

1 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

2 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

3
4 City Hall, Room 400
5 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
6 Tuesday, April 28, 2026
7 10:00 a.m.

8 PRESENT:

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
10 COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
11 COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
12 COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
13 COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
14 COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE-RICHARDSON
15 COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
16 COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
17 COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
18 COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
19 COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
20 COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.
21 COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

22
23 HELEN LOUGHEAD, The Clerk
24

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Good morning, everyone.

4 COUNCILMEMBERS: Good

5 morning.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Good morning, everyone.

8 This is the public hearing
9 and public meeting of the committee
10 of the whole regarding Bill Nos.
11 260199, 260200, 260201, 260202,
12 260203, 260204, 260205, 260206,
13 260208, 260209; and Resolution No.
14 260227.

15 Ms. Loughead, would you
16 please take roll?

17 THE CLERK: Councilmember
18 Squilla? Councilmember Gauthier?

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
20 Present.

21 THE CLERK: Councilmember
22 Jones? Councilmember Young?
23 Councilmember Driscoll?

24 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

1 Present.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember

3 Lozada?

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

5 Present.

6 THE CLERK: Councilmember

7 Bass? Councilmember Phillips?

8 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

9 Present.

10 THE CLERK: Councilmember

11 O'Neill? Councilmember Gilmore-

12 Richardson?

13 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

14 GILMORE-RICHARDSON: Present.

15 THE CLERK: Councilmember

16 Thomas?

17 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

18 Present.

19 THE CLERK: Councilmember

20 Harrity?

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

22 Present.

23 THE CLERK: Councilmember

24 Ahmad?

1 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD:

2 Present.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember

4 Landau?

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

6 Present.

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember

8 Brooks?

9 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

10 Present.

11 THE CLERK: Councilmember

12 O'Rourke?

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

14 Present.

15 THE CLERK: Council

16 President Johnson?

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

18 Present.

19 I want to thank you,
20 Ms. Loughead. This committee has a
21 quorum and is officially called to
22 order.

23 Ms. Loughead, would you
24 please read the title of the bills

1 and resolution?

2 THE CLERK: Bill No.
3 260199, an ordinance adopting the
4 operating budget for Fiscal Year
5 2027.

6 Bill No. 260200, an
7 ordinance to adopt to Fiscal Year
8 2027 capital budget.

9 Bill No. 260201, an
10 ordinance to adopt a capital program
11 for the six fiscal years, 2027
12 through 2032, inclusive.

13 Bill No. 260202, an
14 ordinance amending chapter 19-2400
15 of the Philadelphia Code, entitled
16 Hotel Room Rental Tax by providing
17 for an additional excise tax on
18 hotel room rentals, all under
19 certain terms and conditions.

20 Bill No. 260203, an
21 ordinance amending sub code A, the
22 Philadelphia Administrative Code of
23 Title IV of the Philadelphia Code,
24 Building Construction and Occupancy

1 Code by adding and revising zoning
2 board of adjustment fees and
3 provisions regarding hearing
4 scheduling, all under certain terms
5 and conditions.

6 Bill No. 260204, an
7 ordinance amending Title III of the
8 Philadelphia Code, entitled Air
9 Management Code to modify the
10 amounts with a license and permit
11 fees, under certain terms and
12 conditions.

13 Bill No. 260205, an
14 ordinance amending section 19-1806
15 of the Philadelphia Code, entitled
16 Authorization of Realty Use and
17 Occupancy Tax to clarify the
18 imposition of the tax on the use or
19 occupancy of real estate with
20 respect to cell towers, all under
21 certain terms and conditions.

22 Bill No. 260206, an
23 ordinance amending chapter 6-600 of
24 the Philadelphia Code, Asbestos by

1 adding and revising provisions
2 related to various fees, all under
3 certain terms and conditions.

4 Bill No. 260208, an
5 ordinance amending chapter 19-1800
6 of the Philadelphia Code, entitled
7 School Tax Authorization to add a
8 new section 19-1808, entitled
9 Authorization of Rideshare Use Tax
10 to authorize the Board of the School
11 District of Philadelphia to levy a
12 tax upon the use by passenger of a
13 transportation network company for a
14 prearranged ride that originates in
15 Philadelphia, all under certain
16 terms and conditions.

17 Bill No. 260209, an
18 ordinance amending Title 19 of the
19 Philadelphia Code, entitled Finance
20 Taxes and Collections to add a new
21 chapter, 19-4800, entitled Retail
22 Delivery Tax to establish a tax on
23 orders for the delivery in
24 Philadelphia of retail consumer and

1 other tangible goods, all under
2 certain terms and conditions.

3 Resolution No. 260227,
4 providing for the approval by the
5 Council of the City of Philadelphia
6 of a revised five-year financial
7 plan for the City of Philadelphia,
8 covering fiscal years 2027 through
9 2031, incorporating revisions with
10 respect to Fiscal Year 2026, which
11 is to be submitted by the mayor to
12 the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
13 Cooperation Authority, pursuant to
14 an intergovernmental cooperation
15 agreement by and between the city
16 and the authority.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

18 Thank you very much, Ms. Loughhead.

19 Today we will hold the
20 public hearing of the committee of
21 the whole to consider the bills read
22 by the clerk that constitute
23 proposed operating and capital
24 spending measures for Fiscal Year

1 2027, a capital program, a forward-
2 looking capital plan for Fiscal Year
3 2027 through Fiscal Year 2032. This
4 morning we have scheduled testimony
5 from the Law Department and
6 Defendant Association.

7 Ms. Loughead, will you
8 please call the first panel?

9 THE CLERK: The first
10 person to testify from the
11 Administration is Renee Garcia, city
12 Solicitor.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
14 Just for some housekeeping rules for
15 our session today, obviously, we're
16 going to be on a timer, and we have
17 a hard stop at 1:00. And so we have
18 two city agencies. You have the
19 solicitor's office, and also the
20 Defender's Association.

21 And so just be direct with
22 your line of questioning, please be
23 direct in your responses, and we'll
24 go from there. Try to get as many

1 rounds in before I break at 1:00.

2 The Chair acknowledges city
3 solicitor, Renee Garcia. Just state
4 your name for the record and please
5 begin your testimony.

6 MS. GARCIA: Good morning,
7 Counsel President Johnson and
8 members of City Council. I am Renee
9 Garcia, city solicitor. Joined
10 today by first deputy city
11 solicitor, Meghan Goddard, and
12 members of my executive team.

13 I am pleased to provide
14 testimony on the Law Department's
15 Fiscal Year 2027 operating budget
16 proposal. The Law Department has
17 the esteemed honor of serving as
18 council to the mayor's
19 administration, this Council other
20 elected officials, and boards and
21 commissions. We strive to provide
22 innovative legal strategy on behalf
23 of our clients to better the lives
24 of our neighbors here in

1 Philadelphia.

2 As passionate public
3 servants, our team of over 400
4 attorneys and legal
5 paraprofessionals is dedicated to
6 pursuing equity and justice through
7 our everyday work.

8 With every complex
9 challenge, our team is working to
10 provide exceptional legal services
11 to minimize risk for the city, while
12 pursuing our collective vision for a
13 safer, cleaner, greener Philadelphia
14 with access to economic opportunity
15 for all. Relevant to this budget
16 hearing, the work of the Law
17 Department also preserves city
18 funds, while securing and collecting
19 additional revenue through
20 successful affirmative litigation
21 tax revenue, fines and fees. I want
22 to highlight a few of the major
23 efforts that the Law Department was
24 involved in during the Fiscal Year

1 '26 budget cycle.

2 Whether there is an
3 emergency issue of citywide interest
4 or challenge to city operations or
5 legislation, the Law Department is
6 called upon to provide legal
7 counsel. As all members know, no
8 piece of legislation is a straight
9 line or straightforward. Your
10 offices have your ear to the ground
11 at what real world issues are
12 impacting Philadelphia residents.

13 Our job in representing
14 both the Mayor and City Council is
15 to take noble policy ambitions and
16 fit them in a fragmented, piecemeal,
17 and sometimes contradictory legal
18 landscape. Our legal advice strives
19 to achieve all of your policy
20 objectives while also withstanding
21 constitutional preemption and
22 Charter restrictions that do not
23 always align. The Mayor's H.O.M.E.
24 Initiative was one such example,

1 where we worked iteratively on
2 numerous drafts of legislation
3 related to the issuance of bond
4 financing.

5 In this past year, the Law
6 Department has supported City
7 Council to advance complex
8 legislation pertaining to sidewalk
9 cafes, workforce training,
10 discrimination in housing and
11 employment, youth services, animal
12 cruelty and overbreeding, mobile
13 medical service providers, curfews,
14 retirement savings, nuisance
15 businesses, and more.

16 Although those examples
17 involve months of planning and
18 deliberation, the Law Department is
19 also called for in the moment legal
20 advice. A few weeks ago, the Law
21 Department was immediately deployed
22 to provide emergency counsel to
23 heroic first responders and
24 operating departments in the

1 aftermath of the tragic garage
2 collapse in Grace Ferry that claimed
3 the lives of three people.

4 Law was on-site to assist
5 with real-time legal advice related
6 to evidence preservation and
7 emergency contracting and drafted
8 executive order 0326, to initiate an
9 independent investigation of the
10 incident, which is now underway.

11 The Law Department has been
12 instrumental in progressing the
13 city's consumer protection efforts.
14 Since the implementation of the
15 Consumer Protection Ordinance
16 introduced by this legislative body,
17 the Law Department has championed
18 efforts to protect Philadelphia
19 consumers from scams and frauds
20 perpetuated by bad actors.

21 We have filed several
22 lawsuits to hold companies
23 accountable for fraudulent business
24 practices and harms to Philadelphia

1 consumers. This year, we sued SC
2 Johnson and Bimbo Bakeries for
3 violating consumer protection laws
4 by misleadingly advertising the
5 recyclability of their products,
6 leading to increased litter and
7 disruption to waste processing
8 systems.

9 We also filed two separate
10 suits against several pharmacy
11 benefit managers: One alleging that
12 companies had a significant role in
13 creating and sustaining the opioid
14 addiction crisis, and the other
15 alleging the companies participated
16 in a price fixing scheme to
17 artificially inflate the price of
18 insulin.

19 More recently, we sued
20 GLOCK, a common gun manufacturer,
21 which the city alleges had
22 contributed to the gun violence
23 crisis in Philadelphia through their
24 advertising tactics, which promote

1 the use of illegal switches to
2 convert handguns into automatic
3 weapons. We continue to litigate in
4 these cases to obtain relief and
5 ensure that entities doing business
6 in our city are following applicable
7 laws.

8 With the transition to a
9 new federal administration and ever
10 shifting federal legal landscape,
11 the Law Department has worked to
12 meet the legal needs of the city in
13 this moment. Law provides 24/7
14 monitoring of emerging funding
15 issues, enforcement actions, and
16 case law developments with nuanced
17 collaborative and creative legal
18 advice solutions and actions.

19 Attorneys across the
20 department provide real-time advice
21 to operational departments through
22 changes to federal funding and grant
23 criteria to minimize disruptions to
24 essential programs and capital

1 project progress.

2 Notably, the Law Department
3 was instrumental in an emergency
4 fund to support families impacted by
5 cuts to the SNAP benefit program.
6 Additionally, when the slavery
7 panels were removed from the
8 President's house exhibit, my
9 department filed a complaint and an
10 emergency injunction that same day.

11 Although the matter is
12 still under appeal, my team
13 successfully had many exhibits
14 restored and the federal government
15 is currently enjoined from further
16 attempts to change the exhibit.

17 Thank you.

18 The Law Department
19 continues to employ all available
20 legal strategies to reduce the rate
21 of gun violence and tackle the black
22 market of illegal firearms. In
23 addition to the suit against GLOCK,
24 this year, the Law Department

1 drafted the straw purchasing
2 ordinance, now signed into law,
3 requiring all licensed firearm
4 dealers in Philadelphia to post
5 clear warning signs that straw
6 purchasing of guns is a crime. We
7 also successfully defended the
8 switch ordinance, banning rate of
9 fire acceleration devices, leading
10 to the dismissal of a lawsuit filed
11 against the city.

12 The Law Department plays a
13 critical role in advancing the
14 city's goals of creating and
15 preserving affordable housing, as
16 well as creating long-term
17 opportunities for those in
18 recovering from substance-use
19 disorder.

20 The Law Department was
21 vitally involved in all aspects in
22 the development of the Riverview
23 Wellness Village. Our units
24 collaborated with city departments

1 on issues related to real estate
2 infrastructure, HIPAA and privacy,
3 constitutional matters, and
4 contracting.

5 We assisted the Office of
6 Community Wellness and Recovery and
7 negotiating professional services
8 and best value contracts to ensure
9 the residents of the Riverview
10 Wellness Village receive
11 comprehensive care, recovery
12 support, medical and other services,
13 including but not limited to food
14 services, culinary arts training,
15 career exploration, and skill
16 development for residents.

17 The code and public
18 nuisance litigation unit also worked
19 over many months to secure a zoning
20 variance that would allow for the
21 expansion of services at the
22 Riverview Wellness Village, through
23 the erection of a new building with
24 82 multifamily dwelling units on

1 site. The commercial law unit
2 attorneys supported the Office of
3 Homeless Services in partnership
4 with numerous city agencies in
5 expanding the city's emergency
6 shelter capacity by 1000 beds.

7 The Law Department's
8 commercial law and real estate team
9 play a key role by negotiating
10 leases, assisting with drafting
11 notices, executing, supporting
12 contracts, offering guidance on
13 licensing and zoning requirements,
14 and preparing letters of support for
15 shelter-site locations. These
16 efforts are just a snapshot of the
17 daily responsibilities and work of
18 the Law Department.

19 Our department touches
20 every piece of legislation, every
21 program and initiative, every
22 transaction, every contract. Our
23 legal work ensures that we are able
24 to deliver outstanding public

1 service on behalf of the residents
2 of Philadelphia. This commitment to
3 investing in law staff is crucial to
4 our retention, our ability to
5 attract and hire a diverse set of
6 the best and brightest legal minds,
7 which we need as we work together to
8 solve some of the city's most
9 complex challenges.

10 On your desk is our year in
11 review, so you can review everything
12 that we did last year, as well as
13 our involvement in the community,
14 and some of the fun stuff that we
15 also do to, you know, create the
16 bonds really that allow us to do
17 this work, which is challenging. I
18 am now happy to take questions.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

20 Thank you very much. The Chair
21 recognizes Councilmember Dr. Anthony
22 Phillips.

23 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

24 Thank you, Council President. I was

1 expecting you to go first, so right
2 ahead. Appreciate it. Thank you.

3 So, City Solicitor, one of
4 my first questions that I have for
5 you is around contracts,
6 legislation, service level
7 agreements. My -- the theme for
8 this budget cycle for me has been
9 responsive government. So
10 ultimately, one of the things that's
11 important for me, and we talked
12 about this, but I wanted to go on
13 record for this, is the importance
14 of being able to provide City
15 councilmembers with service level
16 agreements.

17 So it's an understanding
18 that if we send you a contract
19 review, a piece of legislation
20 review, there will be a document
21 that you could send back to us,
22 giving us a timeline on the review
23 process for how long this should
24 take in terms of reviewing the

1 legislation and providing feedback,
2 and information, and legal counsel
3 around legislation and contract. Is
4 that something that this Law
5 Department can do this coming year
6 to help us understand how quickly we
7 can get things back when it comes to
8 contracts and legislation that we
9 want to pass in the city?

10 MS. GARCIA: Yep. Thank
11 you for your question. We have
12 taken numerous efforts on the
13 contracting side to reduce the
14 amount of time that the Law
15 Department has contracts. It is --
16 there's two kinds of contracts:
17 There's law draft contracts, and
18 then there's department draft
19 contracts.

20 And my preference is really
21 to move to law draft contracts,
22 because we're using templates and we
23 can do it faster than a department
24 can. But within our service level

1 agreement, if you -- if you will,
2 our SLA, we strive to get a contract
3 done in 30 days, but it's not a
4 linear line, because it could be a
5 run of the mill contract, where we
6 use a template and it's easy and it
7 goes through without editing or
8 there could be an incredible amount
9 of editing, it could be very
10 complex.

11 So 30 days is our metric,
12 and we're trying to get contractor
13 review under 30 days, but it could
14 be that we're negotiating with the
15 provider, it could be changes in the
16 scope of the contract. So we've had
17 some technology contracts that have
18 taken nearly a year to negotiate
19 because of the back and forth.

20 So generally, it's about 30
21 days. But it really is variable
22 depending on how much negotiation is
23 going on and the endoscope of the
24 work that needs to be done, whether

1 that changes.

2 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

3 Oh, I wasn't done. All right. So
4 and then I just wanted to also ask
5 you, which is really important, can
6 you follow up about the legislation
7 piece, proposed legislation that we
8 sent to you? Because the whole goal
9 is, and we understand there's
10 complicated factors, but after
11 looking at it, maybe after the first
12 week or two, you could say, this one
13 is going to take us this amount of
14 time.

15 MS. GARCIA: Yeah.

16 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

17 Can we begin to have those type of
18 service-level agreements as well?

19 MS. GARCIA: Yeah, we can.
20 I will speak to Chief Lewis Rosman,
21 so that right off the bat, you have
22 an understanding of where that
23 legislation is in the queue, and I
24 think it would be good for one

1 legislation to come in to even set a
2 meeting out, whether it's two or
3 three weeks, so that it's on the
4 calendar. If that -- if that is
5 okay with you, a good way to go
6 about it. So at least we have a
7 definite checkpoint in.

8 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

9 Yes.

10 MS. GARCIA: To discuss,
11 you know, how heavy the editing has
12 to be, or other ideas, or maybe we
13 need to speak to some of the
14 operational departments, obviously,
15 with your approval, but I think that
16 --

17 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

18 Sink in. And I want to ask --

19 MS. GARCIA: I can't
20 exactly see you, but I think you're
21 nodding.

22 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

23 And I just want to ask something
24 about the Law Department's

1 relationship with City Council.

2 MS. GARCIA: Sure.

3 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: So
4 we understand the Law Department's
5 role to represent the
6 Administration, City Council,
7 agencies in the city, as well as our
8 boards. But there are times where
9 Council is advancing legislation
10 that perhaps the administration may
11 not fully agree with. In those
12 moments, how does the Law Department
13 balance that, and how can you better
14 support Council in advancing laws
15 that reflect what we're hearing
16 directly from residents?

17 THE CLERK: Yes. And this
18 comes up, I think -- so the
19 Charter's 75 years old. It was
20 adapted, I think it was April 17, 75
21 years ago. And I bet this question
22 has come up every year since,
23 because it is unusual. Most cities
24 are set up this way. My job is to

1 enforce the Charter. I didn't write
2 the Charter, you all amend the
3 Charter, but my job is to enforce
4 the Charter as it is written.

5 That means that there are
6 lanes as designated in the Charter
7 that are for the executive and the
8 legislative. My job is also to
9 review state law, federal law, to
10 look for preemption issues,
11 constitutional issues. So when I'm
12 analyzing a piece of legislation,
13 I'm taking all of that into
14 consideration. My legal advice will
15 be the same, whether it is the mayor
16 asking or City Council asking that I
17 believe there is a separation of
18 powers issue or not an issue, or a
19 constitutional issue or not an
20 issue.

21 I am doing the best that I
22 can to predict the legal challenges
23 that come. It is your decision
24 whether you put a bill in or not,

1 right? Then the mayor has to decide
2 on her side whether the bill would
3 be implemented. And part of that is
4 legal risk. So I know that there's
5 a feeling that City Council hears no
6 a lot. The Mayor also hears no a
7 lot. I just say no.

8 But what I try to do, what
9 we really strive to do, and what I
10 try to do when I come in every day
11 is to say, "yes and", or "no, but",
12 right? So the most important thing
13 is to have conversations about the
14 goal that you're trying to get to
15 rather than sort of a proscribed way
16 to do it.

17 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

18 Thank you. Thank you. I -- it's
19 been something that's been weighing
20 on me for a little bit about what
21 you said, you can't change the
22 Charter, and whether or not we need
23 to distinguish, you know, having
24 have a legal support for just

1 Council, and then legal support for
2 administration. That way we don't
3 have to divide minds in that way.

4 So I just -- I don't know what's
5 your perspective on that, the idea?

6 MS. GARCIA: I honestly,
7 and I'm being truly honest, I don't
8 know how that would function because
9 it is still the administration that
10 has to implement legislation. So
11 you could have your own lawyer, and
12 then if you have lawyers, and
13 there's Emily Marcos as well that
14 says this is constitutional or not,
15 but it is for the mayor to
16 implement.

17 And so I come in, again, as
18 a city solicitor saying to
19 everybody, anybody who wants a legal
20 opinion, I believe that there is a
21 first amendment issue, or a
22 preemption issue, or there is no
23 issue. So you could have your own
24 lawyer, but it is -- it is still

1 there is one lawyer that speaks on
2 the legal position of the city, and
3 it benefits all of you to have that
4 position so that there, it's no
5 surprise, right? So you know
6 exactly what the mayor's going to be
7 told about the enforceability of any
8 bill.

9 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

10 And just one quick question,
11 Counselor, because I heard the bell.
12 I just want to say there for the
13 question on the delivery tax --

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 You're on your second bell, bro.

16 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

17 I'm on a second one.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

19 Go ahead.

20 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

21 I'll get it. I'm on my second bell.

22 My gosh. All right. Real quick.

23 From a legal standpoint, how is the

24 Law Department analyzing this

1 current delivery tax that's being
2 proposed, if there is a uniformity
3 cost, it's not connected to a sales;
4 like, how is it not distinguished
5 from being a sales tax as opposed to
6 being just strictly a delivery tax?

7 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. I am
8 very happy to give you a legal
9 opinion under privilege. I can
10 follow up with that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
12 Okay. Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
14 Thank you very much. I'm going to
15 do this, because I see we have a
16 considerable amount of individuals
17 who have questions, but also, it's a
18 combination of the solicitor's
19 office and Defendant's Association.

20 So, Ms. Hudson, can you
21 come and give your testimony, and
22 then I'll allow members to go
23 through the queue. Because some
24 people are in the queue for the

1 Defense Association. So could you
2 go ahead, Ms. Hudson, please begin
3 your testimony so we can go straight
4 through all the lines of
5 questioning, please.

6 And before you begin,
7 Renee, I just want to also thank you
8 and your team, one for stepping up
9 in the space regarding the
10 challenging of the Trump
11 administration to remove the
12 non-slave individuals at the
13 President's house and really
14 stepping up in that space, and doing
15 -- moving forward with the legal
16 challenge, because it is very, very
17 significant.

18 Other counties also follow
19 suit and file certain lawsuits as
20 well regarding that issue. And then
21 also an issue that's near and dear
22 to me around the issue of guns,
23 right? The suing of individuals
24 that were selling, I don't know who

1 -- did we sue GLOCK? I don't know.
2 Whatever company you work with,
3 Joshua Harris --

4 MS. GARCIA: GLOCK, yeah,
5 the manufacturer. That's right.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 For suing GLOCK, and also addressing
8 the issue around the switches as
9 well. So I didn't want this session
10 to go past without acknowledging how
11 critically important the work is
12 being done around those two
13 particular issues. That's near and
14 dear to me. So I want to
15 acknowledge that.

16 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.
17 I'm very proud to stand up on those
18 cases for the city of Philadelphia.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 Thank you. Ms. Hudson, as always,
21 it's good to see you. Just state
22 your name for the record. Let me
23 give you a shout out too. Thank you
24 for your hard work that you're doing

1 regarding reentry, also our
2 juveniles, and also addressing the
3 issue of how the public defender's
4 officer has reshaped how we address
5 public safety. And so, I appreciate
6 your work. Thank you for being a
7 part of the special committee on gun
8 violence.

9 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.
10 Thank you, Council President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Please begin your testimony.

13 MS. HUDSON: Good morning,
14 Council President Johnson and
15 members of City Council. My name is
16 Keisha Hudson, Chief Defender of the
17 Defender Association of
18 Philadelphia. I am joined today by
19 members of my leadership team,
20 Carolyn Jester, our chief financial
21 officer; Lilah Thompson, who heads
22 our immigration law practice; Andrew
23 Pappas, who oversees pretrial
24 diversion; Elisa Downey-Zayas, who

1 runs our reentry program; and Kate
2 Parker, our policy director.

3 Like Public defenders
4 everywhere, the Defender Association
5 of Philadelphia plays a critical
6 role in a functioning justice
7 system. Every day, our office works
8 to ensure that constitutional rights
9 are protected, that court processes
10 are fair, and that outcomes promote
11 stability, not further harm for the
12 individuals and communities we
13 serve.

14 This budget size season, we
15 are requesting an increase of just
16 over five million. This is a
17 targeted necessary investment to
18 sustain our operations, meet our
19 labor obligations, and continuing
20 delivering essential services,
21 including immigration, defense, and
22 strategies that reduce unnecessary
23 incarceration.

24 Last year alone, our office

1 represented more than 30,000 clients
2 across 62,000 cases and staffed more
3 than 200,000 hearings. On any given
4 court day, that means our attorneys
5 are covering close to 850 hearings.
6 That volume reflects both the scale
7 of our responsibility and the stakes
8 for the people we represent.

9 Philadelphians who are low income,
10 often navigating housing
11 instability, behavioral health
12 challenges, and the long-term
13 impacts of poverty and trauma.

14 To meet this demand, we
15 rely on a workforce of more than 500
16 people, attorneys, social workers,
17 investigators, and support staff.
18 Eighty-four percent of our staff are
19 unionized, and 75 percent of our
20 staff live in the city of
21 Philadelphia. Supporting and
22 retaining this workforce is
23 essential to maintaining the quality
24 and continuity of our services.

1 A significant portion of
2 our budget request is driven by
3 labor and operational costs. And
4 it's important to remember that we
5 are not a city agency, and as such,
6 we do not get support for operating
7 costs, which yearly total \$9 million
8 out of our baseline budget. These
9 operating costs also includes
10 meeting our collective bargaining
11 obligations and addressing the
12 rising expenses related to
13 insurance, technology, and facility
14 maintenance. These are not optional
15 investments, they're the baseline
16 requirements to keep our systems
17 functioning effectively. Carolyn
18 Jester, our CFO's here and can speak
19 in more detail about these costs,
20 and can answer any questions you
21 have about how we manage them
22 responsibly.

23 But our budget request is
24 more than about sustaining

1 operations; it is about continuing
2 strategies that are working. Over
3 the past two years, Philadelphia's
4 jail population has reached
5 historically low levels. While
6 crime trends alone do not explain
7 this targeted policy and
8 collaborative efforts, many
9 involving our office have played a
10 significant role.

11 Our pretrial interventions,
12 including early bail review and
13 emergency bail hearings, are
14 designed to ensure that people are
15 not held in custody unnecessarily.
16 Even short periods of detention can
17 destabilize employment, housing, and
18 family connections.

19 Through our emergency bail
20 hearings alone, we have secured the
21 release of more than 280 people.
22 Even conservatively, that has saved
23 the city hundreds of thousands of
24 dollars in incarceration costs,

1 while also improving outcomes for
2 those individuals and families. But
3 due to staffing constraints, we can
4 only staff these hearings on a
5 limited basis. With dedicated
6 funding, we can expand this work and
7 make these interventions more
8 consistent and accessible.

9 Andrew Pappas, who leads
10 this work can speak more about how
11 these strategies are reducing
12 unnecessary detention while
13 maintaining public safety.

