many different
20 bureaucracies. I remember distinctly
21 calling her Councilmember and being
22 told there was nothing they could do
23 to help.

24 I was reminded in an intimate
25 and urgent way how difficult it is to

1 find deeply and affordable, quality
2 housing and how nearly impossible
3 that is after a person has been shot
4 in the head during the epitome of a
5 violent eviction. It's hard for me
6 to comment on reforms to the RTL
7 because it's the tip of the iceberg
8 of all that is immoral and wrong
9 about how we approach housing in this
10 City and in this country.

11 The appearance of corruption,
12 the profit motive, the lack of
13 training and transparency, the
14 unpredictability of the process, the
15 fact that officers arrive in plain
16 clothes. It seems so abundantly
17 clear that the system must go.

18 Councilmember Brooks prefaced her
19 comments by saying if an eviction
20 must be done, and I think that's an
21 important place to begin.

22 We know these systems go hand-
23 in-hand. A recent study out from the
24 Eviction Lab just last week showed
25 that the cheaper it is to carry out

1 an eviction, the higher the risk of
2 eviction in the jurisdiction. I wish
3 that our time and resources could be
4 spent on all that comes before the
5 violent removal of a person and their
6 family from their home. But so long
7 as evictions are part of our reality
8 and so long as it deputize private
9 security officers carrying them out,
10 I urge Council and the state and the
11 courts to take action to ensure the
12 safety, transparency and the
13 accountability of this process.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
16 you so much for giving comment today
17 and for speaking up for Angel Davis.
18 We really appreciate you.

19 MS. HEFNEY: Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Is
21 Asantewaa on the line at this point?

22 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: Calling
23 her right now.

24 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: Aasantewaa
25 Nkrumah-Ture.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hi --

2 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: Hello?

3 Hello?

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Hello,
5 Asantewaa. Can you hear us?

6 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: I can hear
7 somebody. Is this the hearing?

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes,
9 this is Councilmember Gauthier.
10 Please --

11 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: Okay. Hi.
12 Good morning.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
14 morning.

15 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: I've been
16 waiting for someone to call me to get
17 on per their instructions.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: You're
19 on. You're on. You're live. Please
20 state your name for the record --

21 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: Okay. I'm
22 sorry.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: No,
24 it's okay. Please state your name
25 for the record and proceed with your

1 comment.

2 MS. NKRUMAH-TURE: Certainly.

3 Certainly. Thank you. Well, good
4 morning everyone. My name is
5 Asantewaa Nkrumah-Ture. The only
6 pronoun I am using today is housing
7 justice community organizer. I'm a
8 member of the Justice for Angel Davis
9 Now Campaign, and I want to thank
10 Councilmembers Gauthier and Brooks
11 and all your colleagues for this
12 hearing this morning.

13 As we all know, on March 29th
14 Angel Davis was shot twice in the
15 head and only by the grace of God and
16 the ancestors, she is still alive.
17 While Angel Davis could not be with
18 us here today, she sends her thanks
19 to everyone for their support.

20 So if I may, for the Justice
21 for Angel Davis Campaign, we have
22 several demands: One of which is the
23 total end of the deadly LTO system,
24 period. Hold Marisa Shuter, the LTO
25 officer and her husband, Municipal

1 Judge David Shuter accountable
2 because what we have now amounts to a
3 mercenary army for landlords. We
4 must also compensate Angel Davis, her
5 partner Gabriel Plummer and all
6 tenants that have been unjustly and
7 perhaps illegally evicted.

8 We must hold slumlord Odin
9 Properties accountable. They did not
10 have a license until March 31st two
11 days after Angel Davis was shot.
12 They are notorious in other states
13 and here in Philadelphia they have a
14 large number of evictions. They have
15 a large number of code violations,
16 and it should also be noted that Odin
17 Properties made campaign donations to
18 several candidates in our recent
19 Democratic party primary. Also, as a
20 demand Licenses & Inspections, our
21 City agency, must have all the
22 resources necessary to do inspections
23 and make sure buildings are safe.

24 Now, with this campaign, this
25 is a grassroots campaign, right.

1 We're just regular folks. So I also
2 want to give special thanks to all
3 the organizations that are part of
4 this campaign. They include the
5 Philadelphia Rent Control Coalition,
6 BSA, PFL, YCL, PTU and especially
7 CARP, who quickly organized the
8 GoFundMe to make sure Angel Davis had
9 immediate housing, food,
10 transportation and other necessities.
11 We as a community, we as community
12 organizers did all of this while no
13 agency of the City of Philadelphia
14 stepped up. And that's a shame for
15 the City of Philadelphia.