14 Another key investment is
15 the expansion of the Wellness Court
16 Initiative, which provides an
17 alternative to arrests and
18 incarceration for those facing
19 summary offenses, connecting them to
20 treatments and support instead of
21 cycling them through the jail
22 system. Our office plays a central
23 role in making this program work.
24 We screen every individual brought

1 in on Wellness Court days, identify
2 eligibility, resolve outstanding
3 bench warrants, and help ensure that
4 participants can actually access
5 services.

6 Since its launch, we have
7 helped prevent more than 160
8 incarcerations through this
9 initiative. Without that
10 intervention, nearly one third of
11 those individuals would have been
12 required to enter the jail due to
13 outstanding warrants. As the
14 program expands citywide, our role
15 will expand with it. This budget
16 request includes the staffing needed
17 to scale that work responsibly.
18 Andrew, again, can speak further
19 about what that expansion requires
20 and what it will deliver.

21 We're also seeking
22 continued investment in immigration
23 legal defense through the PAIFUP
24 program. Through this work, we

1 represent non-citizens in
2 Philadelphia who are at risk of
3 detention and removal, many of whom
4 have deep ties to the city,
5 including U.S. citizen family
6 members. The data is clear here:
7 representation makes a difference.

8 A majority of our detained
9 clients represented through this
10 program have been released from
11 custody, and outcomes allowing
12 individuals to remain in the United
13 States are significantly higher for
14 those with counsel compared to those
15 without.

16 Just as importantly,
17 clients who are released
18 consistently returned for their
19 court hearings, demonstrating that
20 due process and accountability go
21 hand in hand. This area is growing,
22 the demand is growing, and when --
23 where the consequences of inaction
24 are significant, not just for

1 individuals, but for families and
2 communities across Philadelphia.
3 Lilah Thompson, who leads our
4 immigration practice is here and can
5 provide additional detail on both
6 the need and impact of this work.

7 Finally, I want to
8 emphasize that many of the most
9 effective strategies we've
10 discussed: emergency bail hearings,
11 reentry support through the Bridge
12 Home program, elements of our
13 diversion work are not fully funded
14 through our core contract. These
15 are programs that reduce
16 incarceration, improve outcomes, and
17 save the city money over time. But
18 without dedicated investment, they
19 remain limited in scale. This
20 budget request is an opportunity to
21 align funding with what we know
22 works.

23 In closing, I want to thank
24 the defenders who do such incredible

1 work, those who are present here
2 with me and those back at the office
3 in courts at the jails. And I
4 personally invited two members of
5 our police accountability unit:
6 Mike Mellon and Paula Sen, who
7 ensure -- our staff are the ones
8 that ensure our clients are
9 zealously and effectively
10 represented when facing the immense
11 resources of the police.

12 And I want to thank Mike
13 and Paula for the exceptional work
14 they have done in the police
15 accountability unit in particular
16 this past year. Funding public
17 defense isn't just a line item in a
18 budget; it's what determines whether
19 the constitution's promise of
20 justice actually works in real life.

21 Our budget proposal
22 reflects a responsible and strategic
23 investment in the essential
24 operations and programs of our

1 office. With Council's support, we
2 can continue to deliver high quality
3 representation, strengthen public
4 safety, and ensure a more equitable
5 and effective justice system for our
6 city. Thank you, and I welcome any
7 questions.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

9 Geez, you just reminded me, I was in
10 a barbershop yesterday, a lot of
11 guys coming home from back in the
12 day from dirty cops. That was a
13 conversation I had getting my hair
14 cut yesterday. And I applaud you
15 and your team, like, you know, I
16 believe in accountability, but you
17 got to do it the right way.

18 And so a lot of folks are
19 coming home to South Philadelphia,
20 so until you and your team continue
21 to keep up the good work, so I want
22 to acknowledge that. Thank you very
23 much. So you-all ain't going to
24 clap for that, but I will. So

1 what's up? I guess, if you don't
2 have that lived experience, you
3 probably don't really connect with
4 it, but thank you-all for doing what
5 you-all doing. You got to do it the
6 right way, that's all.

7 The Chair recognizes
8 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, then
9 Councilmember Kendra Brooks, then
10 Councilmember Nicholas O'Rourke, and
11 then Dr. Nina Ahmad.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
13 Good morning, Solicitor Garcia and
14 Defender Hudson. My questions are
15 for the defenders. So thank you for
16 your testimony. I wanted to know if
17 you can expound on what the primary
18 drivers of your office's operating
19 costs are, and then secondly, how do
20 the terms of your union contract,
21 particularly pay scales or benefits
22 drive the size of your annual budget
23 increase request?

24 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

1 I'll invite our CFO Carolyn Jester
2 to answer that question.

3 MS. JESTER: Good morning,
4 and thank you for your question. I
5 wanted to just explain that
6 currently we have a \$69 million
7 budget. After salaries, rent, taxes
8 and insurance, we've spent 66
9 million of that. So we've got only
10 about 3 million left and we haven't
11 turned the lights on yet. We pay
12 for our electric, phone, internet,
13 laptops. We have to buy all the
14 software. If we want email, we have
15 to buy Microsoft and Windows, and of
16 course, pay cost associated with
17 representing our clients. We have
18 expert witnesses and professional
19 fees. Without an increase in the
20 operating expenses, we fall short of
21 meeting those obligations.

22 And in terms of your second
23 question, the union contracts. On
24 July 1st, we are contractually

1 obligated to increase the salaries
2 of our staff, and our current budget
3 does not support that. We are \$2
4 million short.

5 So the investment in the
6 defenders of about 3.3 million to
7 cover our salaries and our operating
8 costs is less than five percent of
9 our budget. But it's what we need
10 to continue the current operations,
11 and that's not even discussing what
12 my coworkers will discuss about
13 increasing representation and
14 increasing some of the services we
15 can offer.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: So
17 this \$5 million increase is really
18 making up for an incredibly slim
19 margin once you account for all of
20 the hard work that we've all, you
21 know, commended in this room?

22 MS. JESTER: That's
23 correct.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 Okay.

2 MS. JESTER: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

4 Thank you. I wanted to hear more
5 about your reentry work. What
6 reentry programs do you currently
7 coordinate with, and how effective
8 are they in reducing recidivism?
9 How does this differ from what other
10 reentry services are able to
11 provide? And then lastly, what gaps
12 in service such as housing,
13 employment, or mental health support
14 most affect your client's successful
15 reentry?

16 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYA: Thank you
17 for the question. Good morning,
18 everyone. My name is Elisa Downey-
19 Zayas. I'm the managing director of
20 Behavioral Health Alternative
21 Sentencing and reentry for the
22 Defender Association. So Bridge
23 Home was kind of my baby. It was
24 the pitch that I made to Keisha when

1 I entered my current role.

2 And it is a unique reentry
3 program in that there are a lot of
4 great organizations that do work in
5 this city: PowerCorps, Uplift, the
6 Division of Reentry, they do good
7 work. The problem is that you can
8 provide services to people in county
9 custody, but if you don't combine it
10 with legal, you're not going to
11 effectuate real change in these
12 people's lives.

13 And what we heard over and
14 over again was that people would get
15 really good information and
16 services, but it wasn't connected to
17 their release state. So they
18 couldn't actually connect with the
19 community services on the -- on the
20 street because the organizations
21 themselves did not have the legal
22 acumen or the legal ability to
23 actually file for parole.

24 So the Bridge Home Program

1 brings together a unique skillset.
2 It is social workers that act as a
3 liaison between legal and community
4 reentry programs. And in doing so,
5 they do needs-based assessments to
6 meet with individuals in county
7 custody to establish what do they
8 need to succeed when they re-enter.

9 And then because we are
10 housed within the Defender
11 Association, we can actually file a
12 petition for their early release,
13 give the judge the details of the
14 good work that these community
15 programs are doing, and provide a
16 reason why this individual can
17 succeed by making those connections.
18 And the parole petitions have been
19 so well received by the Judiciary.

20 Our capacity, we started
21 with one social worker and the
22 biggest problem we had was that we
23 had a -- we were victims of our own
24 success, because we were only able

1 to do five a month when we started,
2 and the response that we kept
3 getting was, why aren't you doing
4 these for everyone? Because the
5 plans were detailed, we connected
6 them with services, and we give a
7 year of case management services
8 post-release.

9 And so we have been
10 struggling because we know it works.
11 We've served 101 people so far.
12 Fifty-three of those people have
13 reentered the community, and only
14 four individuals have experienced
15 re-arrest or re-incarceration.
16 That's a seven-and-a-half-ish
17 recidivism rate. Most other
18 community-based or department of
19 corrections-based recidivism
20 programs have between 20 and 40
21 percent. Now, obviously, we're only
22 a year in, but the results speak for
23 themselves. They work.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: So

1 to close out, what gaps in service
2 could we help you close that would
3 make that successful program even
4 more successful?

5 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYA: Well, the
6 biggest -- the biggest barrier
7 obviously is housing. The current
8 environment has shuttered a lot of
9 resources for people on drug and
10 alcohol or mental health treatment.
11 So people who are already
12 experiencing criminality or the
13 results of criminality, so, you
14 know, lesser job opportunities,
15 lesser housing opportunities with
16 convicted felons.

17 They also are now seeing
18 programs decrease where if they have
19 concurrent issues, so drug and
20 alcohol or treatment issues. And so
21 the expansion of those and the
22 housing -- affordable housing is
23 really our biggest barrier.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you so much for your work.

2 Thank you, Council President.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 Okay. Member Brooks.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

6 Thank you. Thank you, Council
7 president. My first question is for
8 the Law Department. At the hearing
9 for ICE-OUT legislation, you stated
10 that there would be training for
11 city's employees about the new
12 guidance the administration issued
13 in response to the bills about
14 interacting with ICE and other
15 external government officials on
16 city property.

17 Could you please provide us
18 with the details of these training
19 sessions? Specifically, when will
20 the trainings be held and what will
21 they cover? Who will receive the
22 trainings and how frequently will
23 they take place?

24 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,

1 Councilmember and good morning. The
2 guidance has since gone out. So
3 there are two documents: One is the
4 Law Department drafted guidance of
5 who exactly to call when someone
6 shows up and what to do, and then
7 there's an infographic just making
8 it a little bit easier to read and a
9 little bit less dense. So those
10 both went out. They went out to HR
11 managers and city leadership to then
12 cascade down to the building
13 supervisors or front desk people.

14 It was really for the
15 departments to decide who would be
16 the person interacting with any kind
17 of law enforcement agent that showed
18 up at any city facility. The
19 trainings will be May 5th and 7th.
20 We're doing two separate -- same
21 training, but two separate dates.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

23 Thank you. And my next question is
24 for the defenders. I have a series

1 of questions related to your
2 immigration work. How much funding
3 is allocated to the Pennsylvania
4 Immigrant Family Unity Project, and
5 how has the demand for services
6 changed over the last couple of
7 years?

8 The city plans to roll out
9 an RFP for a PAIFUP contract, which
10 will be funded at \$950,000. You are
11 seeking an additional 950K for your
12 unit. How will that funding be
13 spent? And can you discuss how
14 relatively recent changes in
15 immigrant policy related to the
16 detention of non-citizens has
17 changed your practice?

18 MS. THOMPSON: Thank you so
19 much for the question. My name is
20 Lilah Thompson. I'm the Chief of
21 the Immigration Unit at the Defender
22 Association of Philadelphia.

23 I want to note that the
24 program is currently only funded at

1 \$950,000, and this is enough to
2 represent only a small percentage of
3 Philadelphians who need
4 representation in their legal cases
5 in the immigration space.

6 As of -- from January 1st,
7 2025, to December 31st, 2025, we
8 received 214 referrals to our
9 program, and we were only able to
10 offer 35 individuals direct legal
11 representation in immigration court.
12 That's 16 percent of all referrals.
13 By comparison, the year before, 2024
14 year, we only received 82 referrals
15 and were able to accept 37 people
16 for full representation; that's 45
17 percent of all referrals.

18 The number of cases has
19 increased dramatically. If you
20 compare just January of 2026 to
21 January 2025, this January we
22 received 25 referrals, and the prior
23 January we only received five.

24 Since this past year, there

1 has been a series of unlawful
2 detentions that is subjecting
3 non-citizens to mandatory custody
4 that is against the law. And the
5 2nd Circuit actually just struck
6 down this policy this morning. We
7 expect that that will happen in the
8 3rd Circuit as well, but we are
9 waiting to see.

10 In the meantime, though,
11 ICE is detaining people unlawfully
12 and holding them in detention. And
13 our office is seeking additional
14 funding so we can represent these
15 individuals who are subjected to
16 unlawful custody and are trying to
17 defend against their removal from
18 the United States.

19 In the past year, since
20 December of 2025 to present, we have
21 filed 73 habeas petitions in Eastern
22 District of Pennsylvania. Three
23 petitions challenging ankle monitors
24 being used to surveil our clients,

1 and five additional petitions in
2 federal court in the Western
3 district of Pennsylvania, in the
4 middle district of Pennsylvania. Of
5 these individuals, 51 were ordered
6 to be immediately released from
7 custody due to illegal government
8 detention.

9 What we will use this money
10 for is representing more people. We
11 need to be able to meet the moment
12 and only being able to represent 16
13 percent of individuals in custody at
14 this time is not sufficient to do
15 so.

16 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
17 Thank you for that. And one other
18 question. I want to understand how
19 the Defendant's Association views
20 the Wellness Court, and how will
21 your role change with the planned
22 expansion of the Wellness Court, and
23 what supports do you need?

24 MR. PAPPAS: Thank you for

1 your question. Andrew Pappas,
2 managing director of pretrial for
3 the Defender Association. Wellness
4 Court has already expanded to two
5 days a week, and the planned
6 expansion to five days a week.
7 We'll obviously bring in more people
8 every day. There's been huge
9 benefits to this program in terms of
10 our ability to remotely lift bench
11 warrants out at the Kensington
12 Wellness Support Center. That's not
13 something that has ever existed in
14 Philadelphia before, remotely
15 lifting bench warrants.

16 To date, we have lifted
17 bench warrants for 126 people, a
18 total of 206 warrants. That's an
19 enormous volume of people that are
20 not going into custody. We've
21 prevented 169 incarcerations. Every
22 person who doesn't have to go to
23 State Road, who doesn't have to
24 spend even a day, right? Some

1 people will go into custody and be
2 on a bench warrant list at the CJC
3 the next day, but even one night in
4 jail, is a night in jail. And for
5 some people, it's much longer. So
6 anytime we can prevent an
7 incarceration is a huge benefit, and
8 that's exclusively through this
9 program.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: Yep.
11 And I get that. I'm not saying
12 that; I'm saying the capacity. What
13 is the capacity that you have with
14 staffing currently with the
15 expansion of Wellness Court, since
16 one of the questions is centered
17 around your ability to do all the
18 work that you have with the money
19 that's allocated?

20 MR. PAPPAS: Yeah. So
21 right now we are staffing Wellness
22 Court two days a week with two
23 attorneys and a social worker. We
24 also staff warrant remediation on

1 the other three days a week that we
2 don't -- that Wellness Court is
3 operating, we're already doing
4 remote bench warrant lifts that day.

5 If Wellness Court expands
6 to five days a week, we're going to
7 need to probably at least double the
8 number of attorneys that we have out
9 there. Our social workers are now
10 providing case management to the
11 Wellness Court participants; they're
12 also public defender clients. And
13 so we would need to expand our
14 capacity for social workers as well,
15 so that we can represent all of our
16 clients in case management.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

18 Thank you so much for that.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

20 Thank you. O'Rourke, Ahmad, Jones.

21 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

24 I got it. My bad.

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 Thank you, Mr. President. Just
3 while you're up here, I heard you
4 say that two days a week with two
5 attorneys, as you go to five days,
6 you'll need to double with the
7 expansion. Just to kind of stay in
8 that length -- that same vein, could
9 you also just describe a typical day
10 in Wellness Court for your offices,
11 and given what you've said, what
12 role does your office play just in
13 layman's terms that can't be easily
14 filled by other folks?

15 MR. PAPPAS: Yes, thank you
16 for the question. So police go out
17 every Wednesday and Thursday
18 morning, starting around 6:00,
19 6:30 a.m., and arresting people in
20 the Kensington neighborhood on
21 summary offenses. When they get to
22 the Kensington Wellness Support
23 Center, that's when our role kicks
24 in.

1 So we review every single
2 person who's arrested, that's 550
3 unique arrests over the last 15
4 months. We are reviewing them for
5 outstanding warrants, open cases to
6 look at their entire criminal
7 picture, and any past supports that
8 they've had through our office or
9 outside of our office.

10 The police are also doing a
11 similar warrant review through NCIC,
12 PCIC, but the information that they
13 get is not connected to a docket
14 number. So the police could say,
15 this person has a warrant. I don't
16 know what the docket number is, I
17 don't know exactly what all the
18 charges are, I can't generate a list
19 for the Court to put those people on
20 a bench warrant list. We do that,
21 right? Sometimes the police will
22 come and say, we ran this person
23 through NCIC, PCIC, they have four
24 warrants.

1 And I will say, they went
2 through Bench Warrant Court two days
3 ago, your information just is not --
4 just hasn't been updated yet. And
5 when they call in, they're able to
6 verify that. That's a person who
7 would've gone into custody
8 erroneously if we weren't there to
9 prevent it.

10 And so that's the first
11 thing that we do, is run everyone to
12 see what warrants they have so that
13 we can put them on a bench warrant
14 list, lift those warrants, and make
15 them eligible to receive services
16 through Wellness Court, because they
17 don't have to go into custody.
18 We're then reviewing body camera
19 footage for anyone that is a
20 Defender client, we are talking with
21 the police, with the behavioral
22 health specialists, with medical to
23 make sure that our clients are
24 receiving the services that they

1 need, and then representing them
2 when they get over to 391 Whitaker
3 for court in the afternoon.

4 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: So
5 efficiency and accuracy in terms of
6 dealing with those who are just as
7 impacted within this wellness system
8 is dependent upon the Defender's
9 Association to effectively get that
10 done. So it's fair to say that you
11 all need to be well staffed and
12 funded to be able to do these things
13 and to get the Wellness Court
14 running effectively; is that fair to
15 say?

16 MR. PAPPAS: Yes, exactly.

17 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: I
18 would agree. Good morning to you,
19 Mr. Pappas and to you, Defender
20 Hudson, as well as to our city
21 solicitor, Ms. Garcia. We don't
22 have to go into detail, but I want
23 to thank you for the work that has
24 been done in our partnership in

1 recent weeks and months. Thank you
2 very kindly.

3 Jumping back into my
4 questions mainly for the Defender
5 Association. The association is
6 currently in negotiations for a
7 first contract with -- and I'll be
8 brief, Mr. President.

9 A first contract with the
10 non-attorney staff, who voted to
11 form a union a little over a year
12 ago. We know that collective
13 bargaining agreements, especially
14 first contracts, typically include
15 pay increases over multiple years.
16 So how does the mayor's proposal to
17 flat fund the Defenders Association
18 for FY27 affect your ability to
19 negotiate a fair contract and
20 agreement with non-attorney staff?

21 MS. HUDSON: Thank you for
22 your question, Councilmember
23 O'Rourke. As our CFO, Karen Jester,
24 testified, we are already in a

1 contract with the UAW who represents
2 our attorneys and contractually
3 obligated on July 1st to give our
4 attorney pay increases through their
5 contract. We cannot meet that pay
6 increase that we're contractually
7 obligated to meet because we've been
8 flat funded.

9 And so part of our budget
10 request a little over 2 million is
11 not only to meet our obligations
12 with our attorney union, but we are
13 at the bargaining table with our
14 non-attorneys who are represented by
15 AFSCME DC 47, which represents many
16 city workers as well.

17 It's difficult to be at the
18 bargaining table negotiating a
19 contract when we know that we -- the
20 mayor has us flat funded, but we are
21 now going through a process with
22 Council. We may not know what our
23 funding outcome looks like until
24 Council votes on the budget. We've

1 requested 5 million, a little over 2
2 million of that would help us meet
3 what we hope to be the agreed upon
4 salary negotiations with our
5 non-attorneys.

6 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

7 It's essential that you get the
8 funding that's -- that you needed
9 clearly to me. Defender Association
10 attorneys are also unionized and the
11 defender has negotiated two
12 collective bargaining agreements
13 with attorneys since 2022.

14 How has the defender
15 budgeted for a multi-year contract,
16 given that funding is allocated by
17 the city annually, and isn't
18 necessarily predictable from year to
19 year?

20 MS. HUDSON: We -- it's not
21 predictable. We negotiate in good
22 faith with the UAW, and our
23 attorneys. I just want to make it
24 very clear that when we look across

1 the Commonwealth, and we look across
2 the tri-state area, and I'm just
3 looking at Maryland and New Jersey,
4 because the cost of living in New
5 York and DC is very high, our
6 attorneys are making less when we
7 look across --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

9 Excuse me, Ms. Hudson, one second.
10 We have a point of information form
11 Councilman Jeffrey J. Young,
12 Esquire.

13 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
14 you, Mr. President. Just on the
15 same lines, well, when you're
16 negotiating these contracts, is the
17 city or representative from the
18 finance department, are they at the
19 table with you when you have these
20 discussions? If you rely on the
21 city to fund your operations, I
22 should -- I mean, is someone there
23 from the city helping you with that
24 negotiation?

1 MS. HUDSON: I'll just ask
2 Mr. Gillison to come up, since he
3 sits at the bargaining table with
4 our first assistant, Sarah Allen. I
5 am not at the bargaining table, but
6 Everett and my first assistant are
7 the ones that are working.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
9 And could you also clarify your
10 structure as the Public Defender's
11 Association? Are you a city agency,
12 a nonprofit --

13 MS. HUDSON: We are a
14 nonprofit.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 A partner with other organizations
17 to bring in additional resources --

18 MS. HUDSON: We are a
19 nonprofit.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 -- to supplement you. Everybody may
22 not know. They may just assume that
23 you are part of our city. Are you
24 city employees, do you have to live

1 in the city, you get a pension,
2 you're -- could you just clarify the
3 structure, just for the wider
4 public, for the record?

5 MS. HUDSON: We were
6 founded in 1934 as a community
7 defender. And so a 92-year-old
8 organization. So, you know, well
9 before the United States Supreme
10 Court said that if you cannot afford
11 an attorney, one should be appointed
12 to you.

13 We've been doing that work
14 well before that decision in 1963.
15 We then entered into a contract with
16 the City of Philadelphia. So we are
17 not a city agency; we are a
18 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and so that
19 related to what I testified before
20 regarding operating costs. So
21 issues around rent, and healthcare,
22 and insurance, that's -- that comes
23 out of our base budget. We do not
24 get support for that. We are not --

1 we don't have a pension program, so
2 we are not looked at as city
3 employees, but I can also have
4 Everett talk about what happens at
5 the bargaining table.

6 MR. GILLISON: Thank you.
7 Everett Gillison, the director for
8 employee and labor relations for the
9 Defender. Good morning to all
10 Councilmembers.

11 We are a nonprofit,
12 therefore, the city does not sit at
13 the table with us when we're
14 negotiating. I represent along with
15 the first assistant, Sarah Allen.
16 We are the ones that actually have
17 to do the negotiations on behalf of
18 the office. After we do that in
19 good faith, we bring it back to our
20 -- to the chief defender, who then
21 takes it to our board.

22 As a contract, that means
23 that we submit what we need to this
24 body and to the mayor, and the mayor

1 then -- and you set our matter like
2 all other contracts. We put our
3 contract through the city
4 solicitor's office in order to make
5 sure it's conformed properly, and
6 paid the way it needs to be paid.

7 Each year, we estimate, and
8 Carol and Jester makes a very, very
9 good estimate of what we think the
10 contracts need are going to be in
11 the incoming up, and when I -- when
12 I'm negotiating on behalf of the
13 office, I have been around for a
14 little bit of time, so I kind of
15 have a good sense of where things
16 should end up. Sometimes we get
17 surprised, but most of the time, we
18 hit our numbers.

19 But the question always is,
20 will we get the support from the
21 city, from the mayor, and from you
22 to make sure that we can meet our
23 needs. This year, the Mayor flat
24 funded us in the five-year budget,

1 zeros for increases across the five
2 years. I've been around for a
3 while, that hasn't been done. So we
4 are appealing to each of you to kind
5 of look at the history, look at what
6 we've been doing, look at the work
7 that we've been doing.

8 It wasn't too long ago;
9 there were 10,000 people on State
10 Road. We changed the way that we
11 did public safety. And as a result
12 of doing that, there are now less
13 than 3,300 people on State Road.
14 There has been significant savings
15 by being a holistic approach to
16 public safety. I don't know where
17 that came from. I'll just say
18 that's something that I know that
19 we've been hearing for many years in
20 this hall and in the mayor's office.

21 And I think that we have to
22 reflect the reality. We are now
23 unionized. We are now a nonprofit
24 that has a union, and we are a

1 negotiating in good faith, and we
2 have to come up with the money. And
3 there's -- there is no magic.
4 Either we have it, if you give it to
5 us, or we don't. And if we don't,
6 the only way we do is that we have
7 to take services away, and we don't
8 want to do that. So I leave it to
9 you and to your good graces to look
10 and see that the investment is
11 definitely worth it. Any other
12 questions? Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 Very well said. Welcome back, sir.

15 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

16 He's right, you know. Well, I mean,
17 I hope Member Young got his question
18 answered. I believe I got mine as
19 well. I thank you for your time for
20 coming here today, and thank you for
21 your service to the residents of
22 this city, and those who are engaged
23 within our criminal legal system.
24 Obviously, I value you and we hope

1 that we can demonstrate that through
2 funding you well. Blessings to you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 Thank you. Member Ahmad, or
5 Dr. Ahmad.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
7 you, Council president. Good
8 morning to all, and thank you for
9 all of you for your public service.
10 Sometimes thankless in the public
11 sphere, but we know how hard all of
12 you work. My first question is to
13 our city solicitor to follow up on
14 the line of questioning that
15 Councilmember Phillips did around
16 the contracting timeline issue.

17 I hear you in terms of
18 accountability and transparency, I
19 had asked this question of the chief
20 administrative officer as well,
21 since you're all in a continuum in
22 this process, of a timeline being
23 put out in terms of some sort of a
24 public-facing, you know, website to

1 tell where we are along without
2 having to yield information that is
3 sensitive, but the public has no
4 idea. It's like this black box,
5 what is happening? And our job is
6 to demystify this process. So I
7 wanted to hear what the Law
8 Department would say about a
9 dashboard.

10 MS. GARCIA: Quite
11 honestly, I don't have an opinion on
12 that. That's really a policy
13 decision. I know that through the
14 implementation of Opal, which is the
15 new system, there will be dashboards
16 for the vendors to be able to see
17 exactly where their contracts are,
18 and who their point persons are.
19 But with respect to the public,
20 that's really a policy decision that
21 if the administration want to
22 explore that, I would review any
23 legal issues.

24 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: And

1 follow up is about implementation of
2 our bills. You know, we -- you
3 already somewhat touched on it. We
4 really -- we can pass as many bills
5 as we want and the administration
6 can choose to implement, not
7 implement. What pathway do we have
8 outside of going to the Commonwealth
9 Court to really make sure what we
10 are asking on behalf of our
11 constituents actually gets done, and
12 what is the accountability process
13 there in terms of implementation?

14 MS. GARCIA: Sure. There's
15 -- well, I'm going to kind of break
16 it down. There are bills that are
17 squarely within your purview, those
18 the mayor has to implement. Then
19 there are bills that for separation
20 of powers issues, the mayor does not
21 have to implement, right? And that
22 is a policy decision that, you know,
23 she has to make with her operating
24 departments.

1 And I'm not going to
2 pretend there aren't politics and,
3 you know, that's not my lane over
4 there. But the Charter is what --
5 the implementation of the Charter is
6 what determines what is in those
7 buckets, right? And the way the
8 Charter was written 75 years ago is
9 that it is a strong mayor form of
10 government. And we've said that
11 over and over and over again.

12 And the -- you know,
13 obviously I wasn't there, but the
14 vision and what the home rule
15 Charters are in other cities is
16 because City Council could pass
17 every single Thursday operational
18 requirements for the administration.
19 They could say every city solicitor
20 who's hired has to speak five
21 languages. Would that be better for
22 representation in the public? Yes.
23 But that's not City Council's job to
24 make that determination, that's in

1 the mayor's purview, right? That's
2 the way the Charter is written.

3 So if you have a bill that
4 is within your authority, a taxing
5 bill, or whatever it is, and it's
6 not being implemented, then you
7 could sue the Mayor in a mandamus
8 action to have that implemented.
9 But for a bill where it is touching
10 on separation of powers issues, you
11 could ask for counsel. I mean, we
12 would have that discussion, but you
13 both have my legal opinion and you
14 know where I'm going to fall, and
15 that's the reason why it's set up
16 the way that it is.

17 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: So if
18 you were to sue, would you represent
19 the Council in that process, or we
20 would have to get outside counsel?

21 MS. GARCIA: If we were to
22 sue, it would -- that determination
23 would be made on a lot of factors,
24 including what my legal opinion was

1 at the time that the bill came down.

2 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: To
3 proceed on it.

4 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

5 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Okay.
6 All right. I just wanted
7 clarification.

8 MS. GARCIA: Sure.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
10 you so much. I want to pivot to our
11 Public Defender's office, and once
12 again, say thank you for doing what
13 our constitution tells us. I'm
14 deeply grateful to all of you for
15 the work you do under very difficult
16 circumstances, and it behooves all
17 of us to make sure you have the
18 resources, point 1.

19 Point 2, thank you for
20 feedback we got from your office
21 around the hearing we had on Friday
22 around the gaming platforms being
23 used as grooming spaces for
24 everybody actually. And the real

1 question I have out of how young
2 people are targeted in the law
3 enforcement system, even when
4 they're victimized.

5 And if you could address,
6 how can we address that once we do
7 not revictimize people, ones who've
8 already been targeted by traffickers
9 or, you know, grooming of some sort,
10 where does -- we all know this,
11 police and the DA knows it, why are
12 they charging them as adults? Why
13 is there no understanding of how
14 this crime occurred and what their
15 role was in it in terms of being
16 coerced to carry out something
17 illegal? So if you would address,
18 what can we do to stop this?

19 MS. HUDSON: I think one of
20 the most important things to realize
21 is that a lot of the folks who
22 obviously come into the system are,
23 as you identify, victims of trauma
24 themselves and deep trauma

1 themselves.

2 And I think that we need to
3 be more cognizant in terms of
4 realizing through social services
5 and mitigation. I've always said
6 that victims advocate should be
7 appointed to the people who are in
8 these cases. That my clients often
9 are at many times, over 70 percent
10 of them are victims themselves of
11 some sort of crime before they came
12 into the public defense space. And
13 to -- and that they need services as
14 well.

15 So I think it's given the
16 resources, but also a lot of
17 training and an understanding of
18 what that world looks like and what
19 that space looks like, and have that
20 be trauma informed, and having
21 everyone interacting with our youth
22 in the space to be trauma informed,
23 but also put on the lens of should
24 -- is this an incarceration, or

1 criminal justice path, or is there
2 other outcomes that are beneficial
3 here to our youth?

4 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: So
5 the problem I have is they're happy
6 to go after the kids, but they're
7 not going after the Johns, they're
8 not going after the traffickers. So
9 their resources are misplaced to do
10 this in the first place.

11 So we need to talk further
12 to really see how -- whether we can
13 codify this in some way where the DA
14 and the police are accountable of
15 how they address a crime such as
16 human trafficking, and who are they
17 putting their resources to get and
18 hold accountable? So thank you for
19 the work you do.

20 MS. HUDSON: Thank you.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: I
22 hear you, and we're going to have to
23 work on this. Thank you, Madam
24 Chair.

1 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
2 Dr. Ahmad. The Chair now recognizes
3 Councilmembers Jones, and then
4 Harrity. Jones was in the queue,
5 but it dropped off. So Harrity
6 after. You're okay? Okay. Member
7 Jones.

8 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
9 you, Madam Chair. Good morning
10 still. I am grateful for two things
11 being able to be true at the same
12 time. The fact that we have pursued
13 a more progressive form of justice,
14 and the prison population is down,
15 and crime is down. And it proves
16 that to pursue a more progressive
17 form of government, it doesn't mean
18 crime goes up and doesn't mean we
19 are in bedlam. And thank you and
20 the team appear testifying today
21 that had proved that theory to be
22 true.

23 My questions this year
24 first to the solicitor and then to

1 the defenders is, can you give us a
2 brief update on gaming machines,
3 some of the gun legislation that is
4 pending, lost and stolen switches
5 and things of that nature? You've
6 done a herculean job of defending
7 the city of Philadelphia in those
8 cases. And for the Defender's
9 Association, please describe for me,
10 I know we are reducing the census up
11 on State Road, how are you working
12 with probation and parole at the
13 other end to reduce their caseloads?

14 Why don't we go with the
15 city solicitor?

16 MS. GARCIA: Good morning,
17 Councilmember and thank you. I am
18 so surprised you're asking questions
19 about guns. I have a little
20 Councilmember Jones tab here,
21 actually. So I'll start with gaming
22 first because it's a bit shorter.
23 We are still in the appellate courts
24 up and down the appellate courts on

1 whether these are games of skill or
2 games of chance.

3 And so we are waiting
4 determination by the appellate
5 court, and then we can flow the
6 consequences of enforcement through
7 there. On guns, I have an ever-
8 growing list, so I'm very happy to
9 update you on this really important
10 work. So one of our cases is our 3D
11 printing, and there was a preemption
12 challenge to the ordinance that
13 governs 3D printing of firearms. We
14 won that case in the trial court,
15 and in the Commonwealth, and now the
16 appeal is pending in the PA Supreme
17 Court.

18 In the gun range case "In
19 Re: gun range," and this was a
20 zoning restriction around where gun
21 ranges could be, we -- one in the --
22 at the ZBA, one at the trial court,
23 and in the Commonwealth Court, there
24 was a remand down to the trial court

1 on exclusionary zoning. We
2 prevailed on there and they -- but
3 went back up to the Commonwealth
4 Court. But we've been successful
5 there.

6 On the rec center case,
7 this was Mayor Kenny's executive
8 order that firearms should not be in
9 the rec center. Here -- and let me
10 just back up to say, we -- through
11 this executive order, we're looking
12 to govern properties as the property
13 owner, right? This was our
14 properties. We govern the rules of
15 engagement of who comes in and
16 whether they can have weapons or
17 not. That case, we lost at the
18 trial court. They found that we are
19 preempted and our appeal is pending
20 in the Commonwealth Court, an
21 injunction remains in effect.

22 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
23 currently, if I understood that
24 ruling -- currently, if I understood

1 that ruling, that people are under
2 the law, able to bring firearms into
3 our public spaces, city buildings,
4 and rec centers?

5 MS. GARCIA: Not all city
6 buildings. For example, they can't
7 get into this building, because this
8 is where the judges sit, right? So
9 they can't go into courthouses. But
10 yes, for rec centers and parks that
11 remains in place.

12 The Armstrong case, which
13 is our lost and stolen case, which
14 you're familiar about, that is still
15 sitting with the PA Supreme Court,
16 so we await decision on -- well, I
17 think they haven't actually, and we
18 haven't fully briefed it yet with
19 the Supreme Court. I think they --
20 we applied for an appeal on that
21 sitting up there.

22 We sued three gun shops, if
23 you remember that case for straw
24 purchasing. All three have been

1 shut down, and we are in the process
2 of going after the insurance
3 companies because none of the three
4 have any assets. So more to come on
5 that. We have our challenge to the
6 switch ordinance. We -- the --
7 that's the bump stocks and the
8 switches. We won at the trial
9 court, and so the ordinance remains
10 in effect, and that is an appeal
11 that's pending in the Commonwealth
12 Court.

13 And then finally, our GLOCK
14 case, where we sue the manufacturer
15 of the guns for marketing, that
16 makes it look like anybody legally
17 could put a switch in or have an
18 automatic weapon when, of course,
19 automatic weapons are not legal for
20 the public. And that is our list.

21 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: I
22 just want to thank you for putting
23 up the good fight.

24 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

1 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: And
2 representing us well in these
3 respective courts. Madam Defender?

4 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYA: Thank you
5 for the question. So as I
6 understand it, the question is how
7 do we stop people from violating
8 probation and parole in the first
9 place to stop kind of their reentry
10 into the jail? But if that's not
11 the question, please let me know. I
12 will say that to pivot back to my
13 earlier --

14 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
15 actually, the question is more we
16 have made headway in reducing the
17 population at the prisons. How are
18 we doing on the other end of the
19 continuum of justice to say people
20 are concluding their probation,
21 their paroles?

22 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYA: So to get
23 them off? Okay. So there's two big
24 ways, I would say. The first is

1 going back to our reentry. So the
2 first thing you can do to get
3 someone off probation or parole is
4 to have them be successful very
5 early on.

6 So Bridge Home, and we also
7 have the New Leash on Life program,
8 which many people know about, which
9 is a program run by New Leash on
10 Life USA by one of the first things
11 you can do is make sure that people
12 understand the conditions of their
13 probation and parole. You are in a
14 courtroom, a lot of difficult or
15 complicated terms are used, and
16 people speak very quickly.

17 Most defendants leave the
18 courtroom not having any idea what
19 is expected or required of them when
20 they're being supervised. That is a
21 very real and practical problem that
22 people don't know what is going to
23 lead them back to jail or cause them
24 to not be successful on probation

1 and parole.

2 One of the first things we
3 do when we meet with someone in
4 Bridge Home, or when we meet with
5 someone behind the walls who's in
6 New Leash on Life, is tell them,
7 here's your sentencing order, sir,
8 or ma'am; here are all the things we
9 expect you to do. What are you
10 going to have a problem with doing?
11 And so just communicating explicitly
12 about what the expectations are is
13 plan 1. That's how we get people
14 off supervision.

15 The second thing is, if
16 some part of that is difficult or
17 impossible, then that has to be
18 explained to the courts. They are
19 unable to do this for this reason,
20 or they want -- you told them to get
21 a GED, but they, you know, are in
22 this other program and other
23 vocational program instead, that
24 doesn't require a high school

1 diploma or GED, and that's what
2 they're going to do.

3 So it requires a
4 communication with the people who
5 are being supervised, and a
6 conversation with the courts about
7 the purpose is having someone engage
8 in pro-social conduct.

9 We don't always have to
10 exactly prescribe what that conduct
11 looks like. What we want is for
12 people to not be rearrested and to
13 contribute their communities in a
14 positive way. That looks very
15 different for everyone, and we don't
16 need to put certain expectations.
17 The second thing I will say is Act
18 44 has really changed the game.

19 It was statewide
20 legislation, that includes mandatory
21 review of people's probation after
22 prescribed periods. In many cases,
23 it mandates early termination of
24 your supervision if you are

1 compliant, except if you are
2 actually in violation or have
3 committed a new crime, well, under
4 supervision.

5 That case -- or it went
6 live June 2024, and to date, over
7 400 probation review conference
8 summaries have already been filed.
9 About 70 percent of the time
10 probation is recommending
11 termination be terminated. That is
12 allowing people to get off
13 supervision sooner. And what I
14 always tell people is getting out of
15 jail is free -- is you being free,
16 but getting off supervision is real
17 freedom.

18 So we are allowing people
19 to get back to their actual lives
20 free of the stigma of supervision
21 and free of the weight of the courts
22 behind them. And frankly, we should
23 have more support for Act 44
24 provisions in the courts.

1 The courts and the District
2 Attorney's office has been very
3 hesitant to read the explicit
4 provisions of the bill and the way
5 they're meant to be read. It
6 demands mandatory termination. We
7 are often going into court and
8 saying, termination is mandated, it
9 is a shall statute, and we have the
10 courts and the District Attorney's
11 office fighting us. These are
12 people who are in compliance with
13 their supervision.

14 We know that criminality or
15 criminogenic, supervision is less
16 valuable after the first 18 months.
17 Sometimes 18 months, 24 months, but
18 it is a short period of time. If
19 we're reviewing someone's sentence
20 within that time period, and someone
21 is doing well, we shouldn't be hung
22 up on whether they did 20 hours of
23 community service or whether they
24 passed their GED test or not. We

1 should be getting people off
2 supervision, and everyone should be
3 on board for that.

4 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So is
5 the population of supervised
6 individuals up or down?

7 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYA: Down.
8 And it should continue to go down,
9 and it should actually continue to
10 drive down the prison population
11 because the less people -- one of
12 the primary drivers of the prison
13 population is detainers. You're in
14 on a probation detainer. The less
15 people who are on supervision, the
16 less people who are in on detainers.

17 So oftentimes, you have
18 someone on probation who picks up a
19 minor offense, a small amount of
20 marijuana, they're in jail on that
21 detainer. Now, you get one of those
22 and you're not on probation anymore,
23 you pay a fine; you don't go to
24 jail. So we are getting people off

1 supervision and over time, I do
2 expect the provisions of Act 44 and
3 the way -- and to probation's
4 credit, they've been doing an
5 amazing job here. I have to give
6 the Adult Probation and Parole
7 Department of Philadelphia a lot of
8 credit, because they had to do a
9 lot.

10 But they are really trying
11 to focus their resources on people
12 who need to be supervised, and
13 everyone else who's just doing what
14 we need them to do, they're trying
15 to get off supervision. And that
16 should really drive down the prison
17 population in the coming years.

18 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
19 you, Madam Chair. That's a third
20 leg of good job, good job, and good
21 job. And we appreciate that. Can
22 you get those stats to the
23 Chairwoman, please?

24 MS. DOWNEY-ZAYA: Of

1 course.

2 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
3 you, Madam Chair.

4 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
5 Councilman. The Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Harrity.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
8 Thank you, Councilwoman. Hello,
9 everybody. I think it's still
10 morning. Good morning. Thank you
11 as always. I appreciate always. I
12 torture Ms. Garcia about bringing us
13 some more money all the time. And
14 the Defender's Association, you guys
15 know how I feel about you.

16 And I'm glad you brought up
17 about people being caught in that
18 process just for like a dime bag of
19 weed of -- yeah, it's no secret,
20 we've had this discussion before.
21 It -- the Defender's Office took
22 care of me when I was a kid. I was
23 always in and out of trouble of
24 stupid stuff. My first job was to

1 pay the fines because my father was
2 a police officer, and he refused to
3 pay fines for me misbehaving. So I
4 had to go get a paper route in order
5 to pay the fines.

6 But I know that it's a
7 scary thing going in there. And
8 when you have that defender that
9 comes up and greets you, especially
10 when you're in family court, where
11 it used to be over there at 1801
12 Vine, we used to have to go and walk
13 it up to see that big building when
14 you're a kid, and I know it even
15 intimidated my mother when she had
16 to take us there.

17 So I always appreciate you
18 guys, and I'm sure, you know, I
19 always tell the story about my
20 brother and how the system worked.
21 And, you know, my brother did nine
22 years on a two-and-a-half-year bid.
23 In defense of the judge, he
24 reconsidered the sentence nine

1 times. Finally, he set him Upstate
2 and he was able to be paroled and
3 then able to get out of the system.

4 But it took forever just
5 because he couldn't stop smoking
6 marijuana. The judge actually said
7 it. He said, Sean, it actually
8 drives me crazy to have to send you
9 back, because you have not committed
10 another crime, except smoking
11 marijuana and violating his parole.
12 And because of that, he did nine
13 years. So I thank you for
14 everything you do.

15 And to go in line with
16 that, I know that people had asked a
17 little bit about the Wellness stuff
18 already, but Ms. Garcia, where does
19 the Philadelphia Commonwealth Court
20 appeal against the Opioid Trust
21 currently stand, given the trust has
22 repeatedly rejected the city's
23 Kensington spending programs while
24 the clock on those funds continue to

1 run, what is the Law Department's
2 strategy for protection --
3 protecting Philadelphia from
4 forfeiture? I remember they tried
5 to take the money back a couple
6 times for something we were spending
7 on.

8 And just to get the
9 questions out there for the
10 Defender's Association, the
11 testimony states that Wellness Court
12 -- to expand Wellness Court to five
13 days a week, and to serve more
14 communities; which communities will
15 the expansion encompass? And also,
16 you stated that 30 percent of the
17 Wellness Courts participants lived
18 outside of the city.

19 I thought the original
20 agreement was to send people back to
21 their original county for the
22 treatment, because Medicare dollars
23 would not cover it if the residents
24 were not from Philadelphia. Has

1 that changed? Are they now allowing
2 us to do that? I know we're working
3 out the warrant thing with the
4 different counties, which is great,
5 but did they give us a waiver or
6 something to be able to send them to
7 the program?

8 MS. GARCIA: I'll be very
9 brief. Yes, some of the money was
10 held back, some of it was
11 subsequently released, but our case
12 is on for oral argument before the
13 Commonwealth Court on May the 12th.

14 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
15 Thank you. That's great. I know it
16 was a little bit of semantics, and
17 it -- and it actually helped
18 bringing it -- I was there when we
19 did the tour with a couple of the
20 State reps there, and the people
21 that are on there, and they didn't
22 actually get what we were asking for
23 at first. They didn't understand
24 why housing in those neighborhoods,

1 how they were being deteriorated
2 from the epidemic that was going on
3 from the people being down there,
4 until we actually bought them and
5 toured them, that they changed their
6 mind. So, you know.

7 MS. GARCIA: You're exactly
8 right. It is -- it has very proudly
9 been an opportunity to educate about
10 the holistic approach that has to be
11 used to combat this epidemic. So
12 while we're still fighting over
13 this, I do think in the future,
14 we've laid a foundation.

15 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
16 Beautiful, beautiful. And
17 defenders?

18 MR. PAPPAS: Yes. And
19 thank you for your question. In
20 terms of expansion, I know that the
21 Office of Public Safety has
22 indicated that we'll expand to three
23 days, starting on May 18th. My
24 understanding is that expansion will

1 be, in terms of the number of days,
2 but still within Kensington.

3 I know the goal is to go
4 citywide, but I don't know the exact
5 neighborhoods in which they plan to
6 expand in which order. In terms of
7 the issue with people from other
8 counties who are arrested in
9 Kensington, DBHIDS has social
10 workers there that do assessments
11 for their social service needs,
12 their drug and alcohol needs. And
13 depending on where they're
14 connected, they -- if they're
15 Philadelphia residents, obviously,
16 they're able to connect them with
17 services here.

18 They have worked with all
19 of the counties to find resources
20 for people out in those counties,
21 even into New Jersey. We have
22 connected people with services in
23 New Jersey, if that's where they
24 were originally from. And so it's a

1 little bit more complicated. It
2 sometimes takes a little bit longer
3 to make those connections.

4 So as opposed to a
5 Philadelphia resident who may be
6 able to get connected to services
7 the same day that they're arrested,
8 sometimes for people who are out of
9 county residents, they're getting a
10 one week date to come back to
11 Wellness Court so that they can work
12 through all of those insurance
13 issues, make connections out of
14 county and out of state and try to
15 get them connected to the services
16 where they reside.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
18 Yeah. And trying to get them back,
19 that's a whole other story?

20 MR. PAPPAS: Yes.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: But
22 just you're there, you're on the
23 ground, you guys. So how is our
24 Wellness Village affecting that? Is

1 it helping to be able to have a
2 place for long-term housing so that
3 we're not actually putting them back
4 out into the neighborhoods that, to
5 be quite honest, for us, they
6 shouldn't be in people places and
7 things that's a rule for us, you
8 know, stay away from the same
9 people, same places, or you'll do
10 the same things. So how do you feel
11 that the Wellness Village is
12 working, and what do you believe
13 that we could do to make it easier
14 to access?

15 MR. PAPPAS: Yes. Thank
16 you for the question. So Riverview
17 Wellness Village, for the people who
18 have made it there through Wellness
19 Court, we've gotten overwhelmingly
20 positive responses in terms of the
21 physical facility itself and the
22 services that are being provided.

23 There haven't been a
24 tremendous number of people who came

1 in through Wellness Court that made
2 it to Riverview yet. We're seeing
3 those numbers increase, but I think
4 to date that number is less than 10
5 people in terms of people who came
6 in through a Wellness Court arrest,
7 went inpatient, because that's a
8 requirement before you can get
9 stepped down to Riverview, you have
10 to complete 30 or 60 days of
11 inpatient treatment, right?

12 So in terms of people who
13 have come in through a Wellness
14 Court arrest, completed that
15 inpatient and then stepped down to
16 Riverview, you know, I think that
17 number is less than 10. Although
18 we're seeing more people now since
19 we've expanded to two days that are
20 accessing inpatient treatment. And
21 so, I anticipate those numbers will
22 continue to rise. I think that's
23 just kind of the growing pains of
24 the process. And so I'm hopeful

1 that we will see more of our clients
2 get to Riverview and the long-term
3 housing support that it provides.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

5 Yeah, I would like to definitely
6 work with you to make sure that it
7 happens. Riverview has been very
8 accommodating whenever I've reached
9 out to them for somebody who was
10 struggling, that was ready to get
11 out and needed a place to land. So
12 we definitely need to use that
13 resource. And hopefully now that
14 we're going to be doing five days a
15 week, we will have more people into
16 that, you know, the system, because
17 it actually -- like you said, it
18 takes at least 60 days to get them
19 over into Riverview. And trust me,
20 I've gotten somebody into Riverview
21 back into Aphid Girard and to then
22 back the Riverview. It's a process,
23 right?

24 MR. PAPPAS: Yes, it is.

1 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: You
2 know, so, thank you for that. And
3 just my plug, I'm always for fully
4 funding the Defender's Office.
5 Amen.

6 MR. PAPPAS: Thank you,
7 Councilmember.

8 CHAIR BASS: Thank you.
9 Chair recognizes Councilmember
10 Landau.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
12 Thank you. Thank you so much.
13 Thank you all for being here today.
14 I feel the need to start with the
15 Wellness Court because you're up
16 here. So I'm going to -- I'll start
17 there. I want to start with
18 funding, though.

19 I am amazed as what I'm
20 hearing is an increase -- a
21 continual increase in demand on your
22 services and the great holistic
23 wraparound services that you're
24 doing. And that there's not an

1 increase in your budget for that.
2 Is this -- has this been the norm
3 over the past years that there's an
4 increase in demand for your services
5 and there hasn't been an increase in
6 the budget?

7 MS. HUDSON: Every space
8 that we've expanded into in the
9 last, I would say, you know,
10 certainly in my tenure, has come
11 with -- or has started with grant
12 funding, right? So just one
13 example, you know, we now have an
14 education lawyer; one, for our
15 client population that represents --
16 works with our youth. And that was
17 grant funded.

18 The Bridge Home program
19 that you heard Ms. Downey-Zayas talk
20 about was grant funded. So we are
21 expanding, not just our
22 representation of people who are
23 coming into the juvenile,
24 independent and delinquent and adult

1 systems. We also represent people in
2 civil mental health court. And we
3 do thousands of hearings a month.
4 And that population of clients is
5 expanding.

6 Unfortunately, a lot of our
7 population now are people in nursing
8 homes with dementia. And so it's a
9 little-known aspect of our work that
10 we represent people in civil mental
11 health as well as our dependency
12 practice. But programmatically, we
13 -- I come to Council every year and
14 stress the importance of supporting
15 the public defenders.

16 But we need to expand our
17 holistic representation, expand the
18 number of social workers that we
19 have. We need to do case management
20 work as opposed to referral. And
21 right now we do not have enough
22 social workers to work with clients
23 in a case management approach. The
24 Bridge Home Program and Ms. Downey-

1 Zayas explaining that funding, that
2 case management service is really
3 critical, and that's what our
4 clients need.

5 So I think the 5 million
6 request is a humble one. But it's
7 absolutely a critical one. Not just
8 to sustain the services that we have
9 now, but we really need to expand in
10 some critical areas, particularly
11 around the diversion work that we
12 are doing in Kensington and in
13 reentry.

14 This budget request
15 included a \$400,000 ask to support
16 expanding Wellness Court from the
17 one day, ultimately to now three, to
18 now five. We did not get that
19 \$400,000 request from the Mayor, but
20 we are hoping we can get funding to
21 staff and expand. We want to move
22 with this program, and we want to be
23 able to meet the demand and the
24 city's focus on expanding.

1 Currently -- we don't have the
2 resources currently to expand to
3 that three or five days. The person
4 who staffs Wellness Court is
5 literally sitting right here and is
6 a member of my executive team, and
7 he's the one on the ground.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: And
9 still people have a constitutional
10 right to be defended in these
11 actions. And are there any private
12 law firms stepping up to do this for
13 free?

14 MS. HUDSON: No.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: So
16 it would only make sense that we
17 need to fund you; is that correct?

18 MS. HUDSON: Correct.

19 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I
20 wanted to -- you kind of answered my
21 next questions about social workers
22 and stuff, and maybe I'll just go on
23 a long soliloquy right now. You
24 have 100 percent proven that

1 holistic approaches to everything in
2 the criminal justice system works.
3 We have been doing this in
4 partnership in Philadelphia now. We
5 are all rowing in the same
6 direction.

7 Every single dollar we give
8 you proves to be a decrease in
9 crime, a decrease in people being
10 incarcerated, a decrease in people
11 with any kind of recidivism
12 committing another crime. It
13 doesn't make any sense at all that
14 we wouldn't fund you for every
15 single thing that you're doing. It
16 is absolutely perfect. And you guys
17 have kind of perfected the model
18 too. You've taken on -- I can
19 guarantee when you were first
20 founded 70 something, is it?

21 MS. HUDSON: 1934.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
23 1934. My guess is you came in, you
24 took each case, you handled that

1 case and you moved on. You now are
2 looking at the big picture and
3 seeing what pieces -- what matters
4 and what works and what investments
5 you need, including social workers,
6 so somebody doesn't come back in
7 again. I don't see any reason at
8 all we wouldn't fully fund you.

9 Can I ask a PAIFUP
10 question? I also have a question
11 for the law department too. So,
12 PAIFUP, how much -- how much do you
13 need to increase your PAIFUP
14 representation that we know will
15 happen? Start with that. Oh, how
16 much additional funding do you need
17 for PAIFUP?

18 MS. THOMPSON: We're asking
19 for an additional \$950,000 for this
20 year. To really meet the moment, we
21 would need substantially more than
22 that. But that is all that we're
23 asking for at this time. We are
24 hoping to scale up our program to be

1 able to represent every
2 Philadelphian who needs assistance
3 in detention, and then if released
4 from custody, in their continued
5 immigration removal proceedings.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I
7 was struck by your comment -- your
8 whole team's comments about how even
9 one day incarcerated for somebody --
10 for a person, can affect their lives
11 and how they need so much support on
12 the other end. So how we quickly
13 get them back into society as
14 quickly as possible, and how much
15 that could affect them and how much
16 supports are needed. Do you have
17 any plans to increase social work
18 funding or any other mental health
19 supports needed for folks who are
20 released from detention?