16 Additionally, there are other
17 issues. So for example, there are
18 also -- as some of you may know,
19 additionally there are also numerous
20 incidents of violence and/or illegal
21 evictions where landlords or their
22 proxies carry out evictions without
23 going to court. The Philadelphia
24 Police Department must be trained and
25 take seriously what is and is not a

1 legal eviction.

2 As some of you may recall what
3 happened to me last year when the new
4 owner of the house I lived in at the
5 time violently and illegally tried to
6 evict me and I was under siege for 10
7 days. Friends of mine, some of who
8 are watching this hearing, stayed
9 with me for 24 hours a day for 10
10 days from February 6th to February
11 16th to make sure I was safe.

12 If tenants have a record of
13 evictions and judgments against them,
14 then it's only fair there also be a
15 record of bad, violent or otherwise
16 unfair landlords. This must happen
17 as well to make sure this is fair and
18 to make sure tenants who go through
19 this horrendous process can be able
20 to afford housing in the future.

21 Now, I have been going to a
22 lot of events and passing out flyers
23 we've been sending thousands of
24 emails, everybody everywhere, across
25 this City and across this country.

1 We have partners across this country
2 who are also willing to join with us
3 in this campaign to put pressure on
4 folks to do their job, do the right
5 thing and make sure there is justice
6 for Angel Davis.

7 But one thing that I keep
8 getting from passing out flyers at
9 Odunde, at Juneteenth and everything
10 else, how is Angel Davis doing
11 because no one has heard anything.
12 Why is there no news coverage about
13 this? Where is the body cam and who
14 shot her? Why hasn't this LTO
15 mercenary been identified? Is this
16 situation being investigated and by
17 who? Is it being investigated by the
18 police department, the DA's Office,
19 the FBI? Who is investigating this
20 thing and how do we get justice for
21 Angel Davis to make sure this happens
22 to no one else ever again?

23 This is so wrong. And forgive
24 me but I'm emotional, because some of
25 you on here know folks threatened me

1 with a gun last year. I have made
2 repeated calls to the police, the
3 DA's Office and they don't tell me
4 what I need to know. Are charges
5 going to be filed against the people
6 who did this to me last year because
7 we sent pictures and video and all
8 kind of evidence? Has the statute of
9 limitations ran out for what happened
10 to me last year?

11 I call repeatedly all kind of
12 police officers, send them emails and
13 no one will tell me those things.
14 How will these people be held
15 accountable and what is the statute
16 of limitations? When does it run
17 out? So thank you all for listening.
18 But first and foremost, Angel Davis
19 thanks you for your support and we
20 must end the LTO system. Tenant
21 Lives Matter. Justice for Angel
22 Davis now. Justice for Angel Davis
23 now. Thank you so much.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
25 you, Asantewaa. We appreciate you

1 being her to speak up for Angel Davis
2 but also to share your story. I
3 regret that the City has not gotten
4 back to you on the status of your own
5 case. As you know, we followed up
6 not too long ago with the 18th
7 District who pledged to help us with
8 Southwest Detectives and we'll keep
9 pushing on it. But I appreciate you
10 being here. Thank you so much.

11 Are there other comments from
12 members of the Committee or
13 questions?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: There
16 being no further questions from
17 members of the Committee and no other
18 witnesses to testify, I will ask if
19 there's anyone else present in this
20 hearing whose name we have failed to
21 call and that wishes to offer
22 testimony on the resolution being
23 considered today?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Hearing none, this concludes the
2 business before the Committee on
3 Housing, Neighborhood Development and
4 The Homeless today.

5 Thank you all for your
6 attendance. And thank you so much,
7 Councilmember Brooks, for putting
8 this very important conversation in
9 place and I look forward to working
10 with you and all of the stakeholders
11 and tenants to bring about some real
12 change. Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Thank
14 you. Have a great day.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
16 Bye-bye.

17 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Thank
18 you, Madam Chair.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you.

21 (Committee on Housing,
22 Neighborhood Development and The
23 Homeless concluded at 12:20 p.m.)

24
25

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

2

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

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TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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