21 MS. THOMPSON: Yes. This
22 is a really excellent question. Our
23 team provides a lot of the support,
24 and in partnership, one of the

1 reasons that the PAIFUP program
2 exists at the Defender Association
3 is so that we can collaborate on the
4 many resources that the Defender
5 already has. And so we work very
6 closely with the social work team to
7 provide these resources for our
8 clients and with our community-based
9 organizations.

10 PAIFUP is a collaborative,
11 not just of legal service providers,
12 but of community-based
13 organizations. And we all work
14 together to provide that holistic
15 representation for our clients. And
16 so one of the things that we're
17 constantly looking at is how we can
18 expand services to our clients so
19 that they cannot just survive the
20 very difficult moments of being in
21 custody.

22 And it is civil detention,
23 but it is indistinguishable from
24 punitive criminal detention

1 settings, to be able to not just
2 survive that, but to be able to
3 thrive in our communities. And we
4 do that through our network of
5 community-based organizations and
6 within the resources that we have
7 inside the Defender Association. So
8 funding the Defender, writ large,
9 also helps our immigrant clients as
10 well.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

12 Thank you. Can I ask a couple of
13 questions to the law department as
14 well? And if not, I'll come back
15 around.

16 CHAIR BASS: It's a short
17 list. It's a short list. Next,
18 Councilmember Thomas.

19 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Good
20 morning. Thank you. I want to
21 first start by saying thank you to
22 the entire legal team, both our
23 solicitor as well as our public
24 defenders. I've had the honor to

1 work closely with both departments
2 on a number of different issues.
3 But everyone knows that my favorite
4 issue to discuss with both
5 departments is actually Driving
6 Equality.

7 Yesterday I had an
8 opportunity to be in New York for a
9 panel. And based on the work that
10 we've done in Philadelphia, cities
11 all across the country are looking
12 at Driving Equality as a model to
13 address issues as it relates to
14 pre-contextual traffic stops.

15 When we started that
16 conversation in 2020, clearly the
17 focal point of that conversation was
18 dealing with men of color,
19 specifically Black men who had been
20 victims of a lot of viral situations
21 that caught the attention of the
22 entire -- the entire world, really.
23 Now, the conversation is steered
24 more towards ICE, and looking at

1 pre-contextual stops to put people
2 in a position where their status as
3 citizens might have been
4 jeopardized.

5 It's no secret that we've
6 been sued multiple times and there's
7 a rumor that a certain court has
8 decided to take the case. Can you
9 talk to us a little bit about where
10 we are as it relates to withstanding
11 another challenge to Driving
12 Equality? And what is the legal
13 strategy that you're comfortable
14 communicating today?

15 Clearly you can't say the
16 whole legal strategy, but what are
17 some things that you're comfortable
18 communicating today so this
19 legislative body and the general
20 public can understand that we are
21 fighting our hardest to make sure
22 that this legislation stays intact?

23 MS. GARCIA: Sure.
24 Councilmember, if you can believe

1 it, we have been in litigation for
2 four years now; four years over
3 this. The whole time it's been
4 enforced, right? There's never been
5 a stay in place, which is important
6 for people to know. And the sky has
7 not fallen yet. So far -- so far as
8 I'm aware, the sky has not fallen.

9 We had won in the trial
10 court in March of 2023. We got the
11 case dismissed. We won in the
12 Commonwealth Court in September of
13 2025. There was a further appeal,
14 which is discretionary, meaning that
15 the PA Supreme Court could take the
16 appeal, and they in fact did take
17 the appeal. So that will go through
18 probably another year of litigation.

19 Again, there's no stay in
20 place. So enforcement will
21 continue. If you ask me why they
22 took it, I don't know. There were
23 two dissents on the Commonwealth
24 Court opinion that maybe they were

1 trying to clean it up and to have --

2 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

3 You're saying they, can you let
4 folks know who the "they" is?

5 MS. GARCIA: Sure. What
6 I'm saying is, I don't know why the
7 Supreme Court decided to take this
8 appeal. They did not have to. It
9 was discretionary on their part;
10 meaning it was not an appeal by
11 right to the PA Supreme Court.
12 There was with the Commonwealth
13 Court opinion two dissents. And it
14 may be that they, the PA Supreme
15 Court, thought that they needed to
16 clean up the opinion.

17 But the issue is whether
18 the ordinance and the executive
19 order that follow the ordinance are
20 preempted. And I have felt very
21 strong about our legal position the
22 entire -- the last four years. And
23 we have been winning in that the
24 Mayor must have discretion in

1 dictating enforcement of the vehicle
2 code.

3 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So
4 just to close out. Thank you, Madam
5 Chair. How much money of taxpayer
6 dollars have we wasted on these
7 lawsuits the last four years? And
8 where are we as it relates to the
9 Public Defender's Office being able
10 to assess the data around traffic
11 stops and why the stop happened and
12 what actually was the end result of
13 those traffic stops? Those are my
14 last two questions, Madam Chair.

15 MS. GARCIA: I can get you
16 the exact number. We did have
17 Montgomery McCracken as co-counsel
18 for a while. I'm going to say it's
19 maybe \$20,000 or \$30,000, but I will
20 get you that final number. Since
21 then, my office has been handling
22 it. So it's not out-of-pocket
23 expense, but it's an awful lot of
24 time that we could be working on

1 other things, including all those
2 gun cases that I read out, because
3 it's the same team.

4 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Is
5 there a way that you can give us an
6 estimate and maybe give it to our
7 Council President sometime before we
8 finish budget negotiations? I think
9 it's important that the taxpayers
10 recognize how much revenue and
11 taxpayer hours -- I'm sorry. How
12 much taxpayer dollars and manpower
13 has been spent defending this case
14 over the last four years.

15 And if our Chief Public
16 Defender could just close out with
17 some information around data.
18 Because we're still struggling to
19 collect data. So how are you guys
20 doing collecting data and what is
21 the data? What is the story that
22 the data has told you thus far?

23 MS. HUDSON: Thank you,
24 Councilmember Thomas. And we have

1 been proud to partner with you in
2 getting the Driving Equality law in
3 effect. I will invite Mike Mellon,
4 who you've worked with very closely
5 from our Police Accountability Unit,
6 to talk about the picture of the
7 data. Now, we have a dashboard, the
8 Driving Equality dashboard, but he
9 can give you a clearer picture of
10 what is happening with the data and
11 what that looks like.

12 MR. MELLON: Good morning,
13 and thank you for the question,
14 Councilmember. Our unit --

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
16 State your name.

17 MR. MELLON: This is
18 Michael Mellon on behalf of the
19 Defender and the Police
20 Accountability Unit. Our unit,
21 which consists of a data analyst and
22 a policy analyst and two attorneys
23 and some admin staff, together built
24 a dashboard that tracks the policing

1 related to vehicle stops. And so we
2 can look in real time to see the
3 trends that are happening in regard
4 to policing as it relates to vehicle
5 stops.

6 Now, what we've seen over
7 the last two years or so is vehicle
8 stops have actually increased
9 comparative to immediately after the
10 pandemic. But right now we are
11 having a little bit of trouble being
12 able to see patterns related to why
13 the officers are pulling the
14 vehicles over.

15 So we continue to work with
16 the police department and the
17 Council Member's office to improve
18 the statistics that are available so
19 that our citizens can see the trends
20 that are happening within the police
21 department to make sure that what we
22 are seeing with Driving Equality,
23 our expectations are being met as
24 far as the officers behaving in a

1 way that is consistent with the
2 Driving Equality ordinance.

3 Now, we are seeing a lot of
4 disparities still. Disparities
5 dropped, but are still very, very
6 significant. And so we need to be,
7 all of us, to be able to keep an eye
8 on what's going on. And that's why
9 the dashboard is important. It's
10 why the data needs to be improved so
11 that we all know what's going on.

12 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

13 Thank you, Mike. Madam Chair, with
14 respect for the time, I'll come back
15 to the second round to be able to do
16 a deeper dive into this line of
17 questioning, but I do want to again
18 publicly affirm and thank the legal
19 representation, both on the Chief
20 Public Defender side as well as the
21 City Solicitor for the great work
22 that you've done with Driving
23 Equality. Thank you so much.

24 MS. HUDSON: And if I could

1 just quickly add, thank you,
2 Councilmember Thomas, that the
3 Driving Equality dashboard is also
4 another endeavor that is grant-
5 funded by the Catalyst Foundation.
6 So thank you.

7 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
8 Councilmember. Chair recognizes
9 Councilmember Lozada. Sorry.

10 Councilmember LOZADA:
11 Thank you, Madam Chair. I echo my
12 colleagues' sentiments in saying
13 thank you and expressing gratitude
14 for the work that each of your
15 departments do for our city every
16 day. Many of my questions were
17 asked by my colleagues, but I do
18 have two simple, quick questions,
19 one for each of you. I'll start
20 with the Defender's Office.

21 And that is, there are
22 sometimes different sentiments
23 expressed when we talk about the
24 work that is happening at Wellness

1 Court. And so very simply, I ask,
2 do you believe in the work that
3 we're doing at Wellness Court? Do
4 you believe that the work that is
5 happening there is happening with
6 compassion and with empathy for
7 those that are suffering from
8 addiction? And do you believe that
9 in order to respond and restore
10 quality of life in the -- in the
11 communities where this is happening,
12 do you believe in the expansion or
13 in the need for the expansion that
14 is happening or that is being
15 requested?

16 MS. HUDSON: You know, last
17 year when I sat at Council table,
18 you know, I was clear that in our
19 view we would've preferred to have
20 been in from the beginning and to
21 have sat at the table with the city,
22 with the police, with the Office of
23 Public Safety from the very
24 beginning.

1 Us, the District Attorney's
2 Office, and the courts were not part
3 of kind of strategically building
4 out what Wellness Court would look
5 like and how it would function. And
6 I think, you know, one of the
7 reasons we're seeing kind of a very,
8 very slow progression of clients
9 from Wellness Court into Riverview,
10 is because we've had to navigate
11 challenges to a system that was
12 really designed without our direct
13 involvement.

14 As it stands, you know,
15 we've been -- we've been there the
16 entire time, from the start of the
17 pilot project. And we'll go with
18 the expansion to the two days, to
19 the three days. And ultimately, if
20 we get the funding, of course, to
21 the five days.

22 The work we're doing in
23 lifting bench warrants is fantastic
24 work. It's important work. It's

1 keeping people out of jail, keeping
2 the jail population low, but also
3 making sure they're getting services
4 that same day and that they're
5 connected to services that same day.
6 And that's a crucial element of --
7 and a crucial success point of the
8 program.

9 I do think -- and I've
10 suggested to DBHIDS that I would
11 like to have social workers to do
12 case management for our client
13 population. I know DBHIDS is hiring
14 social workers of their own, but our
15 clients -- these are our clients.
16 They trust us, they look to us to
17 guide them.

18 And I think if I had an
19 equivalent number of social workers,
20 or if the social workers -- the 15
21 they want to hire, perhaps we get
22 half of them to work with our -- you
23 know, work with our team, I think
24 you'll actually see much better

1 outcomes. It's the case management
2 that's really critical. It's
3 following the clients. It's now
4 helping them navigate all manner of
5 challenges.

6 So I think the program -- I
7 believe in the program, I believe
8 the program is working in some
9 crucial elements. I believe that it
10 will work with continued
11 collaboration, but I cannot
12 emphasize enough that we all need to
13 be at the table and collaborate in
14 ways that we can expand and improve
15 this program, not just in
16 Kensington, but all across the City
17 of Philadelphia.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: And
19 that's why I ask you, right?
20 Because I believe that you bring a
21 different perspective, and I believe
22 that people trust your word, right?
23 I think oftentimes I hear from folks
24 who don't understand what is

1 happening there, that we're
2 disappearing people or that people
3 are being treated without compassion
4 and without empathy, right?

5 And so I think that hearing
6 it from you here on the record, I
7 think makes a difference. Folks
8 don't understand that this is new
9 and that there is a need for us to
10 readjust when necessary. I
11 appreciate your office's work as
12 well as the police department and
13 others involved in the courts, and
14 your willingness to adjust where
15 necessary in the best interest of
16 those who are living in addiction
17 and connecting them to services.

18 So thank you for that.
19 Thank you for your work. And thank
20 you to your team too, who is on the
21 ground and who, you know, is present
22 and kind of working it through with
23 us. We are grateful for your
24 partnership.

1 To our City Solicitor,
2 thank you. Grateful for -- you
3 recently helped me respond to a
4 situation in the district, and I
5 appreciate your support for that.
6 You've often heard Majority Leader
7 speak to the nuisance businesses in
8 the community. There have been
9 multiple pieces of legislation that
10 have been passed in this legislative
11 -- or by this legislative body.

12 And the nuisance businesses
13 issue persists in our -- in our
14 neighborhoods. In the 7th Council
15 District, I see one of these
16 convenience stores pop up very
17 quickly, sometimes without going
18 through a zoning process. Everyone
19 knows that they're selling illegal
20 products, but it persists. And so
21 at what point do we as a city
22 determine that these types of
23 businesses are not good for our
24 communities? And what can you do to

1 help expedite the process in order
2 to hold these people accountable?
3 Because I'm at the point now where
4 I'm -- we've done overlays, right?

5 And it doesn't even seem
6 like the overlay to prevent these
7 businesses from opening up in our
8 communities is even helping. So at
9 what point does the City Solicitor's
10 office -- or what can you do to help
11 us take back our communities?
12 Because these folks are almost like
13 predators.

14 Majority Leader mentioned
15 several times in these chambers that
16 they're leaving New York because New
17 York is cracking down on them. So
18 what can we do as a city to prevent
19 us from having to get to that point,
20 right? We should be proactive.
21 We're seeing what they're doing in
22 other neighborhoods. What are we
23 doing in the city to be able to
24 protect our neighborhoods from

1 predator businesses?

2 MS. GARCIA: That's your
3 small, simple question. I will say,
4 if I tallied up all the meetings on
5 the different topics that I handle,
6 nuisance businesses is probably one
7 of the top-rated in terms of volume
8 of meetings that I'm in and calls
9 that I'm on, because it is a game of
10 whack-a-mole, right? It is -- you
11 squash one and they pop up again,
12 and you squash one and they pop up
13 again.

14 And the hard thing about it
15 is they combine legal products and
16 illegal products, right? You know
17 that. And then we take their
18 business license away, and then they
19 pop up under another name. So one
20 thing that we -- besides ramping up,
21 so we have -- in this fiscal year,
22 we hired five new attorneys for the
23 code enforcement team. And they are
24 literally hitting thousands of

1 cases, working very closely with the
2 police department on 4,400 cases.

3 The other thing we did,
4 which is -- was gold, is to hire an
5 investigator for that unit. And the
6 thing that he is doing is going
7 through public records to find joint
8 ownership between all of these. And
9 so one thing we're trying to do
10 right now is figure out the right
11 way to hold successors liable,
12 right, for their predecessors,
13 because it's all the same people,
14 right?

15 So that is something that
16 we are very invested in doing. I
17 unfortunately don't have all the
18 answers. I -- we are trying any
19 kind of innovation, and I know that
20 Council has been really supportive.
21 But we do have -- and we can do a
22 fuller briefing with the Office of
23 Public Safety and L&I, because we do
24 have these meetings. But it is

1 really tricky in particular because
2 some of the businesses have certain
3 through lines that would give them
4 certain legal protections.

5 And I can brief you -- that
6 was very vague. I'll brief you
7 offline about that. But it is --
8 but it is a struggle. I'll just
9 admit it is a real struggle. But
10 our investigator is worth his salary
11 in gold because he is starting to
12 unpeel all of that gristle that gets
13 tied up in these -- like the shell
14 game that they're playing.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
16 recognize that we have to be
17 cautious about racial profiling. I
18 get it.

19 MS. GARCIA: Yeah.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: But
21 if it's the same community who is
22 being problematic in our
23 neighborhoods, then we need to --
24 we're losing a lot of our young

1 people as a result of these
2 establishments opening up in our
3 neighborhoods.

4 And so I think that we're
5 sending mixed messages as a city,
6 right? We're saying we want to be
7 open for business, and come bring
8 your business into our city, and
9 open up in neighborhoods, and, you
10 know, we want to have a nightlife
11 and we want to be like a New York.
12 And we -- but we recognize that --
13 well, we have to recognize that
14 maybe we're not ready to be a New
15 York, right? That maybe we don't
16 have the capacity, that maybe, you
17 know, we don't live on top of each
18 other like they do in New York.

19 And that these types of
20 businesses are really impacting
21 quality of life in neighborhoods.
22 And they are the reason why we're
23 losing some of our young people and
24 our young people are being exposed

1 to certain types of products,
2 because there is a lack of
3 enforcement, because we're afraid of
4 people saying that we're profiling a
5 certain community.

6 And so I want us to do
7 whatever we absolutely can do.

8 There's been funding for a nuisance
9 business task force, hiring
10 infectors and task force and health
11 department. We need to do more.

12 And so I am going to ask you to do
13 what we can. I want to be a partner
14 in that. You know, in some blocks I
15 have four and five of these
16 businesses, and it's just -- it's a
17 problem.

18 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. If I
19 could say two more things. One,
20 it's cities across the country. So
21 this -- and I'm on the board of the
22 International Municipal Lawyers
23 Association, and we're all
24 struggling with this, big city,

1 small cities, because the demand is
2 there, right? There's the supply
3 and the demand, right? And we have
4 product after product after product,
5 whether it's something ingested or
6 something on our phones that's just
7 giving us these addictive-like
8 behaviors, right? And forming those
9 pathways.

10 And so there's got to be
11 two sides of it, right? And that's
12 why we've done the tobacco and the
13 vaping and that whole line of cases
14 that we've worked on to try supply
15 and demand. And the demand is
16 really hard because of -- quite
17 honestly, I'm not a doctor, but the
18 way that brains are being rewired to
19 want that hit all the time.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIR BASS: Chair
23 recognizes Councilmember Katherine
24 Gilmore Richardson, and then

1 Councilman J. Young.

2 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

3 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
4 very much, Madam Chair. And thank
5 you all so much for being here this
6 morning. I'll start with our thank-
7 yous. Of course, thank you to our
8 City Solicitor, Renee Garcia, to
9 Sam, your Chief of Staff; thank you
10 very much for your responsiveness to
11 the entire legislative unit. Lewis
12 Rosman, our old friend from Council.
13 Raynell Staley, thank you very much,
14 Raynell, and I hope you're
15 listening. And Zoe, thank you so
16 much. Joanna Klein from the Code
17 Enforcement Unit. Jim Zwolak, who
18 I've had an opportunity to work with
19 even back when I was a staffer;
20 thank you very much for always being
21 helpful with information and
22 guidance relative to the
23 delinquency, real estate, sheriff
24 sale, and lien cases, of which we

1 just sent another one today. So
2 thank you very, very much.

3 And for the Defenders
4 Association, thank you so much to
5 Keisha Hudson, our Chief Defender.
6 Thank you to Everett Gillison, we
7 appreciate you being here and your
8 presence today. And also to Rhonda
9 Harvey and the entire Harvey family.
10 They are defenders through and
11 through. So I just wanted to give
12 each of them a shout-out and say
13 thank you.

14 I wanted to go back to the
15 point of my colleague, Councilmember
16 Lozada, to nuisance businesses for
17 law department. Can you provide an
18 update on the nuisance business unit
19 in the law department? How many
20 nuisance abatement plans is law
21 currently working on? And how does
22 law department work with other city
23 departments to ensure we pursue
24 fines and fees for businesses who

1 owe the city money based on code
2 enforcement court cases?

3 And then to the point that
4 was brought up during your response
5 to Councilmember Lozada, if you
6 could speak to how you all are
7 enforcing the new legislation that
8 we just passed relative to the
9 businesses that are changing their
10 LLCs. And so -- to try to avoid,
11 you know, their abatement plans.

12 MS. GARCIA: I have some
13 figures here. And then if you want
14 more figures -- well, I'll give this
15 to you in writing, and then if you
16 want more figures, I'll give it to
17 you as well.

18 So in our nuisance and
19 property unit for this fiscal year,
20 so July 1st 2025 to current, the
21 unit received 77 referrals. We
22 filed 16 matters in court. We have
23 25 referrals sitting, and there's 10
24 that are kind of in the pipeline for

1 4,400 cases. We have a nuisance
2 abatement plan request 48. I don't
3 know of those 48, I can follow up on
4 how many are completed. We've filed
5 two restraining orders and we have
6 at least five BLUR appeals that are
7 pending. If you need more, I have
8 figures on short dumping. I have
9 figures on health appeals. I have a
10 lot of figures.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
12 RICHARDSON: Health appeals would be
13 great because I think that goes into
14 the issue that we were talking about
15 the other week, Councilmember
16 Lozada, relative to the businesses
17 with the permits, the cigarette
18 permits as well.

19 MS. GARCIA: Yep. So
20 tobacco enforcement, again, on this
21 fiscal year, we've handled 29
22 appeals at BLUR for tobacco
23 enforcement.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

1 RICHARDSON: Okay.

2 MS. GARCIA: Overall, in
3 this fiscal year, we filed 1,045
4 cases, and we've handled 1,600 court
5 appearances and 1,800 administrative
6 board appearances. We've collected,
7 I think this is one of your
8 questions, \$2.6 million in fines and
9 fees.

10 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

11 RICHARDSON: Okay.

12 MS. GARCIA: And we have --
13 we've hired collection counsel that
14 does contingency work, because
15 collection is actually really
16 difficult when the businesses are
17 popping up and down.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

19 RICHARDSON: Yeah.

20 MS. GARCIA: So we've sent
21 a lot more out, so those collection
22 numbers should go up. We just don't
23 have the capacity to run around
24 town. So we have collection counsel

1 for that.

2 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

3 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be
4 great. And I'll get the rest of the
5 numbers -- of the numbers later.

6 MS. GARCIA: Sure.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

8 RICHARDSON: But I also -- I wanted
9 to -- and I know I just sent this to
10 you last night, but I have to get
11 this on the record. Because I serve
12 in dual positions now and work
13 closely with my district
14 Councilmember, Councilmember Jones,
15 very closely.

16 But I have to get this on
17 the record relative to the letter,
18 first-class mail, that we received
19 from one of the former presidents of
20 WRA, Mr. Reed. And I'm putting this
21 on the record because I know he
22 watches, and so I just want him to
23 know that we did send that
24 information to our City Solicitor

1 and her team for their follow-up.

2 L&I is doing their part.

3 I mean, they have gone out
4 there on numerous occasions relative
5 to the two properties in question
6 that are owned by the same owner,
7 residential properties in
8 Wynnefield. And we just need the
9 follow-up to take place because we
10 are being inundated in that
11 community by owners, just like the
12 one that was referenced in that
13 letter that we received last night.

14 And I know the community
15 would be greatly appreciative of the
16 follow-up. I will tell you that two
17 of the properties on that block --
18 and for reference, there's only
19 three properties on that side of the
20 street, two of the three have gone
21 up for sale and two of the three
22 have sold that are directly next
23 door to that one particular problem
24 property. So it is an issue. And

1 we're talking about, you know,
2 houses that are of great worth.

3 And so for those folks who
4 are longtime Wynnefield residents to
5 move as a result of that nuisance
6 residential property, it's an issue.
7 And all in that corridor we have a
8 challenge. We had the folks that
9 were having the paid pool parties in
10 a residential neighborhood, selling
11 sections, hookah and liquor. I
12 mean, we have been inundated in that
13 section with nuisance residential
14 properties. And so I just had to
15 put that on the record because we
16 just received that letter just
17 yesterday. I just sent that to you
18 all last night. But I'm just
19 putting it on the record because I
20 know that Mr. Reed listens.

21 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. And,
22 Majority Leader, we do have an
23 update. Would you like to put that
24 on the record or shall we submit

1 that in writing?

2 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

3 RICHARDSON: Yes, we can submit it
4 in writing because of the sensitive
5 nature of that particular location.
6 But I just want them to know that we
7 are following up.

8 MS. GARCIA: Okay. I'll
9 have a written response to you --
10 first I'll send it to you so we can
11 work with how to respond to the
12 community.

13 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

14 RICHARDSON: Yep. And I want to
15 thank L&I and the team for all their
16 work for following up, because they
17 were really helpful in coordinating
18 and going back and forth over the
19 last year. Okay.

20 MS. GARCIA: Absolutely.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

22 RICHARDSON: All right. Thank you.
23 Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

24 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,

1 Council Lady, Majority Leader.

2 Chair recognizes Councilmember J.

3 Young.

4 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
5 you, Madam Chair. A couple of
6 questions for the law department. I
7 know right now we're suing Glock,
8 but our police department still uses
9 Glock. And I know as an attorney,
10 when, you know, I had clients, we're
11 suing somebody or some entity, we
12 don't use that product or use that
13 service anymore while we're suing
14 them. So what advice have you given
15 our police department while we're
16 suing Glock but still using their
17 products?

18 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. That's
19 what makes the behavior doubly
20 offensive, is that we do use Glocks,
21 and you'll hear the police
22 department say they're very
23 reliable. They're very reliable
24 guns. And then on the flip side,

1 they're advertising that you can
2 make them into automatic weapons,
3 right? And that is at the heart of
4 our case. How could you -- how
5 could you play both sides like that,
6 right?

7 The police department also
8 mentioned that to turn over all
9 their weapons would take probably
10 five years. So at that point, we're
11 not going through that. We're
12 hoping to work with them. Honestly,
13 what we want is a better product,
14 and we want them to stop
15 advertising. So that's where we are
16 now. There's a long road and
17 there's lots of discussions to have,
18 but you've really hit on a point
19 that makes it like just doubly
20 insulting to us that they would
21 produce something and advertise
22 something that, number one, is not
23 legal. It's not legal for everybody
24 to have automatic weapons, right?

1 But that can hurt our police.

2 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I

3 mean, essentially to me it's just --
4 even if we win this case, we're just
5 going to get our money back that we
6 are already giving them. So it's --
7 you know, even if it does take five
8 years, I think that we should show
9 that we're willing to, you know, put
10 our money where our mouth is and
11 start that process. Because if we
12 don't, then Glock is winning either
13 way. So I just wanted to put that
14 on the record.

15 I have another question
16 regarding the retail delivery tax.
17 In the legislation itself, it says
18 that in the -- I guess, in the
19 preamble, it says, "Whereas, the
20 steady increase of delivery vehicles
21 on streets has led and continues to
22 lead to increased traffic
23 congestion, deterioration of the
24 streets, vehicle-related area

1 emissions and other harms and cost
2 to the city and the residents." So
3 why are we taxing the retailer
4 instead of the delivery services
5 that are causing these things that
6 happen on our streets?

7 MS. GARCIA: Sure. That is
8 something that is privileged
9 information, unless the
10 administration wants to talk about
11 that. So I will send -- the Mayor's
12 office is in the room, and will note
13 that question.

14 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So
15 the reason why we're taxed -- the
16 city has proposed to tax retailers
17 versus the delivery services is
18 privileged; is that what you're
19 saying?

20 MS. GARCIA: Any
21 conversations that I've had with the
22 Mayor on why she's doing one tax or
23 another tax would be privileged,
24 yes.

1 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Okay.

2 Would it be legal for us to tax the
3 delivery services?

4 MS. GARCIA: That is a
5 question that I can answer for you
6 in privilege. I will submit a
7 written response to you.

8 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I'm
9 asking -- I'm waiving privilege.
10 I'm waiving it. Can you answer that
11 question now for us?

12 MS. GARCIA: I cannot
13 answer that question right now
14 because I have not done -- I
15 personally have not done that
16 research. If it's been done -- but
17 even if it was, I would not give you
18 that in public.

19 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
20 you. My last question for you is
21 regarding parity for your employees
22 with, I want to say, other legal
23 departments, right? With the
24 District Attorney's Office, the

1 Defender's Office. Can you tell us
2 where some of the, I guess, the
3 salary disparities are between
4 attorneys that are doing similar
5 work between your departments and
6 like the District Attorney's Office?

7 And I mean, I've noticed
8 some of the salaries for District
9 Attorney employees are a lot higher
10 than some of the salaries for folks
11 working in our law department. Can
12 you talk to us about why there are
13 certain disparities?

14 MS. GARCIA: Sure. I have
15 a pay plan, which I'm happy to share
16 for everybody who wants it. And it
17 goes by title. And then there are
18 steps in each title. So the entry
19 level is assistant city solicitor,
20 and there are five or six steps, and
21 the Deputy and five or six steps.
22 And the same for staff members as
23 well. We have pay scales. I do not
24 differentiate between those in the

1 child welfare unit and the code
2 unit, right? We are looking for the
3 same level of experience, same pay
4 throughout.

5 My understanding, and I
6 know he's going to be here next
7 week, is that the District
8 Attorney's Office is not set up that
9 way. I can't speak for the
10 Defenders on how they do it, but
11 that's how we set our office up.

12 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
13 you. The same question for the
14 Defender Association. Like, how do
15 you set up your pay scale amongst
16 your attorneys? I know that now
17 your attorneys are represented. But
18 how was that pay scale set up for
19 your entry-level attorneys versus
20 your higher-level, more seasoned
21 attorneys?

22 MS. HUDSON: Thank you for
23 that question, Councilmember Young.
24 And I had started to talk about this

1 before, but just to lay the
2 groundwork, that the Defender
3 Association's starting salary is far
4 below that compared to other
5 attorneys and other public defenders
6 across the Commonwealth, but also in
7 New Jersey, where their starting
8 salary is \$85,000.

9 And in Maryland, that's the
10 starting salary as well. Our
11 starting salary is \$75,000. My
12 understanding, I believe the law
13 department and the District
14 Attorneys are on the same starting
15 level, which I believe is \$79,000 or
16 \$80,000 starting. But Solicitor
17 Garcia can answer that question.

18 We have a contract with the
19 UAW. Our attorneys are unionized.
20 So our starting is at \$75,000 and it
21 goes up each year. We are a unique
22 organization in that 15 percent or
23 so of our staff have been there for
24 decades. So people have spent

1 literal decades practicing as
2 attorneys in our office, which is --
3 which is wonderful service. But we
4 also have to make sure that we
5 account for that experience.

6 And so we have a 30-year
7 scale so that the salary goes up by
8 \$2,000 every year. But it's a
9 30-year scale to accommodate for
10 having a significant workforce that
11 has been with the organization for
12 decades.

13 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
14 you. And, Madam Defender, can you
15 tell us what -- I guess, what are
16 the annual or the average percentage
17 increases in salary that you -- that
18 you negotiated with your employees?

19 MS. HUDSON: With our
20 attorney union?

21 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Yeah.
22 Well, the attorney -- with your
23 attorney union and non-attorney
24 union.

1 MS. HUDSON: Right. So
2 we're at the bargaining table now
3 with our non-attorney union. And we
4 are still discussing where we can
5 land on salaries given the budget
6 outlook.

7 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Yeah.
8 I'm just bringing that up because,
9 you know, looking at where we are,
10 you know, our city employees went on
11 strike for 3.5 percent, right? And
12 so just trying to maintain that
13 parity when it comes to increases in
14 salary and looking at where some of
15 our other represented employees are.
16 I know your employees are not city
17 employees, but you're asking the
18 city for funding. So I'm just
19 trying to ensure that there's parity
20 when it comes to those increases as
21 well.

22 MS. HUDSON: Right. And a
23 reminder, again, because we are not
24 a city agency, we don't have a

1 pension. We have a 403(b) that we
2 have to pay into and take care of --
3 for our staff. But that's another,
4 you know, distinction between how
5 our agency is treated -- pitted
6 against other agencies. And so the
7 fact that we don't have a pension is
8 something that we have to account
9 for in our 403(b) benefits, which is
10 something that we are discussing at
11 the bargaining table for our
12 non-attorneys right now.

13 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Okay.
14 Thank you. Thank you. I heard the
15 bell. Thank you.

16 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
17 Councilman. Chair recognizes -- I'm
18 going to go to Councilmember Landau
19 because I know you said you just had
20 a couple of questions real quick.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Yep.

22 CHAIR BASS: Okay.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

24 Thank you. Thank you.

1 CHAIR BASS: It's all
2 right. Go ahead.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
4 Thank you. Thank you again. So my
5 questions are for the law
6 department. I wanted to talk a
7 little bit about technology,
8 following up on the Majority
9 Leader's questions about nuisance
10 businesses and the information that
11 we have that you've hired an
12 investigator. What role does the
13 law department play in weighing in
14 on technology for all of our
15 departments? It feels like a lot of
16 the grievances that come to us and
17 that we pass along to all city
18 departments and agencies are really
19 about what seems like simple
20 communication issues that also we
21 could be using technology to connect
22 more dots.

23 It seems that for all of
24 the issues that a nuisance business

1 might have, even if we have them in
2 different tech silos, databases in
3 the city, why are we not connecting
4 them? So start with, how much --
5 like, what role does the law
6 department play in overseeing all
7 technology? And again, I want to
8 just touch on one other thing that
9 came up today. Even contracting, we
10 know when contracts come up, we know
11 when they need to be conformed, we
12 know when they need to be fully
13 executed, and then when someone
14 needs to be paid.

15 This seems like we are so
16 far behind the times in what should
17 be happening quickly and to get to
18 like the really strong meat of your
19 work instead of dealing with some of
20 the smaller administrative things
21 that could be easily done.

22 MS. GARCIA: Thank you for
23 the questions. I'll take the
24 technology question first. I have

1 two hats. One is as a department
2 head and one as a city solicitor,
3 right? So I'm responsible for 415
4 people and the technology that they
5 use, right? So I have -- you know,
6 within budget, et cetera, I have
7 some ability to get new technologies
8 to help us out there. So I'm
9 getting a real case management
10 system after 30 years of using a
11 piece of nonsense that was
12 proprietary, right? And with that,
13 I can track a lot more data, right?
14 So that will be key.

15 On the other side, so on
16 the City Solicitor side, I am in the
17 room and trying to figure out,
18 particularly with Philly Stat 360,
19 how to get our data into their
20 bucket so they can spit it back at
21 us, right? And the same with
22 Revenue and the police. And we have
23 endless meetings about this. And
24 Philly Stat 360 is really the hub of

1 that. So I'm there as kind of a
2 stakeholder because I have data,
3 right?

4 And then there's kind of
5 the third hat that I wear; any
6 contracts for technology, right? I
7 know you're very interested in AI.
8 All of that goes through me and
9 they're very heavily negotiated. So
10 there's kind of three lines of
11 responsibility around technology.

12 For contracting, I do want
13 to put on the record the work. I
14 know it is frustrating. It is
15 frustrating for everybody. I have a
16 lot of contracts, so it's
17 frustrating for us too. But there
18 are some tangible things that we
19 have done that I'll just read
20 through, knowing that we're getting
21 short on time. So this is work
22 that's done with the law department,
23 CAO, Procurement, and Finance. So
24 we accelerated the approval process

1 for all amendments, eliminating 10
2 days from the overall conformance
3 timeline for amendments.

4 We reviewed proposed scopes
5 and budgets in advance of contract
6 routing to expedite law's review,
7 collaborated with Procurement and
8 OIT on an RFP to update and
9 streamline all city contracting
10 templates. Met biweekly with city
11 stakeholders to identify contracting
12 issues and problem solving in real
13 time.

14 And along with Procurement
15 and CAO, led fiscal year '27
16 procurement kickoff to establish
17 timelines and best practices for
18 departments to ensure timely
19 conformance. So we're not seeing --
20 we saw this year a smoothing out of
21 contracts coming throughout the
22 year. We still have to do better.
23 And the procurement commissioner
24 will tell you that, but usually this

1 time we're starting to drown and
2 we're okay and we're moving things
3 and we're cranking.

4 So, you know, they may look
5 like small things, but all of this
6 together, I personally feel that we
7 are moving in the right direction
8 and law is in the middle of all
9 that.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I
11 appreciate. And I want to shout out
12 the Majority Leader also for all of
13 her work on this process. This is
14 -- you know, as somebody who worked
15 for the city for so many years,
16 sometimes you get used to the
17 machine not working well. You have
18 to do a deep dive into it to fix it.

19 But I think you said
20 earlier today, to someone else's
21 question, that law should be the
22 center for all contracts. And I
23 don't know all the details of what
24 happens in the administration, but

1 that kind of feels right. It feels
2 like you are the ones who could --
3 this is an issue of justice.

4 This is an issue for so
5 many of the organizations who we are
6 funding to do the important work on
7 the ground. They are struggling if
8 they can't get their money on time.
9 And that's an issue of justice. The
10 nuisance business issue is an issue
11 of justice. It's all -- it all
12 comes under the same guidelines.
13 I've got to jump in with two more
14 questions real quick. One, I wanted
15 to follow up on a hearing that we
16 had about GPS monitoring of our --
17 of our youth.

18 And this is -- I wanted to
19 know about -- with this -- we have a
20 vendor with Track Group. And it
21 disclosed that the City of
22 Philadelphia can access individuals
23 GPS location data for up to seven
24 years after a case is closed. Track

1 Group then stores all the data
2 indefinitely in their own
3 facilities.

4 And the goal is to assess
5 whether current data retention and
6 storage practices align with the
7 city's legal obligations and
8 understand the potential privacy,
9 civil liberties, and whatnot. This
10 is what I want to know. So does the
11 contract for the GPS monitor vendor
12 include parameters around
13 collection, storage, and sharing of
14 individual's data? If yes -- and
15 then also can you share more about
16 these parameters? I'm very
17 interested in this.

18 MS. GARCIA: I probably
19 looked at that contract at some
20 point. I will tell you in our
21 general provisions -- that all of
22 those obligations are included in
23 our general provisions. So the
24 collection of data, the storing of

1 data, the sharing of data, all of
2 that is covered in myriad places in
3 the terms that we give to everybody.
4 So I can provide a copy of that.
5 I'm looking at my team to know if
6 they know anything about this
7 contract in particular. But I will
8 follow up with you on that and
9 highlight the sections that you're
10 asking about.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I
12 appreciate that so much. And then
13 finally, I was so pleased to be able
14 to -- when the Mayor came out with
15 her consumer protection bill that
16 you guys worked on for so long, it
17 was so wonderful to be able to
18 introduce that on our behalf. What
19 -- for -- the Glock case is so
20 exciting to me. That's exactly what
21 we should be using this law for.

22 And so what emerging issues
23 are you seeing, and any trends in
24 especially things like digital fraud

1 and scams that is -- that are
2 harming Philadelphians? What's next
3 on this?

4 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. We have
5 some subpoenas out there that I can
6 tell you privately about. But
7 you've hit it. It has moved to the
8 digital space. It was probably for
9 a long time contractors with like
10 bogus agreements and stuff, right?
11 And now it is -- I don't know, that
12 -- you know, something I get on my
13 phone that I click on and all of a
14 sudden, you know, my data is gone.

15 It is much harder to trace
16 because these perpetrators are often
17 not even here, right? And so we are
18 trying to pull that out to see if we
19 can work -- and we talk with law
20 enforcement to see if there's
21 anything that we can do there. A
22 lot of it is education and we're
23 working with the CEO on education
24 about fraud.

1 And then I would say
2 financial predatory practices is
3 something we're very focused on as
4 well because there's still a lot of
5 junk products out there, and it's
6 easier than ever to apply for them,
7 because you can just apply on your
8 phone. You don't have to go to an
9 office or anything. So that's a big
10 part of our focus right now.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

12 Thank you so much. This is one of
13 my favorite days or one of my
14 favorite panels. I can sit here all
15 day, as we all know. Last thing,
16 Solicitor Garcia, I have a request
17 for you. When we hear from the
18 Public Defender's Office this year
19 in particular, but every single year
20 about the incredible holistic work
21 that they're doing that is
22 constitutionally required, that is
23 helping us to reduce crime and
24 recidivism here in the City of

1 Philadelphia, again, I say this is
2 an issue of justice. We are all
3 winning because of their work.

4 They have expenses that the
5 DA's Office does not have. I would
6 ask you can you please advocate for
7 the increase in their budget as a
8 reason for justice, for the -- for
9 the betterment of Philadelphia? I
10 would ask you, will you please
11 advocate for an increase in their
12 budget?

13 MS. GARCIA: I think the
14 request to the Mayor's Office has
15 come quite clearly out today.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
17 Thank you very much.

18 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
19 Councilmember. Chair recognizes
20 Councilmember Phillips.

21 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
22 Thank you, Chairwoman Bass. I just
23 wanted to ask a quick question for
24 the delivery tax, Solicitor. If --

1 I want to know, does the delivery
2 tax exempt places like -- or
3 entities like -- companies like
4 FedEx, UPS, DHL, USPS?

5 MS. GARCIA: The tax is on
6 the point of sale. So it would be
7 -- I don't want to name any big
8 warehouse stores. So it's not on
9 the carrier, it's on the retailer,
10 who's -- the customer is paying,
11 right? I'm entering to a
12 transaction with Target. It's on
13 the point of sale.

14 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
15 Right. So therefore, a company like
16 FedEx, the retailer can actually --
17 so basically the retailer is
18 absorbing the tax and it's being
19 passed off to the consumer, correct?

20 MS. GARCIA: And that's the
21 way -- my understanding, it's the
22 way it's set up. But I really want
23 to defer to Rob Dubow because I'm
24 staring at a lot of words, and he's

1 the master of all details.

2 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

3 Okay. Yeah. One of the things I
4 was thinking about is that I know
5 there's like -- there's supposed to
6 be no tax on food -- you know, it's
7 just -- it's just only solely -- not
8 on food, but there may be companies
9 that may find their way to kind of
10 angle themselves to not, you know,
11 be a part -- to be a part of like,
12 oh yeah, we're not food. And
13 they're going to end up being --
14 they end up taxing everything at
15 that point.

16 MS. GARCIA: Sure. I mean,
17 implementation is something to
18 consider.

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

20 Okay. And I just have another
21 question. You set a target of 3,250
22 nuisance-related cases annually.
23 How much of that work relies on
24 outside counsel versus internal

1 staff to support? If we're
2 increasing funds for outside firms,
3 how does that translate to faster or
4 more effective enforcement in
5 neighborhoods?

6 MS. GARCIA: We don't use
7 outside counsel for our code
8 enforcement.

9 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
10 Okay. That's great. And then also,
11 is it a number -- are there a number
12 of violations or severity issue,
13 community complaints, that you do in
14 coordination with the Philadelphia
15 Police Department and L&I when it
16 comes to these cases? Are you
17 coordinating with them closely?

18 MS. GARCIA: Closely.

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
20 Okay.

21 MS. GARCIA: Absolutely.

22 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
23 All right. And then one of my final
24 questions, which is really important

1 -- well, I wouldn't say important,
2 but I'm just really curious about;
3 relatively important. In the budget
4 detail I see Epiq Discovery
5 Solutions.

6 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

7 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
8 Increasing to about \$660,000 for
9 e-discovery services. Can you
10 please explain what is driving that
11 increase and why is it important for
12 services -- these services, why is
13 it important -- so important for
14 them to increase the cost?

15 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. So
16 that's -- e-discovery is -- in a
17 litigation, we have to exchange
18 documents, right? In civil
19 discovery, you should exchange
20 documents. And most of our, if not
21 -- almost all of our data is
22 electronic now. We don't have, you
23 know, photocopy, like back in the
24 day, you used to have paper

1 documents and you had to photocopy
2 them and send them to the other
3 side. It's all electronic now. And
4 there's so much more data because
5 people are using Teams and
6 SharePoint and Copilot and all of
7 it. There's an enormous amount of
8 data.

9 So when we're in a
10 litigation and we have to turn over
11 information or receive information,
12 we use Epiq eDiscovery. They are
13 our e-discovery platform. We don't
14 have a platform within the city.
15 And so that data would get pulled,
16 emails, Teams, data from SharePoint
17 would get pulled and put into the
18 eDiscovery's platform, and then
19 produced from there out to either
20 the plaintiff or the defendant, and
21 vice versa. If they're producing
22 something to us, it goes into this
23 platform.

24 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

1 Okay. Thank you so much,
2 Chairwoman; and thank you,
3 Solicitor, for some of the support
4 that you provided our office for the
5 past year. And we're looking
6 forward to continued growth in this
7 department. Thank you.

8 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

9 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
10 Councilmember. Chair recognizes
11 Councilmember Young.

12 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
13 you. I want to get back on that --
14 the question I had regarding the
15 retail tax. But you -- so you said
16 the Finance Director may have more
17 details or information on that. And
18 I'm just asking, this is the budget
19 hearing, is there anyone from
20 Finance or Budget here that can
21 answer some of those questions that
22 my colleague and I may have
23 regarding that?

24 MS. GARCIA: Sorry, your

1 question is: can --

2 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So
3 essentially -- yeah, I mean, we --
4 you've asked -- Councilmember
5 Phillips asked a question and you
6 said, well, Finance is better suited
7 to answer that question. So I'm
8 just asking, is there someone from
9 Finance or Budget here that can
10 answer the questions that we have
11 related to that particular tax?
12 Because, you know, we are in the
13 middle of budget hearings where that
14 piece of legislation is a part of
15 this process. So just asking if
16 there's somebody here.

17 MS. GARCIA: I don't
18 believe there is anybody here. I
19 think the question was whether we
20 expect that the retailers will
21 absorb the tax or pass it on to the
22 consumer?

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Yeah.

24 MS. GARCIA: I don't know.

1 I did watch the hearing last week,
2 so I don't know if that particular
3 question was asked, but we can
4 certainly pass the question up and
5 have a written response.

6 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So in
7 your legal opinion then, right, when
8 you're giving advice -- and I know
9 you'll probably say it's privileged
10 information, but as we are going
11 through the process of all the what-
12 ifs as attorneys, we give our
13 clients all the what-ifs.

14 MS. GARCIA: Sure.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Now,
16 has that question been -- has the
17 law department opined on that? Has
18 that been one of the what-ifs that
19 has been asked, and what is the
20 outcome of that?

21 MS. GARCIA: All right.
22 You know that I can't tell you what
23 I've talked to the client about. I
24 can't tell you what they've asked

1 about.

2 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
3 you. So that's just a question that
4 I guess I'm going to follow up with
5 another question in writing
6 regarding that question, and we can
7 get some answers to that.

8 MS. GARCIA: Sure.

9 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
10 you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

11 CHAIR BASS: Thank you.
12 Okay. We're done a little bit early
13 unless anyone else has any
14 questions. And if not --
15 Councilmember, you have questions?
16 Okay. So this committee will stand
17 in recess until 2:00 p.m. Thank
18 you.

19 (Lunch recess.)

20 CHAIR BASS: Good
21 afternoon. This afternoon we're
22 going to have scheduled testimony
23 from the First Judicial District and
24 the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office.

1 Mr. Stefan, will you please call the
2 next panel to testify?

3 THE CLERK: The next panel
4 is Judge Nina Wright-Padilla,
5 President Judge Court of Common
6 Pleas and Chair, Administrative
7 Governing Board. And then we'll
8 also have, in the Sheriff's Office,
9 Rochelle Bilal, Sheriff for the City
10 and County of Philadelphia.

11 CHAIR BASS: Good
12 afternoon. Good afternoon.

13 SHERIFF BILAL: Good
14 afternoon.

15 CHAIR BASS: Okay. And
16 whoever wants to go first, you can
17 please state your name for the
18 record and proceed with your
19 testimony.

20 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
21 Yes. I am Nina Wright Padilla,
22 President Judge Philadelphia Court
23 of Common Pleas. I'm very, very
24 happy to be here. With me I have

1 Richard McSorley. He's our Court
2 Administrator.

3 MR. MCSORLEY: Good morning
4 -- afternoon.

5 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
6 And I can't speak for the sheriff.
7 I think it's proper for her to speak
8 for herself.

9 CHAIR BASS: Right. She'll
10 -- she'll go --

11 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
12 Oh, later.

13 CHAIR BASS: -- as soon as
14 you're finished with the testimony.

15 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
16 I'm sorry.

17 CHAIR BASS: That's okay.
18 It's all right.

19 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
20 Okay. Good afternoon, members of
21 City Council. I am Judge Nina
22 Wright Padilla, President Judge
23 Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas
24 and Chair of the Administrative

1 Governing Board. I am pleased to
2 provide testimony on the First
3 Judicial District's Fiscal Year 2027
4 Operating Budget.

5 First Judicial District is
6 essential to the daily functioning
7 of Philadelphia, handling hundreds
8 of thousands of cases each year,
9 while ensuring fair, timely, and
10 efficient justice across all
11 divisions of the court. We drive
12 outcomes in public safety, community
13 stability, and case resolution
14 through strengthened courtroom
15 safety and coordinated programs such
16 as Accelerated Misdemeanor Program
17 and the Neighborhood Wellness Court,
18 addressing complex challenges
19 including behavioral health and the
20 opioid crises. This progress
21 depends on a strong workforce.

22 During the recent union
23 negotiations, we sat side by side
24 with the City of Philadelphia and

1 members of the mayor's office to
2 bring those contacts close together,
3 and the -- and the contracts close.
4 Excuse me. I am certain that the
5 city would say that the FJD legal
6 team led by Eric Assini -- raise
7 your hand, Eric, thank you -- was
8 instrumental in bringing those
9 negotiations to a successful
10 conclusion. At that time, we had
11 expected that the same consideration
12 for the salary increases would go
13 forward for our non-represented
14 staff. We have over 800
15 non-represented employees in
16 critical roles. We are here today
17 to simply ask that the same salary
18 increase be granted to those
19 employees as well.

20 Therefore, to maintain
21 operations and remain competitive,
22 we are requesting a three percent
23 salary adjustment for those
24 employees, which is the same as the

1 union increase and the continuation
2 of the fifth salary step for
3 eligible staff. This step was also
4 something that was negotiated with
5 the unions. This is not about
6 expansion; it is about sustaining
7 performance, preventing wage
8 compression, and retaining the
9 talent needed to keep our courts
10 running effectively.

11 With continued partnership
12 and support from the city, the First
13 Judicial District will remain a
14 stable, high performing court
15 advancing safety, fairness, and
16 opportunity for all Philadelphians.
17 We have provided written testimony,
18 and we are available for any
19 questions you may have. Thank you.

20 CHAIR BASS: Thank you very
21 much for your testimony. We're
22 going to hold questions until we --
23 after we hear from the Sheriff.

24 Madam Sheriff, please state

1 your name and proceed.

2 SHERIFF BILAL: Good
3 afternoon. I'm Rochelle Bilal,
4 Sheriff for the City and County of
5 Philadelphia. First of all, good
6 afternoon.

7 CHAIR BASS: Good
8 afternoon.

9 SHERIFF BILAL: And I don't
10 see Council President, so I'll say
11 Councilwoman Cindy Bass.

12 CHAIR BASS: Yes.

13 SHERIFF BILAL: It is both
14 an honor and a privilege to appear
15 before you today. I am Rochelle
16 Bilal, Sheriff for the City and
17 County of Philadelphia. Joining me
18 today, Jamison Rogers, Chief of
19 Staff; Patrick Lee, Chief Financial
20 Officer. And they can raise their
21 hands as I'm saying it, so you'll
22 know who they are.

23 Deputy CFO and Project
24 Manager, William Brownlee; Craig

1 Martin, Senior Chief Budget Officer;
2 Chief Deputy of Court Operation,
3 Sean Thornton; Inspector William
4 Hans, Family Court and
5 Transportation; Inspector Sean
6 Marshall, he's not here. He had a
7 death, his family, but he would
8 have, Internal Affairs and Training.
9 Chief Inspector David Fallen, Civil
10 Enforcement; Inspector Joshua Perez,
11 City Hall and Widener Building;
12 Chief Inspector Nicole Nobles of
13 specialized units, Warrants, Bike
14 Unit, K-9, Domestic Violence Task
15 Force Unit; and IT Director Eric
16 Chambers. Inspector Moore, who is
17 also part of our Warrant Unit. And
18 here we have today is Badia Beasley,
19 Mark Wilson from our Real Estate
20 division. Thank you, you-all for
21 being here today. We do appreciate
22 you standing.

23 Here are our plans for
24 Fiscal 2027. As we move into Fiscal

1 Year 2027, the Sheriff's Office
2 remains aligned with the city's
3 blueprint of Safer Philadelphia with
4 continuous guide -- with a
5 continuous guide of our operational
6 priorities.

7 Our core mission remains
8 the execution of all orders from the
9 First Judicial, while also expanding
10 our efforts to return excess
11 proceeds from sheriff sales to
12 residents, helping to restore
13 financial stability and promote
14 pathways to ownership. We will
15 continue to support the vision of
16 safer, cleaner, and greener
17 Philadelphia. Our Civil Enforcement
18 and Warrant Unit remains critical to
19 this effort, working in close
20 partnership with the District
21 Attorney's Office and the
22 Philadelphia Police Department to
23 apprehend fugitives, and ensure
24 compliance with the court orders.

1 Our Fiscal 2027 budget
2 request of 19,268,000: For several
3 years, this office has operated
4 under constraint funding levels,
5 resulting in ongoing staffing
6 challenges and impacts to service
7 delivery. As we enter this budget
8 cycle, we respectfully urge City
9 Council to remain grounded in the
10 first principle of the vision of
11 safer. Achieving that goal requires
12 not only alignment in priorities,
13 but also the necessary partnerships
14 and financial investment. We look
15 forward to working collaboratively
16 with City Council to ensure this
17 office is adequately resourced and
18 strengthened operations, support of
19 our personnel and continued delivery
20 of essential public safety services
21 to residents of Philadelphia.

22 Court security and staffing
23 needs personnel overtime impact.
24 Despite operating with staffing

1 shortages, our deputies continue to
2 provide consistent and professional
3 security across all court
4 facilities. However, this level of
5 service comes at a cost.

6 Current staffing levels
7 have resulted in significant
8 reliance on overtime contributing to
9 increased fatigue, higher sick --
10 higher sick leave usage, and long-
11 term strain on our workforce. While
12 our personnel continue to perform in
13 high level, this model cannot be
14 sustained.

15 For Fiscal '27, we are
16 prioritizing increased hiring of
17 deputy sheriffs and professional
18 staff, reduction in overtime
19 dependency, workforce stabilization
20 and wellness. Strategic investment
21 in personnel will allow us to reduce
22 overtime expenditures over time,
23 improve employment -- employee
24 retention, and maintain the high

1 level of security required within
2 our court system.

3 We've done election
4 security. The Sheriff Office played
5 a crucial role in supporting
6 election security efforts in 2024
7 and 2025 by supplementing law
8 enforcement presence citywide. As
9 we prepare for future election
10 cycles, we anticipate continued
11 demand for these services and will
12 plan accordingly to ensure safe,
13 secure, and orderly elections for
14 Philadelphia residents.

15 Interagency support and
16 operational flexibility. In
17 addition to our core responsibility,
18 the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office
19 consistently support partner
20 agencies across the City and
21 Commonwealth when called upon. We
22 work closely with the Pennsylvania
23 Office of Attorney General, the
24 Office of Emergency Management, and

1 the Philadelphia Police Department,
2 among others to provide critical
3 resources and personnel during
4 protests, large scale events, and
5 other high-profile operations.

6 On a near daily basis, we
7 are called upon. Our office assists
8 with the deployment of
9 transportation access, including
10 buses to support coordinated public
11 safety efforts, even when these
12 requests require significant
13 logistical coordination. While
14 continuing to meet our primary
15 obligation to the courts, this level
16 of inter-agency support reflects our
17 ability to operate flexibly and
18 efficiently, consistently doing more
19 with limited resources in the
20 service of the City of Philadelphia.

21 Let me say this, to be
22 clear, there are a lot of things
23 that we are a part of, but yet we
24 have not mentioned in the press

1 conference.

2 Competitive salaries,
3 retention, and personnel funding: A
4 significant challenge we face as we
5 enter 2027 -- Fiscal 2027, is
6 compensation. Deputy Sheriff's
7 salary in Philadelphia remains
8 non-competitive compared to others
9 in surrounding counties in
10 Pennsylvania. This disparity
11 continues to impact both recruitment
12 and retention, particularly as other
13 jurisdictions offer higher starting
14 salaries and more accessible
15 training pathways.

16 Addressing salaries'
17 competitiveness will be essential to
18 maintaining a qualified and stable
19 workforce. One of the most
20 significant structural challenges we
21 face in current requirement for
22 recruits to attend Pennsylvania
23 Sheriff's Academy of State College.
24 19-week residential program creates

1 barriers to entry, particularly for
2 candidates with families or local
3 obligations, and contributes to
4 delays in over -- on onboarding new
5 deputies.

6 Fiscal '27 and beyond, we
7 propose exploring a local sheriff
8 academy here in Philadelphia. A
9 local academy will shorten
10 onboarding timelines, improve
11 accessibility for diverse
12 candidates, enable rolling hiring
13 cycles rather than limited annual
14 classes, strengthen regional
15 collaboration. We have already
16 received written support from the
17 Sheriffs of Bucks, Delaware,
18 Montgomery, and Chester Counties who
19 have expressed interest in sending
20 recruits to Philadelphia based on
21 that academy -- regional academy
22 here.

23 Technology investment:
24 Strategic investments in technology

1 remains a priority in 2027. Our
2 partnership with Tyler Tech
3 Technologies will improve financial
4 transparency, accountability by
5 enhancing our ability to track
6 receipts, void transactions, and
7 disbursements in real time.

8 Additionally, the
9 implementation of LiveScan Plus
10 system will provide deputies with
11 mobile biometric identification
12 capabilities, allowing for real time
13 fingerprinting and warrant
14 verifications in the field. This
15 advancement will significantly
16 improve operational efficiency and
17 public safety outcomes.

18 Community engagement and
19 specialized units: In 2027, we plan
20 to expand our Bike and K-9 Units,
21 increasing visibility, law
22 enforcement presence in and around
23 court facilities and key areas such
24 as City Hall. We also remain

1 committed to community-based
2 initiatives.

3 In 2025, the Sheriff's
4 Office hosted free healthcare pop-up
5 clinics and provided critical
6 service to underserved communities,
7 an effort we plan to continue and
8 expand.

9 Additionally, Philadelphia
10 Sheriff's Office is proud to be the
11 first law enforcement agency in
12 Pennsylvania to achieve
13 certification in autism awareness.
14 This training ensures that both
15 sworn and professional staff are
16 better equipped to serve individuals
17 with autism and their families with
18 care and understanding.

19 Closing remarks here: with
20 your continued support, we are
21 confident we can meet the demands of
22 Fiscal 2027 and beyond. We remain
23 committed to working in partnership
24 with the City Council and all

1 stakeholders to strengthen public
2 safety, improve operational
3 efficiency, and serve the residents
4 of Philadelphia with professionalism
5 and integrity.

6 Before closing, I would
7 like to take a note. The importance
8 of ensuring that the Sheriff's
9 Office budget is fully reviewed and
10 properly considered as part of
11 Fiscal '27 process. Doing so will
12 allow us to effectively plan,
13 allocate resources, and continue
14 delivering the critical services
15 that the courts and the public rely
16 upon.

17 Lastly, on behalf of my
18 entire team, thank you for your
19 continued partnerships and support
20 in our shared mission to keep
21 Philadelphia safe, secure, and
22 thriving. Thank you for your time
23 and consideration, and I'm happy to
24 answer any questions.

1 CHAIR BASS: Well, thank
2 you for your testimony, and I want
3 to thank you for you and your
4 department and the First Judicial
5 District for all of your hard work.
6 And one of your statements earlier
7 was that the City of Philadelphia
8 works because you all work, and so I
9 don't want it to be in any way
10 diminished. The amount of work that
11 you all do, the high level of
12 responsibility that you have and the
13 -- you know, just overall, the way
14 you conduct yourselves and conduct
15 your departments. That doesn't
16 always get properly recognized.

17 There's a lot of criticism;
18 I think that there's particularly a
19 lot of criticism around African
20 American women in leadership. So I
21 just really want to say thank you
22 for all of the work that you do,
23 really, to all of your departments
24 and staff. So thank you for your

1 work.

2 I just had one quick
3 question before I turn it over to my
4 colleagues, and that is around
5 sheriff's sales. Can you talk a
6 little bit about sheriff sales?
7 Where are we in the process? What's
8 happening? What should we be
9 expecting?

10 SHERIFF BILAL: Okay.
11 Sheriff's sales are going on. As of
12 August of 2024, we are now back full
13 blast of five sales a month. Some
14 of the things that we are doing is
15 we went technical; our sheriff's
16 sales are online, more people are
17 bidding, more people are getting
18 excess proceeds back to them because
19 the more people that bid, the more
20 money they get back. Mortgage sales
21 are up, tax sales are up.

22 And I think each of you
23 have a package on your desk. We
24 give all the diagrams and all the

1 numbers to what is going on in the
2 sheriff's sale as real estate. Let
3 me give you some more questions.
4 Real estate, well, let me see. You
5 have a specific area in the real
6 estate? Because there's so many
7 departments in the real estate
8 division.

9 CHAIR BASS: Well, you
10 know, I really wanted to -- if --
11 listen, if you read some of the
12 public daily publications, you would
13 think that, you know, real estate,
14 particularly in the Sheriff's
15 Department, was going to hell in a
16 handbasket.

17 SHERIFF BILAL: Huh-uh.

18 CHAIR BASS: And so I
19 really wanted to try to address some
20 of the items that may cause doubt or
21 concern with the general public in
22 terms of some of the things that
23 have been alluded to from the
24 Sheriff's Department with, you know,

1 deed transfers and, you know,
2 returning funds, you know, belonging
3 to heirs and others that, you know,
4 through a sheriff's sale process are
5 due to have some sort of a refund.

6 Can you talk about some of
7 those types of things that are
8 portrayed to be as problematic
9 within the Sheriff's Office? I
10 would appreciate any clarity that
11 you could provide.

12 SHERIFF BILAL: Okay.
13 Thank you for that question --

14 CHAIR BASS: Oh, sure.

15 SHERIFF BILAL: -- because
16 basically a lot of the stuff that we
17 are -- that are being put in the
18 papers is basically twisting the
19 narrative. Let's start with deeds,
20 and in your package, you have our
21 deed pamphlet, which we give out to
22 everybody to tell the process. A
23 lot of the time they're saying the
24 deeds are so delayed and so behind.

1 There are reasons why they
2 are. And we put that information up
3 on our webpage to explain that. The
4 process of deeds process is once you
5 do a sheriff's sale, let's say you
6 do a sheriff's sale, January of
7 2025. Mortgage sale; you purchase
8 the property. Mortgage company
9 think the sheriff offer is like the
10 storage bin for them. They
11 basically buy that property back,
12 and they don't move on it or pay any
13 of the bills to that property until
14 they get a buyer for it.

15 So they bought it back in
16 January of 2025, but they don't get
17 a buyer for it until, let's say,
18 September of 2025. Now it is the
19 rush to get the deed. But the
20 situation is this way, until you pay
21 all the invoices on that property
22 that you get from the Sheriff's
23 Office, is when your deed process
24 starts.

1 CHAIR BASS: Uh-huh.

2 SHERIFF BILAL: It doesn't
3 start because you bought it in
4 January of 2025; it starts once you
5 pay all the bills on it. And that a
6 lot of times they don't pay all the
7 bills on it until they get a buyer,
8 which is sometime in September. And
9 now your deed process starts. And
10 now as we go through the deed
11 process, we can form it; it gets
12 recorded, and then you get to deed.

13 But if you believe them
14 that run to the newspapers, Oh, I
15 didn't get my deed. Well, they
16 never tell them that they didn't pay
17 the invoice of the property. And
18 when it comes down to tax lien
19 sales, they never tell them that
20 they didn't upload their tax
21 compliance letter that they're
22 supposed to give for the city
23 purposes to make sure they don't owe
24 any taxes in the city. They never

1 -- they never tell them that.

2 Once you give your tax
3 compliance letter to us, then your
4 deed process start. Now you can buy
5 the property, you can settle on it,
6 but according to the rules from the
7 city, you have to have a tax
8 compliance letter to say that you
9 don't owe any taxes in the city.

10 Now, once you give us that,
11 now your deed process starts. See,
12 they can put any, Oh, I haven't got
13 my deed because I bought it in
14 January, but until you finish and
15 complete the sale, your deed doesn't
16 start. And a lot of, because we
17 dealt with a couple of people, we
18 done did over close to 2,000 deeds
19 in 2025, and up to about 300 and
20 something up till this date.

21 And these are the people
22 that follow the rules and in
23 compliance, all the paperwork is in,
24 their invoices are paid, and their

1 tax certificate for tax sales is
2 uploaded and done. The ones that
3 run to the papers is the same person
4 that tried to get to the head of the
5 line a year ago. So the ones that
6 try to get to the head of the line
7 keep thinking this is the old
8 operation. It is not.

9 You can't come to the
10 Sheriff's Office and smile at
11 somebody and get a friend and get
12 pushed to the front of the line when
13 everybody else is in line waiting to
14 get their stuff processed. That
15 doesn't operate with us anymore. We
16 follow the law, we follow the rules,
17 and that's how we get everything
18 processed.

19 CHAIR BASS: One other
20 quick question then I'm going to
21 turn it over. Can you talk very
22 briefly about, you know, for folks
23 who lose homes on sheriff sale,
24 because we know that taxes are going

1 up, we keep doing these
2 reassessments residents cannot
3 afford it. Well, now let me
4 clarify, the city, you know, City
5 Council does not -- is not
6 increasing real estate taxes, but
7 assessments are continuing, and
8 values are climbing.

9 And so as people are losing
10 real estate, their generational
11 wealth, because in most of our
12 communities, real estate is the only
13 generational wealth most of us have,
14 are able to pass down, are able to
15 give to our children. You know,
16 this is really it. And so with the
17 loss of these properties, if you
18 can't pay the taxes and then your
19 property ends up sheriff's sale --
20 on sheriff's sale, can you talk just
21 a little bit about how are we
22 avoiding or trying to help people
23 avoid ending up in that particular
24 type of scenario?

1 SHERIFF BILAL: Every -- in
2 every package you have all the
3 pamphlets that we have developed in
4 the Sheriff's Office, and all of
5 them are online on
6 phillysheriff.com. What our Civil
7 Unit does and gives out to
8 homeowners, because my Constituent
9 Services Unit was mandated to
10 develop and put in that pamphlet,
11 all the agencies that can help
12 people save their homes, all of
13 them. And so when our Civil Unit
14 gets the court order, though they
15 have to do their job according to
16 the court order, they do give out
17 postings and pamphlets on the
18 organizations that can help you save
19 your home.

20 And by doing that, a lot of
21 people have started using all of
22 those resources, and they have
23 basically been able to save their
24 homes. Because you can tell by the

1 amount of money that's given back
2 out of the H.A.R.T program, eight
3 point something million dollars
4 giving back to homeowners in that
5 area. But the amount of properties
6 going up for sale has been stayed or
7 stopped because people are using
8 that information to get a hold to
9 the agencies that can help them save
10 their homes.

11 CHAIR BASS: Okay.

12 SHERIFF BILAL: In that?
13 Do you have it? So we will -- we
14 basically, in that package, you have
15 this in there, it basically tells
16 you, in 2024, how many properties
17 was stayed in any -- in every
18 Councilmanic District in 2024 and in
19 2025. That means the numbers have
20 increased in 2025 on how many
21 properties have not gone to
22 sheriff's sale because of the
23 information that are given at the
24 time that we get involved, the

1 Sheriff's Office get involved. And
2 for the record, for people who think
3 we pick and choose properties, we
4 don't. We only operate off of court
5 orders --

6 CHAIR BASS: Yeah.

7 SHERIFF BILAL: When we get
8 the court order, we have to act.
9 But in that process, we give out
10 information for families to be able
11 to get the help they need in order
12 to save their homes.

13 CHAIR BASS: Well, listen,
14 thank you very much for that
15 information. I'm sure there's going
16 to be some more questions related to
17 sheriff sales from the members.

18 SHERIFF BILAL: Okay.

19 CHAIR BASS: So I want to
20 turn it over. Real quick, I do want
21 to say, again, a special thank you
22 to the deputies who keep us safe
23 here in the chamber. So thank you
24 so much to our sheriffs and of

1 course PPD, Philadelphia Police
2 Department, for, you know, our
3 regulars here who are also, we count
4 them as members of Council as well.

5 So first up, we have
6 Councilmember Harrity, Jones,
7 O'Rourke, Brooks, and Gauthier.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

9 Thank you, Councilwoman. Good
10 afternoon, everyone. How are you?

11 SHERIFF BILAL: Good
12 afternoon.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: My
14 questions are for the First
15 Judicial. Philadelphia Family Court
16 Help Center in federal fund -- wait,
17 the Philadelphia Family Court Help
18 Centers in federal funding is set to
19 expire after nine years of funding.

20 Can you speak about this
21 program and how it will continue to
22 serve our constituents without this
23 funding? What gaps does this leave
24 for families and individuals during

1 their experience with the court
2 system? And we know there is a
3 renewed focus within the state court
4 system and the First Judicial
5 District around the intersection of
6 mental health and behavioral health
7 and substance abuse, as well as
8 autism and intelligent --
9 intellectual disabilities. Can you
10 tell me more about this work within
11 Philadelphia and any possible
12 partnerships between the judicial
13 branches of government to address
14 this major issue?

15 MR. MCSORLEY: Thank you
16 for the question, Council person.
17 First, we're hoping that the federal
18 funding will continue for Family
19 Court, and we'll be able to maintain
20 all those services. We don't have a
21 plan in place yet to fill that gap.
22 We're hoping that gap doesn't have
23 to be filled, but it is a question
24 that I can take back to

1 Administrative Judge Olszewski, and
2 we can probably send you back what
3 our plan is, what our backup plans
4 are.

5 Bottom line is the Family
6 Court knows what its obligations are
7 and what its services to the people
8 that use those programs. And we're
9 going to continue use -- we're going
10 to continue with those programs.
11 We're just going to have to find a
12 way to do it if the worst-case
13 scenario happens. But I can have
14 other conversation with you offline
15 with Judge Olszewski and get you
16 more information about that.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
18 Yeah, if you could just get it to
19 the Chair and then we could --

20 MR. MCSORLEY: Sure.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: --
22 we could all have that information
23 would be nice. And how about the,
24 you know, my question with what --

1 we know there's a renewed focus with
2 the state court system and the First
3 Judicial District around the
4 intersection of mental health,
5 behavioral health, and substance
6 abuse, as well as autism and
7 intellectual disabilities.

8 Can you tell me more about
9 this work within Philadelphia and
10 any possible partnerships between
11 the judicial branches of government
12 to address this major issue and
13 intersection?

14 MR. MCSORLEY: Absolutely.
15 The issue of behavioral health has
16 become finally sharply in focus for
17 the FJD and also for the
18 Pennsylvania Supreme Court. We've
19 worked with DBHIDS; we've worked
20 with DBH. We're collaborating,
21 right now, with DBH taking over the
22 forensic unit in the Criminal
23 Justice Stout Center.

24 The Pennsylvania Supreme

1 Court is working with the Mayor's
2 office and obtaining funding to
3 continue in their mental health
4 initiative. We've had several
5 statewide collaborations over mental
6 health. There's now a mental health
7 committee that the FJD works with.
8 It's chaired. One of the chairs is
9 our own Supervising Judge DeFino-
10 Nastasi.

11 So instead of just having
12 the mental health issue becoming a
13 Philadelphia issue, it has finally
14 expanded to a statewide issue. And
15 the court is starting to address a
16 lot of the mental health things that
17 we see in the court. We are now
18 have -- DBH is working with us to
19 have navigators in our pretrial
20 program, our Adult Probation and
21 Parole Program.

22 We have the Hub, which is
23 over the Stout Center, which is not
24 only just for people in the criminal

1 justice system, but it's open for
2 everyone. Probation is creating a
3 resource center addressing mental
4 health issues. So the referrals and
5 the actual hands-on work that we're
6 doing, it's a much bigger
7 collaboration. As somebody who's
8 been here for as long as I've been
9 here for 40 years, this wasn't even
10 talked about 10 years ago.

11 And now we have
12 partnerships with the state, with
13 the DBH, with DBHIDS, and a lot of
14 other partners. And fortunately,
15 there's funding that's being made
16 available for this too. So I think
17 this is going to be all going.

18 And lastly, to talk about
19 autism, we -- in our own place in
20 the FJD, we've created autism
21 awareness training program. It's
22 mandatory for all employees. We've
23 given it to our judges. So staff is
24 aware, first line staff, you come

1 into the Stout Center, you come into
2 City Hall, you're going to file.

3 People don't realize that, you know,
4 there might be something different.

5 And now our staff is being
6 trained to recognize these kinds of
7 issues and take the steps. And this
8 is ongoing training that we're
9 doing. And we've done trauma
10 training too for all staff. So
11 we're trying to make sure that our
12 first line, faces of the FJD, are
13 aware --

14 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
15 Autism --

16 MR. MCSORLEY: And we have
17 the autism reading room as the
18 President Judge has said. So a lot
19 of collaboration, a lot of overdue
20 collaboration.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
22 Yeah, I'm glad to hear that. I --
23 everybody knows I'm a grandfather to
24 an autistic child, and you know,

1 hoping that he never has to
2 experience the court system. But if
3 he does, knowing that we're actually
4 making progress around those issues
5 is very personal to me.

6 MR. MCSORLEY: And even
7 that collaboration with the Sheriff,
8 as the Sheriff mentioned, their
9 autism training, our autism
10 training. Now, when somebody walks
11 into our buildings, there's a lot
12 more people who are aware.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
14 Absolutely. And I -- I'm with the
15 sheriff when she does her program,
16 spent last week at the press
17 conference with her. She does --
18 doing great work when it comes to
19 that with her collaborations of
20 that. You know, it's kind of funny,
21 you don't realize it until you --
22 until you deal with it about how
23 different it is to interact, right?
24 And how quick the interaction could

1 change.

2 So it's good to see that
3 both law enforcement and the court
4 system are partnering up to really
5 work on these issues. So I thank
6 you all for your service. Judge
7 Padilla, thank you. It's an honor
8 to see you as always. Thank you for
9 your many years of service,
10 President. Thank you.

11 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
12 Thank you.

13 MR. MCSORLEY: Thank you.

14 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
15 Councilmember. Chair recognizes
16 Councilmember Jones.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
18 you, Madam Chair. I want to echo
19 something the Chairwoman said that a
20 lot of times we tend to focus on the
21 here and now and not remember half
22 of the good things you guys did for
23 the City of Philadelphia. And I
24 just want to take a moment to

1 recognize that.

2 I remember the worst night
3 of -- in my career, was the night of
4 the George Floyd uprising and all
5 hell broke loose. And I happened to
6 have the scanner that night, so I'm
7 hearing the back and forth, the
8 calls coming back in. And I'll
9 never forget there was a time, and I
10 remember talking to my colleague
11 over there, she was out at 52nd
12 Street, but there was a time when
13 Center City was besieged,
14 surrounded. And we -- it was almost
15 as if at that time, the Police
16 Department was going to just concede
17 Center City. It was that bad.

18 And I remember the
19 Sheriff's Office, without a lot of
20 prodding, stepped up to the plate,
21 pulled up, and I know where you were
22 deployed, and I know what your
23 responsibility because I heard it
24 and I never forgot. That was like a

1 scene from the movies of the Calvary
2 trying to hold down the fort. And I
3 appreciate it, and I want to say it
4 publicly to you, and thank you for
5 your service, you and your team.

6 For the courts -- yeah,
7 give it, she deserves it. For the
8 courts, another rough time was
9 during the pandemic, and we were
10 meeting weekly, Your Honor, trying
11 to figure out how to reduce the
12 census population up on State Road.
13 And back then, the courts, the DA,
14 the defenders, you know, weren't so
15 huggy friendly back then.

16 But in spite of that, you
17 guys stepped up to the plate using
18 technology to have hearings to look
19 at whether or not people could be
20 released safely back into the
21 community. And you weekly brought
22 that census countdown to the fact
23 that what could have been a pandemic
24 spread up on State Road was reduced.

1 We had some fatalities, but not as
2 many as we could have had if we had
3 not worked together.

4 I know some people claim
5 they invented the shot for COVID,
6 but you guys were in the trenches
7 making it happen, keeping us safe.
8 Both the correctional officers up
9 there and the inmates that they are
10 sworn to protect. So thank you both
11 for that.

12 Now that's the good part,
13 and I'll get to the rough and
14 tumble. There's no rough and
15 tumble, relax. But what I would
16 like to ask you, and I'm so glad
17 this year they have you two sitting
18 -- these two departments sitting
19 together so that we don't do this.
20 How -- so today when I was coming
21 into work, there was a big ruckus
22 over at CJC. The, you know, police
23 were called in, it was some
24 disturbance at CJC. And even City

1 Hall police were called.

2 Are we -- what -- with your
3 shortage of manpower, personnel, and
4 your courts having to operate, how
5 is safety -- how are you working
6 together to keep, not only the staff
7 of the courts safe, but the people
8 that are -- the defendants and those
9 accused safe as we travel through
10 CJC? Is there a better plan this
11 year for working together?

12 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA: I
13 would like to just comment on that.
14 That's a very important question.
15 And I can tell you City Council had
16 a hearing recently on ICE, and after
17 the hearing, a lot of those folks
18 that were here in the well of City
19 Council made their way to my
20 chambers. And were standing outside
21 with a huge banner, and they were
22 saying things like, We know you're
23 in there, we're going to be here for
24 a while.

1 And so finally, I ended up
2 calling the sheriff, Sheriff Chung,
3 standing right there. He came to my
4 rescue. He came right over there,
5 right away, took care of it. I
6 couldn't be more pleased and more
7 proud of having the security that we
8 have right now. I also have
9 occasion to meander over to the
10 Stout Center on occasion, probably
11 maybe once or twice a week.

12 And I troubled the sheriffs
13 over there to find out -- the deputy
14 sheriffs, to find out what's going
15 on, make sure everything okay. I
16 stop in a different courtroom from
17 time to time, and I have to commend
18 Sheriff Bilal. There really haven't
19 been any problems at all. The
20 sheriffs are present, they're
21 available. They're helping us.
22 They're there to answer any issues
23 that we have. Personally, I haven't
24 noticed any problems at all with it.

1 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: I'm
2 so very glad to hear that.

3 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
4 Yeah.

5 COUNCILMEMBER JONES:
6 Without that kind of security in the
7 courtrooms, witnesses don't want to
8 testify --

9 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
10 That's right.

11 COUNCILMEMBER JONES:
12 People -- so there is no justice
13 without courtroom safety. And I'm
14 glad you banned these glasses over
15 there because --

16 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
17 We did.

18 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: --
19 it's intimidating to say the least,
20 when people can record you in the
21 court --

22 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
23 Yeah.

24 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: --

1 who's testifying and putting it out
2 on the web. So we have to lock
3 down, no pun intended, on the
4 security of CJC in order for us
5 there -- for there to be confidence
6 that people are safe and have
7 justice. Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
9 Councilmember. And I -- you know, I
10 just -- along your line of
11 questioning. It's my understanding
12 that the building was built knowing
13 that we needed, sort of like, more
14 space, more elevators, more ways to
15 enter and exit. And that the -- to
16 save a couple of dollars, we built
17 it wrong. Well, not we, because I
18 wasn't here then, but it was -- it
19 was built wrong.

20 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So
21 unfortunately, Madam Chair, me and
22 Wilson Goode, Sr., were here. And
23 my name is on the Justice Center.
24 And I remember the change order that

1 you were supposed to have another
2 bank of elevators --

3 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

4 Yes.

5 CHAIR BASS: Uh-huh.

6 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: --

7 thus -- so that the overcrowd, in
8 order to save money because of cost,
9 but you are right, Madam Chair, they
10 cut down a bank of elevators.

11 CHAIR BASS: And it's been
12 a huge issue ever since --

13 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

14 Correct.

15 CHAIR BASS: So sometimes
16 you got to spend the money, do it
17 right the first time.

18 Chair recognizes
19 Councilmember O'Rourke.

20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

21 Thank you, Madam Chair. Good
22 afternoon to all, President Judge
23 Padilla, and Mr. McSorley, as well
24 as the Sheriff of County and the

1 City of Philadelphia, Ms. Rochelle
2 Bilal. I appreciate you-all for
3 your leadership and your service to
4 our City.

5 To you Rochelle Bilal,
6 Sheriff, the town, I find some of
7 your employees to be some of the
8 best and brightest that there are.
9 Grateful to have in the chamber with
10 us today. Both Pastor Darrell
11 Roberts, who I find to be a great
12 champion, as well as the Reverend
13 William Brownlee, who is a good
14 brother. And we go way, way back.
15 And so grateful to have him here,
16 and thank you for hiring them both.

17 Let me jump into my
18 questions. I want to, as I said,
19 thank you for your service to the
20 city, but also thank you for your
21 office's role in carrying out what
22 is probably one of the more
23 difficult mechanisms of our housing
24 system and difficult parts of the

1 housing system.

2 As you may have heard, this
3 past week, this body passed the Safe
4 Healthy Homes Act, which is centered
5 on ensuring that all renters in
6 Philadelphia have access to safe,
7 healthy, and stable housing.

8 Throughout the course of this, what
9 turned out to be more than a year
10 long process, there were ongoing
11 questions raised about eviction
12 timelines particularly around
13 lockouts.

14 And I want to acknowledge
15 that the long lockout times were
16 actually explicitly raised in the
17 run up to the de facto abolition of
18 the Landlord Tenant Office. Prior
19 to which existed and was valued, I
20 think, by landlords for effectively
21 addressing system backlog with speed
22 and with efficiency and limiting
23 financial strain on small landlords
24 by doing so, because it was a quick

1 effort.

2 Now, the problem was that
3 folks were getting shot in the
4 process. And because it's
5 privatized, it existed outside the
6 purview of this body. That to me,
7 and I think to others, is an
8 unacceptable way to operate, so that
9 needed to go. That said, with the
10 evictions being handled by the
11 Sheriff, it still does place control
12 of the process into Council's power.
13 But we do have a responsibility to
14 understand how it's functioning.

15 And I and many landlords,
16 we found out that the course of
17 this, have a vested interest in that
18 it -- in that it functions better.
19 Especially given the serious impact
20 these actions have on tenants and
21 families. So I want to ask a few
22 questions to better understand both
23 the timeline and the safeguards in
24 place related to the eviction

1 process and the lockout time. Once
2 the Sheriff's Office -- somebody is
3 coming up.

4 SHERIFF BILAL: Go ahead.

5 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

6 Great, yeah. Once the Sheriff's
7 Office receives a court order for a
8 lockout, what is the typical
9 timeline before that lockout is
10 executed? And I'll tag another one
11 in there for expedience. And then
12 what operational or capacity
13 challenges affect how quickly or
14 slowly those lockouts are carried
15 out? We'll start there.

16 SHERIFF BILAL: Good
17 question. First, let me just give
18 you our timeline as we got this.
19 Once the Landlord Tenant Officers
20 was no longer in play, the Sheriff's
21 Office got it.

22 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

23 Uh-huh.

24 SHERIFF BILAL: Normally we

1 would do about 400 evictions a year.

2 Last year we did 18,000. So if

3 you're saying the manpower is low

4 and we have to figure out how to do

5 those evictions safely, so we are

6 basically building up to that. And

7 the person that is working with a

8 lot of the landlords to make sure

9 that certain things go smoothly is

10 my Chief Inspector -- no --

11 Inspector Fallen -- Inspector

12 Fallen, who is -- who is in charge

13 of the Civil Unit. And I'm going to

14 let him give you that timeline.

15 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

16 Okay. Thanks.

17 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

18 Good afternoon, Chief Inspector

19 Fallen.

20 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: You

21 need to get closer.

22 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

23 Good afternoon. Chief Inspector

24 Fallen, Sheriff's Office, Civil

1 Enforcement. When the Landlord
2 Tenant Office first shut down in
3 2024, we were able to adjust staff
4 and move some things around to
5 schedule roughly 70 to 80 evictions
6 per week. Which -- what I found
7 after we got a full year of data, of
8 collecting writs and taking in
9 cases, was that that was about half
10 the amount that we needed to be
11 scheduling. So for several months
12 we were upside down.

13 Right now, we're probably
14 about to turn a corner because we've
15 doubled our staff from -- we started
16 with eight. Now we have 16
17 detectives on the street. A case I
18 just looked at today, we got the
19 second part of the -- of case about
20 four weeks ago. So it depends on
21 what part of the city you're in, how
22 quickly the eviction is going to
23 come.

24 But right now, on average,

1 it's like four to six weeks. We are
2 training and soon we'll have more
3 staff deployed into those busier
4 parts of the City, which I'm finding
5 is West and Southwest Philadelphia.

6 As soon as we get those
7 people out, you're could probably
8 start hearing a lot less about the
9 landlords. But one thing we said we
10 weren't going to do was just do them
11 haphazardly. So the difference is
12 we do them with partners, we do them
13 in pairs. They were doing them so
14 well. So we had to -- you may have
15 heard they only had six or seven
16 people doing them, but they were
17 doing them rushed, and from what
18 we're hearing, dangerously.

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
20 For sure.

21 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN: So
22 now that we've doubled our staff, we
23 are -- now we are on top, we're
24 right side up now. We're scheduling

1 more than we're bringing in. But
2 now we just have to work to reduce
3 what's behind, which --

4 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

5 But it does -- I'm sorry.

6 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

7 We're working for both sides.

8 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

9 Sounds like a winner.

10 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

11 Yeah.

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: It

13 does sound like you are -- you're

14 saying that you're at a turning

15 point now. You are staffing up --

16 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN: We

17 are.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: --

19 there are things in play. And so

20 we've already seen a bit of an

21 increase in the amount of lockouts

22 you've been able to effectively do,

23 but you expect there to be even more

24 of an increase in the coming days,

1 weeks, months, as you're staffing
2 up. Is that accurate?

3 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

4 Correct.

5 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

6 Okay. And I want to clarify too,
7 the Sheriff said 18,000. Did you
8 mean 18,000 or 1800? Just want to
9 clarify for correctly.

10 SHERIFF BILAL: 18,000.

11 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

12 18,000.

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: So

14 we went from 400 a year to 18,000.

15 2000, less than 20,000 in the course

16 of a year. Okay, that is a major

17 notion. Again, I want to also say

18 that I recognize the efficiency that

19 the Landlord Tenant Office in its

20 existence provided to those who were

21 concerned with quick lockout times.

22 But you can't kill folk in the

23 process or shoot folk in the head.

24 And so I think we did the right

1 thing.

2 I'm grateful to and your
3 leadership and Member Brooks as well
4 to address that. But we have going
5 to figure out how to get this --
6 that number down or get you-all to a
7 place where you can actually handle
8 that. Let me continue on with my
9 questions. Given that, how does
10 your office approach balancing
11 efficiency? And I'm sure this is
12 difficult, with ensuring that
13 tenants have adequate notice and
14 time to prepare? In the process of
15 these, how are you doing that?

16 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN: So
17 if we just speak with the landlord
18 tenant eviction, there's -- it's a
19 two-writ process and they're given a
20 10-day notice to vacate. It gives
21 them a date and time that they have
22 to leave. So that's served or
23 posted to the property if they don't
24 answer the door.

1 And we provide all contact
2 information for the assigned
3 detectives in that area. So if
4 anyone in that property has any
5 questions, they can call them or
6 call the office, and we'll direct
7 them where they need to be. And
8 then when eviction day comes, when
9 the landlord or the attorney or the
10 plaintiff files what's called their
11 alias writ, that's when we schedule
12 the physical lockout. They're given
13 notice. We try to do that about a
14 week in advance of the actual
15 eviction date. So we give plenty of
16 notice and information and resources
17 to try and assist them.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: On
19 the question on information and
20 resources, what protocols are in
21 place to connect tenants to
22 resources like legal assistance,
23 like emergency housing if that's
24 necessary, social services at or

1 before that point of lockout?

2 SHERIFF BILAL: That's the
3 pamphlets that we put together from
4 my Constituents Services.

5 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
6 Those here?

7 SHERIFF BILAL: You have
8 them all.

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
10 Perfect.

11 SHERIFF BILAL: We've
12 developed all type of pamphlets to
13 give to everybody around this city
14 in reference to what the Sheriff
15 gets involved in.

16 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
17 Got you. Will these be up -- as the
18 new legislations coming through,
19 you'll update these with new
20 information that's necessary?

21 SHERIFF BILAL: And if we
22 find another resources; local,
23 state, or federal, we will add to
24 that pamphlet, yes.

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 Wonderful. Are there any policy,
3 staffing or funding needs that would
4 allow your office to better support
5 a process that is fair, that is
6 transparent, that minimizes harm to
7 vulnerable residents? And I ask
8 these questions because, like I
9 said, in the process of trying to
10 secure the tenant protections and
11 strengthening what was already on
12 the books, I spoke to a whole lot of
13 landlords.

14 And many of them had the
15 same refrain around, we probably
16 wouldn't have as many issues with
17 what you're trying to accomplish, if
18 we trusted that when we were on good
19 ground to evict someone who is a
20 problem tenant, it didn't take six
21 months to a year to do so. That was
22 probably the top concern or
23 apprehension that folks had when we
24 actually got into the nitty gritty

1 of my bills was lockout time.

2 So that's the reason why
3 I'm asking this to make sure that we
4 create a situation where folks are
5 able to be evicted and needed to go,
6 but also that we're able to deal
7 with them in a -- in a compassionate
8 manner that provides people,
9 connects them to resources, things
10 that they need to be able to live
11 better going forward.

12 Anything that we can do
13 policy; funding wise, staffing wise,
14 to help you do this better?

15 SHERIFF BILAL: We need
16 staffing. We need funding. When we
17 said we are asking for 19 million
18 over a five-year period, that's for
19 staffing, that's for equipment,
20 that's for promotion because people
21 that do the lockouts are detectives.
22 They are all sworn personnel;
23 civilians cannot do that.

24 And this is the reason why;

1 we did an analyzation of how many
2 deputies are needed in order to be
3 -- to be fully covered, the courts,
4 the special units everywhere. And
5 we did that. It's about 630 at the
6 lowest minimum. Right now, we are
7 300 -- 391. And because of the
8 court order that we got are mandated
9 to staff and get people in there is
10 we went all out of the box
11 advertising on all kinds of TVs to
12 get people to notice that this is an
13 available position for people to
14 come work with the Sheriff's Office
15 so that we can get those staffing
16 numbers.

17 The problem was this, is
18 they never did it in the past. They
19 never fully funded the Sheriff's
20 Office. And you can look in all
21 their budgets. They never planned
22 for nutrition. They never planned
23 for those that were retiring. They
24 never planned for those that were

1 going to move on to other
2 departments or other law enforcement
3 agency. They never did that, and so
4 we are low because of what the past
5 brings.

6 But we move -- we done
7 moved past that. We now have to
8 focus on staffing the Sheriff Office
9 so that it can be staffed properly
10 and all what the court needs us to
11 do that we can do that, and all that
12 the city that we can do. We do
13 more, people think we're just in the
14 Sheriff's Office, we're just in the
15 courts. The city calls on us a lot.
16 OEM calls on us a lot.

17 And in my opening statement
18 that we have to really do some
19 logistical planning in order to help
20 the city with all of what they are
21 asking for. Just to give you a few
22 months, November '24, September '25,
23 May of '25, 480 hours, 330 hours,
24 543 hours. 1,353 for 2025 is the

1 hours of overtime that we are
2 putting out because they're calling
3 on our buses, our K-9, our vans to
4 support the OEM and all the major
5 events there. That's coming out of
6 our budget. It's not coming out of
7 Philly PD budget. That's not coming
8 out of OEM budget; that's coming out
9 of the Sheriff budget. So we are
10 doing a round of things, and
11 whatever the city needs us to do, we
12 will do the best that we can to make
13 sure it happens.

14 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: I
15 heard the bell, so if there's
16 another round, I'll come back for my
17 Judicial District questions on that
18 one. But again whatever we can do
19 to get you in a situation where
20 you're able to effectively meet the
21 demand around evictions and we're
22 able to do that in a way that's much
23 better than Landlord and Tenant
24 Office, which we already are doing,

1 and I want to thank you for that.

2 But to increase your
3 capacity, I think is well worth the
4 effort. And I think there'll be a
5 whole lot of landlords across the
6 City of Philadelphia who would also
7 thank us if we did that as well.
8 Anyways, thank you so much for the
9 time, Madam Chair.

10 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
11 Councilman.

12 Chair recognizes
13 Councilmember Brooks.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
15 Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
16 So my questions are for both the
17 First Judicial District and the
18 Sheriff's Department in reference to
19 the ICE legislation. It's a series
20 of questions, so if you guys can
21 just take it down and just answer
22 them accordingly.

23 So for years we have seen
24 consistent and disturbing trends of

1 civil immigration arrests of
2 Philadelphians as they exit the
3 Juanita Kidd Stout Center for
4 Criminal Justice. ICE Agents have
5 utilized our local courthouse as
6 ambush site detaining community
7 members as they exit.

8 Despite many still being in
9 the midst of the criminal
10 proceedings or having accepted other
11 sentencing within the criminal
12 justice system. Local ICE agents
13 have been undocumented waiting in
14 the lobby of CJC and visiting upper
15 courthouse floors without
16 documentation of valid judicial
17 warrants, often executing arrests
18 the moment a community member steps
19 out into public hallways or
20 sidewalks.

21 In Chicago, the top Cook
22 County judge banned ICE from
23 arresting any party witness or
24 potential witness while going to

1 court proceedings. Including
2 arrests that might be made inside
3 courthouses, but also parking lots,
4 entryways, and surrounding
5 sidewalks. And Oregon bans the
6 arrest of people at courthouses or
7 on their way to or from there,
8 unless ICE carries a warrant signed
9 by a judge.

10 I know that the First
11 Judicial District and the Sheriff's
12 Office are not supportive of ICE's
13 policies and action. But at least
14 it seems like -- it seems that each
15 party says that it is the
16 responsibility of the other to enact
17 the policies like Chicago has done.
18 So I would like to take the
19 opportunity to ask you both
20 questions while you're both here.

21 So my first question is,
22 like Chicago's top county judge did,
23 will you prohibit the civil arrest
24 of any party witness or potential

1 witness while going to court
2 proceedings, including arrests
3 inside courthouses and in parking
4 lots, surrounding sideways, or
5 entryway? My second question is,
6 will you require all federal agents
7 and law enforcement to wear visible
8 identification and no masks in the
9 courthouse?

10 The third question is, will
11 you expand virtual or excuse
12 experiences -- appearances across
13 all courts until a comprehensive
14 policy protecting immigrant
15 community members is finalized? And
16 lastly, would you put in place a
17 clear policy prohibiting personnel
18 from expending resources or time
19 existing ICE in civil immigration
20 enforcement in or near the CJC?

21 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA: I
22 can -- I can answer my way, but I
23 would also like Mr. McSorley to
24 answer his way. And of course the

1 Sheriff. So in terms of prohibiting
2 access to ICE, ICE is a federal
3 agency, and we just don't have the
4 jurisdiction to prohibit them. It's
5 my understanding that the ICE agents
6 sort of post-up all around the CJC,
7 the Masonic Temple, across where the
8 Marriott is down the street, and
9 they follow people. That's my
10 understanding.

11 There's really not a way
12 that this -- that the court can
13 enforce any type of order about ICE
14 arresting people. Let me just say
15 this, you said it at the beginning
16 of your statement that, you know, I
17 think you said something about how
18 the FJD may have a feeling about it
19 personally. So the court is
20 independent. We have to be fair,
21 unbiased, and we have to just rule
22 on the matters before it. I cannot,
23 as a judge, as President Judge, none
24 of the judges in the FJD can go on

1 the No Kings protest. It's not
2 proper. We can't state how
3 discussing the policy is because
4 that would not be proper. So we
5 can't do anything like that, we
6 can't say those kinds of things.

7 But in terms of masks, the
8 same thing. And the mask in general
9 are federal policy. So we can't --
10 we don't have any statement about
11 that. The virtual court hearings
12 would be -- I actually thought about
13 that when I saw your hearings. I
14 don't see how that could be
15 implemented either because the
16 criminal proceedings, for example,
17 if they -- those are virtual, can
18 you imagine the level of witness
19 intimidation that could go on?

20 We wouldn't even know who
21 was present in the room at a virtual
22 proceeding. The witness
23 intimidation factor is off the chart
24 in any event, very often in criminal

1 proceedings. So it would be
2 unmanageable if it were --
3 proceeding were virtual for a child
4 case -- child custody or dependency
5 case, or a juvenile delinquency
6 case. It would be impossible,
7 really, to have a virtual proceeding
8 for that also.

9 And in terms of a policy
10 that inhibits personnel from
11 assisting. So the court doesn't
12 really have those kinds of policies
13 because of the same reason I said at
14 the outset. We're not allowed to
15 have an opinion about things. We
16 just resolve the -- or dispose of
17 the matters before the court fair,
18 impartial, unbiased. That's what
19 the court is. We're not an active
20 -- an activist sort of arm of the
21 government. So there are three
22 branches of government, executive,
23 legislative, and judiciary. The
24 judiciary can't have those kinds of

1 opinions. But I would like
2 Mr. McSorley to comment because he's
3 got a lot of experience, and he
4 probably would say it better than I
5 will.

6 MR. MCSORLEY: I don't
7 think so, Judge. Hi, Richard
8 McSorley again. To echo what the
9 judge said. Just the President
10 Judge basically said everything that
11 I would say. Just to be more
12 specific, I know about the Chicago
13 ruling. I know that's on appeal
14 right now. I don't know what the
15 Chicago layout is of their
16 courthouse, so they might have their
17 parking garage below them, and maybe
18 they can control that jurisdiction.

19 But unfortunately for the
20 Stout Center, for instance, we have
21 the Masonic Temple on one side,
22 Chili's on the other, and the Notary
23 Hotel across. We don't have -- as
24 the judge mentioned, we don't have

1 the jurisdiction to issue an order
2 that would encompass those areas.

3 So what we have done is
4 we've worked with the Sheriff very
5 closely, and the Sheriff does have a
6 written policy about ICE and what
7 the agents can do. To my knowledge,
8 there's not been one arrest inside
9 the Stout Center or any courthouse.

10 There has been arrest, as
11 we've said, outside, and the Sheriff
12 maintains that security inside of
13 our building. They again, we have
14 the issues that this is a public
15 courthouse.

16 If we can't tell somebody
17 what they can and cannot wear, in
18 the building and many of the ICE
19 agents that come in, they're not in
20 there to effectuate an arrest. So
21 they don't identify themselves.
22 They don't have to go up to the
23 Sheriff and say, I'm an ICE agent.
24 I'm here with a warrant. They're

1 just in the building. What their
2 intentions are, what their real
3 business is, I'm not sure.

4 But they can move freely
5 without the building and there's
6 nothing we can do to restrict that
7 except to work with the Sheriff.
8 When we do know that an ICE agent
9 has an arrest warrant, if they do
10 identify themselves, there are
11 protocols in place that were put in
12 place by the Sheriff's Department.

13 If the court officers knows
14 that there's an ICE agent in the
15 courtroom, they notify the Sheriff,
16 they notify to the District Attorney
17 immediately. That is brought to the
18 attention of the judge. If there's
19 any hint of anything that's going to
20 happen in that courtroom in the
21 hallway, the court tries to handle
22 it.

23 But for the most part, and
24 I've seen a lot of the video, and

1 I've been in the Stout Center for
2 many years, we don't know anything
3 until the person has left the
4 building, and they walk outside. So
5 we can't regulate what the people
6 are wearing.

7 As the judge said, the
8 video hearings, we've had
9 communication with the ICE
10 advocates. It is something that I
11 know that they would like, but
12 unfortunately, criminal cases,
13 constitutionally, we just can't do
14 it. Not to mention, as the judge
15 said, the witness intimidation.

16 Also, we have local rules
17 of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court
18 that we're not allowed to conduct
19 hearings via technology. So our
20 hands are tied in that area. And
21 for personnel, just to emphasize, we
22 -- our personnel are trained. They
23 know what to do when any law
24 enforcement agency comes into any

1 courtroom and identifies themselves
2 if they're going to make some sort
3 of arrest or they want to present
4 themselves.

5 Our personnel are told that
6 they're not supposed to contact or
7 have communication with any other
8 law enforcement agency without a
9 supervisor's permission. So we
10 don't have court people calling
11 outside law enforcement agencies
12 unless they have a reason to do so.
13 And if they do have a reason to do
14 so, they're supposed to be -- have a
15 supervisor's permission.

16 So -- and this goes -- this
17 is not just ICE; this is every law
18 enforcement entity. The
19 Philadelphia Police Department can't
20 come into the courthouse and make an
21 arrest in our courtrooms. They can't
22 make an arrest in our hallway. They
23 have to identify themselves to the
24 Sheriff, and then the Sheriff takes

1 it from there. And then if the
2 person is going to be turned over,
3 that's the between law enforcement.

4 But just to end on what the
5 judge said, we've had many
6 discussions with the Administrative
7 Governing Board. What can we do?
8 Where does the - where is the line
9 drawn for the court system? And as
10 much as we might want to issue an
11 order or put something out there
12 that within so many feet of the
13 courthouse, we're going to and from,
14 it just isn't enforceable, it's just
15 not within our power.

16 It would undermine our
17 authority because it's -- we are
18 issuing an order that would not be
19 able to be followed. And it becomes
20 a political statement basically.
21 And I understand we just had a lot
22 of communication with a lot of
23 advocates, immigration advocates,
24 about 12 or 13 letters, and we

1 answered each and every one of them.
2 We will keep that communication
3 open, but we are doing what we can
4 do. Now I guess I'll turn it to the
5 Sheriff for her comments.

6 SHERIFF BILAL: Thank you
7 for that question. We've already
8 stated this numerous times, and we
9 all also put our policy up on our
10 thing. I know the main issue is
11 around the courts. I think we met
12 with a group of ICE, No Philly ICE,
13 and they wanted us to mandate
14 parking lots. We can't mandate
15 private parking lots, that's not in
16 our purview. We can't mandate them
17 stationed up at the Marriott; that's
18 not in our purview either.

19 What we do inside the
20 courthouse and what we have been
21 doing. ICE agents do not come in
22 the courthouse with masks. They
23 have to identify themselves. Matter
24 of fact, they have to have two IDs.

1 They have to have their ID and their
2 badge. They can't come in our
3 courthouse with just one. They just
4 can't. And they had been -- up
5 until we started dealing with the
6 mess that we see today, there was
7 cooperation.

8 They had -- they had to get
9 a warrant, a judicial warrant to
10 come and get anybody, or to say they
11 want to arrest anybody. And then
12 they would not be able to arrest
13 them inside of there. If the person
14 was in custody, we would take them
15 down, send them back to where they
16 were in custody, and they would go
17 there to get them.

18 There was one incident, and
19 they keep playing this over and
20 over, that a person walked outside
21 of the courthouse and saw the ICE
22 agents and ran back in and they ran
23 behind them. That was the only
24 incident. The other one was not

1 dealing with the Sheriff's Office at
2 all. And I think the Police
3 Commissioner addressed that. But
4 the people keep saying the same
5 thing over and over. Whatever we
6 get, the sidewalk is the public
7 sidewalk. We do not man the public
8 sidewalk at all. That's like we are
9 -- we are patrolling the streets.

10 And as people put it out
11 there, we don't patrol the streets,
12 but we do in some instances, when
13 you see our Bike Unit is around the
14 courthouses. And it's -- they say
15 escorting people from the courthouse
16 to their vehicles to make sure
17 they're safe. But we don't patrol
18 the streets and there's a public
19 sidewalk.

20 So when they came to us,
21 they wanted us to keep them out of
22 parking lots, and we don't man
23 parking lots. We don't man the
24 Marriott parking lot. We don't man

1 the Marriott -- cover over there.
2 We don't man none of that. But what
3 we do inside is they are very
4 cooperative when they come to us.
5 They don't wear the mask. And if
6 they want to see somebody inside or
7 have anything to do with them, they
8 have to have a judicial warrant and
9 we notify the judge. And now all of
10 that takes place under us.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

12 Thank you so much. Thank you both,
13 all three of you guys for making
14 sure that's on the record so our
15 advocates could have this
16 information. You know, I do
17 appreciate the work I've done
18 directly with the Sheriff's
19 Department to get us to this point.
20 And it was just important that we
21 get these things on the record as
22 part of the conversation.

23 As these conversations
24 continue to move and grow, I just

1 want to make sure that we're all on
2 the same page. And in the event
3 that the outcomes in Chicago are any
4 different after the appeal, would
5 you be willing to engage in a deeper
6 conversation about what exactly the
7 courts are able to do here in
8 Philadelphia?

9 CHAIR BASS: Council Lady
10 -- Councilwoman Brooks, can we make
11 that the last and then you come back
12 on the second --

13 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
14 That's my only question. I --

15 CHAIR BASS: Okay. On the
16 second round.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: I
18 don't -- I don't have any other
19 question. That's it for me.

20 CHAIR BASS: So can we
21 answer that and --

22 MR. MCSORLEY: Yes,
23 absolutely. We're always going to
24 have the conversation. We're always

1 open to the conversation.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

3 Thank you so much.

4 CHAIR BASS: Thank you.

5 Chair recognizes Councilmember
6 Gauthier, Lozada, and then young.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

8 Thank you, Madam Chair. Good
9 afternoon, Sheriff Bilal and
10 President Judge Wright Padilla, and
11 to all of you. Thank you so much
12 for your work and thanks for
13 testifying today.

14 My question is for FJD, but
15 I wanted to pause a little bit and
16 just touch on the line of
17 questioning from my colleague
18 Minority Whip Nicholas O'Rourke. I
19 am very alarmed to hear you say that
20 we're doing 18,000 evictions or
21 lockouts a year. If -- I want to
22 follow up to maybe dig into those
23 numbers some, but if that is the
24 case, and that is a red alarm

1 emergency.

2 And I -- although I support
3 what my colleague said, that we have
4 to give the Sheriff's Office the
5 support to do these
6 lockouts/evictions efficiently and
7 safely. While we are considering
8 that, we also have to do the work to
9 get that number down.

10 As far as I can recall, we
11 were doing 20,000 evictions prior to
12 the pandemic. And at that rate, we
13 were the fourth highest evicting
14 city in the entire country. And
15 everyone should be clear that when
16 we're talking about -- when we're
17 talking about folks being evicted,
18 we're talking about black and brown,
19 single moms with children. We're
20 talking about elderly people, we're
21 talking about disabled people.
22 Those are the folks who are most
23 often experiencing this. I think my
24 colleague has a point of

1 information.

2 CHAIR BASS: Well, Chair
3 recognizes Councilwoman Lozada for
4 point of information.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
6 Point of information. Is it 18,000
7 evictions or 18,000 ejectments? And
8 are they the same? Because again,
9 I'm alarmed, but I want to --

10 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
11 Maybe another point of information
12 coming from Rue.

13 SHERIFF BILAL: Because she
14 knows, she knows the difference.
15 The evictions --

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 Okay, got you.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
19 Eviction filings -- eviction filings
20 or actual ejectments? That's what
21 I'm trying to figure out.

22 SHERIFF BILAL: Go Ahead.

23 SHERIFF THORNTON: Good
24 afternoon. Sean Thornton, Chief

1 Deputy of Court Operations, but I
2 also worked in the Eviction Unit.
3 It's actually 18,000 evictions
4 scheduled. Let's be clear on that.
5 But what actually happens, and I
6 know to your point, you were
7 concerned with that number.

8 But what actually happens
9 is evictions get scheduled and at
10 some point, during that process,
11 things get worked out between the
12 occupant or the tenant and the
13 landlord. And that number reduces.
14 So it's actually 5,500 who we
15 actually are evicting, but it's
16 actually scheduled 18,000. So
17 there's some enforcement, but that
18 number is reduced.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
20 Okay.

21 SHERIFF THORNTON: So you
22 -- so you know that part.

23 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
24 Well, that's a lot different. 5,500

1 is a lot different than 18,000.

2 SHERIFF THORNTON: Yes.

3 It's scheduled. Those writs come
4 through the office, so yes.

5 SHERIFF BILAL: So don't
6 forget that that's a process.

7 SHERIFF THORNTON: Yes.

8 SHERIFF BILAL: The
9 evictions are scheduled. They're
10 posted, there's notification that
11 this is about to happen, and then
12 some deals are made between the
13 landlord. And the problem came in
14 with the Landlord Tenant Offices, is
15 that once the landlord -- the tenant
16 made an agreement with the landlord,
17 and if they miss one, instead of
18 notifying them that they're being
19 evicted, they just rolled up on
20 them. And then that's where the
21 problem came in at. Yeah. So it's
22 5,000, but it's 18,000 that we have
23 to start. Yes.

24 CHAIR BASS: So Chair

1 recognizes Councilmember Landau for
2 a point of information, but I just,
3 really quickly, I wanted to say that
4 even though it's -- they're
5 scheduled, that to me is still, you
6 know, saying something is happening.
7 When we went from this low number
8 that was still being scheduled to
9 now 18,000 being scheduled. Even if
10 the eviction, the actual number of
11 evictions drops back down, it's
12 still saying that --

13 SHERIFF BILAL: 18,000
14 being in scheduled, meaning eight --
15 our manpower is out there posting
16 and scheduling and posting, and
17 notifying people that there's an
18 eviction happening.

19 CHAIR BASS: Right.

20 SHERIFF BILAL: So we are
21 still out there doing the work.

22 CHAIR BASS: Yes, yes. So
23 thank you. Councilmember Landau.

24 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I'm

1 sorry, I just want to clear this up
2 because I think it's really
3 important for the public right now,
4 just in case. My understanding and
5 belief at the highest level, the
6 Municipal Court handled 24,000
7 eviction cases filed a year. That's
8 when Mayor Kenney started his
9 eviction diversion task force of
10 which I was a part of this. That's
11 when the Council got involved in the
12 whole process.

13 It's -- so even if it's
14 18,000 cases filed, your own press
15 release you put out in December of
16 2025, said that you've now increased
17 capacity to go from 25 cases
18 scheduling for eviction duties to
19 144 a week in your -- in your press
20 release. That -- my understanding
21 is it's maybe a hundred or so a
22 week, which would make it at best
23 7,000 a year. But I think it's
24 something -- and when we're talking

1 about lockouts that are scheduled.

2 SHERIFF BILAL: When you
3 say -- when we talk about 18,000,
4 that's the 18,000 filed that have --
5 we have to begin to post. Then when
6 you talking about --

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
8 They're in Municipal Court --

9 SHERIFF BILAL: -- ejection
10 --

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
12 They're filed in Municipal Court.

13 SHERIFF BILAL: Right.

14 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: They
15 go through a whole court process,
16 and if they have to get -- go
17 through an eviction, then it comes
18 to you --

19 SHERIFF BILAL: Right.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: But
21 most cases settle in Municipal
22 Court, almost all of them do.

23 SHERIFF BILAL: I don't
24 know about that. Fallen?

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I'm
2 sorry, I just want to clear this up
3 for the public --

4 SHERIFF BILAL: Yeah, I
5 know you want to get it cleared up.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: --
7 because I want us to go --

8 SHERIFF BILAL: Was it --
9 this is Chief Inspector Fallen over
10 at --

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
12 Excellent.

13 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:
14 All right. I'll try --

15 SHERIFF BILAL: Over the
16 Civil Unit.

17 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:
18 I'll try and clear it up the best I
19 can. Chief Inspector David Fallen
20 again, Civil Enforcement. So these
21 are -- these are both the Common
22 Pleas writs, and the Municipal Court
23 reads -- writs. So ejectments,
24 evictions, it is the same for us.

1 It ends with someone being removed
2 from a property. The 18,000 number
3 comes from services to that
4 property, giving them notification.
5 That's the first writ we talked
6 about. That's the final notice --

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

8 Okay.

9 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:

10 The amount of writs that we're
11 actually filed with our office in
12 2025 was -- it looks like it's about
13 17, 18,000. There's a lot of
14 services. 5,500 were scheduled in
15 2025. That doesn't mean they all
16 ended in an eviction. Some
17 judgments get satisfied based on our
18 notices.

19 Some people, they go, they
20 pay, they pay the judgment, the
21 eviction gets stopped. Some people
22 move out and turn over the keys. We
23 just had one today where we got an
24 email that said, You can cancel

1 this one. They gave the keys.

2 We're good. So there's in that
3 schedule number, it's things that
4 are postponed by the attorney.

5 Sometimes we get an email
6 that says, Hey, they gave us most
7 of the money. We really don't want
8 to put them out. Can we give them
9 another shot? Put it on hold, if
10 they don't settle up, we'll let you
11 know.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: But
13 you said 5,500 real lockouts. That
14 makes much more sense.

15 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:
16 Yeah.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
18 That's an actual -- that's the --
19 that's what everyone was, I think,
20 very upset about to think that
21 18,000 people are getting locked
22 out.

23 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:
24 No.

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: It's
2 about 5,500. That makes much more
3 sense. Thank you.

4 CHIEF INSPECTOR FALLEN:
5 But don't forget it is the 18,000 of
6 the work we still have to do. It
7 isn't like we sitting there --

8 CHAIR BASS: Councilmember
9 -- thank you. Councilmember
10 Gauthier. Thank you.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
12 Okay. Thank you so much for
13 clearing that up. We as a Council
14 are working way too hard on eviction
15 diversion, investing in that and
16 right to Council and emergency
17 rental assistance to have anywhere
18 that number -- near that number of
19 evictions. So, thank you. My
20 question is actually for FJD.

21 A few months ago, under the
22 leadership of Councilmember Phillips
23 and Councilmember Landau, we had a
24 hearing on the use of GPS in the

1 juvenile justice system. And I'm
2 wondering what has changed since
3 then about policy or practice
4 related to the use of GPS,
5 particularly to ensure GPS is only
6 being used as an alternative to
7 incarceration.

8 MR. MCSORLEY: Thank you
9 for that question, Council person.
10 GPS is being used by Family Court.
11 Our numbers have dropped on the
12 amount of GPS, and one of the
13 changes we are trying to make to
14 make sure that GPS is used on the
15 more violent cases than the
16 misdemeanor cases.

17 Right now, in calendar year
18 2025 or 2024 is our last stats that
19 I have. 85 percent of the GPS use
20 was on felony cases; only 15 percent
21 was on misdemeanor cases. And the
22 year before that, the numbers are
23 very similar; 80 percent on felony
24 and 20 percent on misdemeanor cases.

1 We are trying to use GPS sparingly
2 and trying to make sure that it's
3 not interrupting the daily
4 activities of those that have to
5 wear them.

6 In the calendar year of
7 2025, there is 749 motions filed for
8 GPS review. 39 percent of them
9 remained in the community on GPS, 27
10 percent were held for further action
11 by the court. And then 29 percent
12 failed to appear. And then there
13 was some miscellaneous numbers.

14 So GPS has its place, I
15 think that it's being used
16 correctly. It's very expensive to
17 use, but we are trying to use it to
18 keep juveniles in Philadelphia not
19 in placement and also under
20 supervision. But as I said, I think
21 the Family Court will tell you that
22 the emphasis is to use them where
23 they must be used. And that's
24 mostly on our felony. And it's just

1 a different population that they're
2 dealing with now.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

4 Thank you. At the hearing, we heard
5 a lot about sort of hardships that
6 were placed on people in terms of
7 them being able to move forward with
8 their lives under GPS monitoring.
9 We heard of people going back into
10 lockup because of technical
11 violations. I'm looking to
12 understand if the items that you
13 discuss right now, are those the
14 ways that you've always practiced?
15 Had -- did you all take anything
16 specific from the hearing? And
17 since the hearing, have you made any
18 changes in policy or practice based
19 on what we heard is happening in the
20 community?

21 MR. MCSORLEY: I know that
22 there's ongoing discussions under
23 Administrative Judge Olszewski.
24 They are looking at different ways

1 that they can take that information
2 and try to make the system better.
3 I -- as of right now, I can't tell
4 you that I know of any changes as
5 the Court Administrator, but I can
6 definitely talk to the
7 Administrative Judge and get you a
8 more comprehensive answer.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

10 Thank you. This is really important
11 to Council, so I would love to be
12 able to follow up with you all to
13 understand what changes you're
14 willing to put in place. Thanks so
15 much.

16 MR. MCSORLEY: Okay.

17 CHAIR BASS: Thank you.

18 Chair recognizes Councilmember Young
19 and then Phillips.

20 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
21 you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of
22 questions for the Sheriff. I want
23 to thank you all for being here.
24 Can -- Madam Sheriff, can you talk

1 about what are -- I mean, we talked
2 -- you've mentioned that there is a
3 shortage in officers, but can you
4 talk about what your promotion
5 policies are from within? So, you
6 know, and how you are looking to, I
7 guess, how does your recruitment --
8 how does your promotion policies
9 affect your recruitment?

10 SHERIFF BILAL: I'm trying
11 to understand, promotional or
12 advertising?

13 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: No,
14 no, no. Just your, yeah. How do
15 you promote from within? What are
16 your policies? What are your --
17 what do you do to determine who and
18 how your officers get promoted and
19 then how does that affect your
20 recruitment?

21 SHERIFF BILAL: To the next
22 rank?

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Yeah.

24 SHERIFF BILAL: Okay.

1 Those -- they take a test and then
2 they get listed on the test. And
3 they get listed as to what their
4 rank is. The city gives us a --
5 we're saying we got about 10 spaces.
6 They may give us a list of 20. Then
7 they are interviewed. They are
8 interviewed by their command, and
9 they are graded on that. And those
10 that are the highest are the ones
11 that get promoted. The others get
12 put back on the list until the list
13 ends.

14 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Okay.
15 Thank you. What -- in your
16 testimony, you talk about the
17 sheriff academy. Can you talk to us
18 about what is your implementation
19 path for this academy? I know you
20 and I have talked privately about
21 it, but just talk to us as a Council
22 to figure -- to talk to us about,
23 you know, what some of the
24 operational challenges that you're

1 facing with having to send, you
2 know, your recruits halfway across
3 the state. And, you know, just talk
4 to us about what the need is for
5 this.

6 SHERIFF BILAL: I'll let my
7 Chief of Staff do that, because I
8 can talk about that all day. That's
9 like the biggest thing in my book.
10 We need people.

11 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
12 you. And if you could also mention
13 and talk about how you plan to
14 recruit and train deputies, you
15 know, not just after -- you know,
16 after you get this academy, how you
17 going to recruit to keep them here?

18 MR. ROGERS: Okay.
19 Absolutely. Jamison Rogers, chief
20 of staff to Sheriff Rochelle Bilal,
21 Sheriff's Office. Regarding your
22 question, Councilmember, is the
23 Sheriff has had this vision for a
24 very long time. And has made

1 immense hurdles in getting us close
2 to the finish line as far as
3 identifying a location, getting
4 collar counties.

5 As you mentioned earlier,
6 other elected sheriffs that want to
7 send their recruits here because of
8 the 19 weeks that you have to spend
9 in State College. We have a lot of
10 people that really want to be a
11 deputy sheriff. However, when they
12 find out that they'll spend 19
13 weeks, Monday through Friday, at
14 State College for a three-
15 and-a-half-hour drive each way, we
16 lose a lot of good candidates.

17 So having this academy
18 here, and believe Councilman
19 O'Rourke, you asked us last year,
20 what buy-in did we have last year?
21 We didn't. Now we do have buy-in
22 from border collar counties now.
23 We've had the conversations with
24 public property, Ms. Harris, I've

1 worked with when she was Chief
2 Deputy Mayor here, putting together
3 a five-year plan on how it would
4 increase recruitment and lower
5 overtime over those five years.
6 Unfortunately, those conversations
7 have stopped, but we yearn for the
8 opportunity to reengage with those
9 conversations again. And it'll be
10 economic opportunity for the City of
11 Philadelphia. And also enhancing
12 the numbers that we have within the
13 office. Hope that answers your
14 question.

15 SHERIFF BILAL: But we also
16 did something else. We knew that
17 because of the court order, we
18 needed to hire and branch out. So
19 while we are waiting for State
20 College, now, mind you, State
21 College service 61 counties. So we
22 may get four slots. So we hire 30
23 people because we bring them into
24 our office and start training them

1 prior to them going to State

2 College. So now you do the math.

3 If there are 61 counties,
4 we get four slots, we got 20 people.
5 Do you know how long it'll take for
6 all 20 of them to get trained up at
7 state college? Five years. Thank
8 you. You do the math quickly. So
9 we had it decided that we will look
10 at another avenue, which we are
11 doing at MACO. We send some of our
12 recruits to MACO to get trained, and
13 then they come back and they do the
14 two-week waiver with one week up at
15 State College and one week here. So
16 that kind of like eliminate that.

17 But they have a threshold
18 that we can't send every -- so we
19 got 20, we can't send 20 over there
20 either. So it's like some that may
21 be able to go to State college, and
22 some go to MACO. That's how we were
23 able to hire about, what, a hundred
24 and something --

1 MR. ROGERS: 126.

2 SHERIFF BILAL: -- after
3 this court order, because we had to
4 think out of the box on how to get
5 people to come and be deputy
6 sheriffs in this city. So of going
7 to State College, for families that
8 are here in this city, that are
9 involved in this city, that's a
10 no-no for them. Once we go -- they
11 go through orientation and find that
12 out, they said -- they don't show up
13 anymore.

14 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
15 you. I have one more question for
16 the courts, if you don't mind, Madam
17 Chair. I recently learned that the
18 Family Court Help Centers has lost a
19 federal grant. Can you talk to us
20 about how -- or like how important
21 it is for us to, I guess, take a
22 look at this information? I think
23 that this is information that was
24 given to us by, I guess, some of

1 the, I think, members of the Bar
2 Association. And this Family Court
3 Help Center, it seems like it is
4 staffed by some of those, like,
5 basically volunteers, essentially.
6 Could you talk to us and talk to us
7 about the impact of the loss of like
8 any federal grants on the court
9 system?

10 MR. MCSORLEY: I believe
11 that this is the question we were
12 started our testimony with that --

13 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Yeah.

14 MR. MCSORLEY: I didn't
15 think that we have lost that grant
16 money. I think that the Family
17 Court is still working with how
18 they're going to fill that gap. And
19 I need to speak to Administrative
20 Judge Olszewski. I'll be able to
21 get you more definite information on
22 that --

23 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Okay.

24 MR. MCSORLEY: -- and have

1 it distributed to Council.

2 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
3 you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
5 Councilman. Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Phillips.

7 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
8 Thank you. Thank you so much,
9 Chairwoman. So my first line of
10 question -- my only line of
11 questions I have for today is for
12 the First Judicial District.
13 Currently, if I'm correct, you
14 handle Act 135, Conservatorship,
15 correct?

16 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
17 Yeah.

18 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
19 Okay. Have you seen an increase in
20 Act 135, conservatorship followings,
21 over the past three to five years?
22 If so, what is driving that
23 increase?

24 MR. MCSORLEY: I don't if

1 there's been any.

2 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

3 Yeah, I don't know if there's been
4 an increase. I'm sorry. But I
5 could find out and get the
6 information to you.

7 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

8 Okay. How many properties have been
9 placed since the conservatorship
10 annually, and how many result in
11 transfer of control or ownership?
12 Can you -- you have to get back to
13 me on that as well?

14 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

15 I'm sorry, I would have to get back
16 to you. But thank you for the
17 question. It's important point.

18 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

19 Okay. And are you -- are you doing
20 anything in terms of providing
21 safeguards in place to ensure
22 property owners are -- fully
23 understand their rights before
24 conservatorship is granted? Is that

1 something your office does?

2 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

3 Well, there's a checklist of things
4 that have to be asked; questions,
5 inquiries, that have to be made
6 before the Act 135 is granted. So
7 --

8 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

9 Right.

10 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

11 -- the presiding judge would go
12 through that whole list. I actually
13 presided over that when I was in
14 that program. And there are
15 actually two -- there's regulations
16 and rules, and I would spend a lot
17 of time exhaustively going through
18 that list to make sure.

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

20 Right. Well, I say that because I'm
21 greatly concerned about properties
22 being taken from --

23 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

24 Yeah.

1 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: --
2 residents in the City of
3 Philadelphia through
4 conservatorship. Currently, we have
5 a property, and I would love to
6 continue this conversation with you,
7 and on which a church wanted a
8 property next door to them. And
9 they did everything in their power,
10 and they're not even predominantly
11 African American community.

12 The church is predominantly
13 white, and they did everything in
14 their power to get that property
15 from an individual. Unfortunately,
16 the individual kept denying them,
17 and then they found some ways to go
18 through L&I, right, to get these
19 violations on them. After the
20 violations, they made some sort of
21 blanket statement that he's -- he
22 wasn't present at the house despite
23 the fact that a neighbor, several
24 neighbors, had pointed out that he

1 does live at that house.

2 And so whatever reason,
3 we're now in a position right now
4 that a man who's been living
5 somewhere for 37 years is in a
6 position to potentially to lose his
7 house due to conservatorship. So I
8 do think it's really important,
9 right? And I'm -- we're going to be
10 working on this because it's
11 bothersome to me. So I just want us
12 -- it's going to be very, very
13 important that I think this court be
14 -- we're trying to preserve houses
15 in Philadelphia -- does --

16 CHAIR BASS: Yeah.

17 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: --
18 does something to help protect those
19 people.

20 CHAIR BASS: Councilman --
21 Chair recognizes Councilman Jones
22 for point of information.

23 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
24 you. President Judge, that issue

1 that Member Phillips is talking
2 about is pervasive.

3 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

4 Is what?

5 COUNCILMEMBER JONES:

6 Pervasive. It -- and what irks me,
7 and I appreciate you raising it,
8 what irks me is they won't do that
9 in the heart of distressed
10 neighborhoods. They won't say,
11 yeah, we want to, you know, take
12 over these properties because we see
13 blight in depressed neighborhoods.
14 They wait till they get to Mount
15 Airy --

16 CHAIR BASS: Germantown.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: They
18 get to Germantown. They get to our
19 districts, Wynnefield, the like, and
20 then they say, oh, that property has
21 a broken window, and we will take it
22 under our advisement, building up
23 enough of the fines, fees, levies,
24 and improvements, keeping a thick

1 folder. Before you know it, the
2 people that may have been under
3 distress may have been unable to
4 keep up with the payments, lose the
5 house. And it doesn't just happen
6 every now and then. It is a
7 systematic; there are law firms that
8 dedicate themselves to this process.
9 So the issue that my colleague is
10 raising is pervasive.

11 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

12 Thank you. And I think it's --
13 thank you so much, Member Jones.

14 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Yeah.

15 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

16 And I just want to say it is also
17 utterly important to you as we
18 provide support funding to this --
19 to this office that you all work
20 together in conjunction with City
21 Council and the City of Philadelphia
22 to prevent this from happening. So
23 you could say you're doing your part
24 and maybe you're counseling and

1 coaching your judges on how to look
2 for these particular schemes.
3 Because it's not right, right? And
4 I think some of them are also in
5 cahoots in some capacity with --
6 that needs to be looked at
7 seriously. So we will be in
8 conversation. I'm not going to let
9 this one go because it's wrong. All
10 right? Thank you.

11 CHAIR BASS: Councilman,
12 thank you very much. Point of
13 information from Councilmember
14 Young.

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
16 you, Madam Chair. I just want to
17 point out for my colleagues that
18 this is state legislation that
19 allows this.

20 CHAIR BASS: Yes.

21 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So we
22 need to talk to our partners in
23 Harrisburg that allow -- the law
24 itself allows attorneys and the

1 petitioners automatic payments. So
2 the petitioner gets 20 percent from
3 the top and lawyers automatically
4 get their fee because the law says
5 they do.

6 CHAIR BASS: Yep.

7 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

8 Right? So it's not -- the court has
9 little discretion in some of the
10 things that happen with Act 135. So
11 I think we really need to focus our
12 energy on actually changing the
13 legislation from Harrisburg. But
14 yes, the courts have discretion on
15 determining if the property is
16 considered abandoned or blighted.
17 But the legislation is so -- it is
18 -- it's so vague that, you know, you
19 can -- anyone's house can --

20 CHAIR BASS: Sure.

21 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: --
22 can fit under the definition. So
23 it's very hard to kind of control
24 this type of behavior when the law

1 allows those, you know, those types
2 of predators, I'm going to call them
3 that because that's what they are,
4 to reap these benefits from this Act
5 135 law. Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 CHAIR BASS: Thank you to
7 Councilmember.

8 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
9 Thank you so much.

10 CHAIR BASS: But -- and
11 just going back to Councilmember
12 Phillips's point, one of the things
13 that I learned about Act 35 -- 135
14 is that when someone files against
15 you, you are automatically the
16 defendant in the case. So you have
17 to go in to defend your right to
18 keep your own real estate.

19 And again, as we talk about
20 real estate being generational
21 wealth for most of us in our
22 communities, the only generational
23 wealth that we really have access
24 to. It's very, very frightening

1 that this is happening. But back to
2 Councilmember Young's point, that's
3 something that we really need to
4 coalesce and work with our state
5 partners on legislatively to get
6 some changes there. So thank you
7 very much.

8 You're done? Okay. Chair
9 recognizes Councilmember Landau.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
11 Thank you. First, thank you all for
12 being here. Appreciate you so much.
13 I think I scare Councilmember Jones
14 away every once in a while. I got
15 you. No, I was just kidding. My
16 first questions are for the court.
17 So in case you don't know, I am the
18 chair of the Tech Committee, and I
19 always try to ask a whole bunch of
20 tech questions.

21 But one thing in particular
22 is that I've heard -- I'm curious
23 about who oversees the technology
24 systems, the databases, and the

1 dockets in both the Court of Common
2 Pleas and Municipal Court. Do all
3 the courts have the same systems?
4 And would you detail what it would
5 cost to improve these systems? I've
6 heard stories as much as people
7 saying that even switching out a PDF
8 would cost \$20,000. And I'm not
9 sure if someone was being dissuaded
10 from changing that PDF, but would be
11 curious about that. And also, how
12 do you -- do you work with the
13 city's OIT on both hardware and
14 software improvements for our
15 courts?

16 MR. MCSORLEY: Thank you
17 for the question, Councilperson.
18 The FJD has its own IT department.
19 It's fully staffed. We look after
20 all of our own hardware. We have
21 created a lot of software. We do
22 have outside software that we use.
23 Family Court uses a basis system,
24 for example, Court of Common Pleas,

1 a Municipal Court and criminal uses
2 system called CPCMS as a state-run
3 system.

4 But everything has to come
5 through our FJ -- FJD IT department.
6 We work hand in hand with the City's
7 OIT. We have weekly, if not more,
8 meetings with them. We can't do
9 anything without City OIT because
10 everything has to go through the
11 city network and they have their
12 firewalls. We need permission to
13 get through our firewalls.

14 So to answer your question,
15 we look after our own hardware. We
16 have a cycle to replace our PCs to
17 upgrade to, you know, the latest
18 programs. I think that we're up to
19 Windows -- I'm not sure which
20 Windows it is. What is it? Yeah,
21 we're up to Windows 11 now.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
23 Whoa.

24 MR. MCSORLEY: I know. We

1 are -- we are coming right out of
2 the 19th century and moving straight
3 ahead. So we do have to do all this
4 within the confines of our budget,
5 our class 200 and 300 monies. The
6 FJD IT department does have its own
7 budget and it's just to basically
8 maintain what we can do. But
9 everything in FJD, every program, I
10 think you mentioned that, we all are
11 using the same hardware or software.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Who
13 does the maintenance if you needed
14 to change a form, update --

15 MR. MCSORLEY: FJ --

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: --
17 something more having to do with
18 filing, not the website.

19 MR. MCSORLEY: Right.
20 Unless it's something that, I myself
21 have could go in and change a form
22 for something for, you know,
23 policies for the FJD. If I have
24 access to that, right access to

1 that; administrative rights, then I
2 could do it. But almost everything
3 from things posted on our -- on our
4 intranet to our internet to the
5 forms that are used within the FJD,
6 all that is -- has to be done and is
7 approved by the FJD IT, which has a
8 staff of, I think about 20 or so
9 people.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

11 Okay. I would love to follow you
12 up. I'm going to get the details of
13 this and follow up with you on this
14 particular instance. And also I
15 wanted to follow up on having to do
16 with Family Court Help Center, too.

17 So last year I was able to
18 secure money in the budget for the
19 debt court navigators. Can you give
20 an update on where we stand with the
21 debt court navigator and anticipated
22 outcomes?

23 And then I'm also looking
24 at Family Court because Philadelphia

1 Legal Assistance and Women Against
2 Abuse have provided two help desks
3 for almost a decade, and they're
4 about to lose all of their funding.
5 So can you detail their operation
6 and impact and what would it take to
7 not only maintain but increase
8 access to this critical legal
9 assistance?

10 MR. MCSORLEY: Again, I'm
11 sure -- I have to fall back on --
12 I'll have to get back to you with
13 Administrative Judge Olszewski. I
14 don't want to speak for him, but I
15 know that they're aware of this and
16 they're making plans, but I want to
17 make sure I have my details. So
18 come -- I'll circle back with you
19 and get that information.

20 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
21 We need to bring him next time.

22 MS. MCSORLEY: Yeah.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
24 Okay. Thank you for that. I have

1 one -- a couple of questions for the
2 Sheriff as well. I wanted to -- I'm
3 staying on my tech theme here. Can
4 you detail how you work -- the
5 Sheriff's Office works with the
6 city's department of OIT for tech
7 support; both hardware and software.
8 And you detail a partnership with
9 Tyler Technologies to help improve
10 financial transparency. What are --
11 what are -- I suppose, what's the
12 Sheriff's Office paying for these
13 services? When can we expect
14 results and what specifically are
15 they going to produce? That's -- I
16 also have a LiveScan Plus question.

17 SHERIFF BILAL: Okay. Eric
18 Chambers. And --

19 MR. CHAMBERS: Good
20 afternoon, everybody. My name is
21 Eric Chambers. I am the IT director
22 for the Philadelphia Sheriff's
23 Office. And with respect to your
24 question Madam Councilwoman, we have

1 a collaboration, under the Sheriff's
2 leadership, we are rebuilding -- I
3 should say, rebuilding a
4 collaboration with OIT. And they do
5 some of our services, and then we
6 have an IT staff in-house that does
7 the majority of the services.

8 So with respect to just
9 general daily computer -- just
10 computer issues or whatever, we have
11 an IT staff, right? But when we
12 need to work, do anything within the
13 network, domain or whatever, we
14 coordinate with OIT. And we do that
15 through their ticketing system. We
16 are, again as I stated, rebuilding
17 relationships so we can reach out
18 directly to those individuals in
19 some of the different units under
20 OIT for help in various areas.

21 For instance, we just got
22 our first server environment. So
23 that will give us the ability to
24 bring together all the software that

1 we have currently running under the
2 Sheriff's Office -- in the Sheriff's
3 Office into one location. And with
4 that we collaborated with OIT
5 through their Gates Process to get
6 to a point where now we have that
7 environment, we can house that
8 software.

9 In addition to that, we are
10 working with OIT to bring in
11 accounting software. When I came on
12 board, we -- under the Sheriff's
13 leadership, again, we have
14 transitioned the Sheriff's Office
15 from the stone age, really, in my
16 opinion because I've been in it a
17 long time. We've transitioned from
18 the stone age to the 20th century,
19 and we're in the 21st century,
20 right? But we're getting there as
21 our people over in FJD stated,
22 right?

23 We're getting there. We're
24 Windows 11 compliant now. And we

1 have a lot of equipment that is
2 working within the office now to
3 assist our users to be able to do
4 things they need to do on a daily
5 basis.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

7 Thank you so much for that. When I
8 -- oh, sorry. I just want to --
9 when I first started to work for the
10 City of Philadelphia long before the
11 Sheriff was in -- at the helm, they
12 were still doing things by pencil
13 and paper, so --

14 MR. CHAMBERS: Yes, ma'am.

15 SHERIFF BILAL: I think we
16 done had too many press conferences
17 on what it was when I walked in
18 there, so I'm not even going to
19 belittle that. Computer had a big
20 old back to it when my grandbaby had
21 a flat screen and that's 2020.
22 Patrick?

23 MR. LEE: Yes. Good
24 afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My

1 name is Patrick Lee and I'm the
2 chief financial officer for the
3 Sheriff's department, Office,
4 rather. So what's interesting about
5 what we've been able to do in
6 conjunction with our IT team is that
7 we tie everything to a city
8 contract. So that is the basis of
9 where we go. All the pricing is set
10 by those contracts.

11 For example, IT
12 augmentation of staff, we get that
13 through OIT. In addition, all of
14 the Dell and software, unless it's
15 other than Microsoft software, we
16 use a city contract to purchase.
17 And that helps us with managing the
18 costs that go into IT, down to the
19 hardware, software, and any other
20 items that we need through and to
21 augment our augmentation process
22 that we have implemented over the
23 last four years, going on five years
24 since I've been there. The

1 efficiencies have been readily
2 apparent. So every time we add
3 technology, we improve either
4 process, procedure, or units to do
5 something a little more efficient.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

7 That's great. I was curious about
8 the Tyler Technologies and LiveScan
9 Plus systems too. Well, let's go to
10 LiveScan Plus, because I think this
11 one is particularly important. You
12 said it's going to provide mobile
13 biometric ID capabilities such as
14 fingerprinting, and how do we ensure
15 data in the system and with any
16 LiveScan subcontractors will be
17 secure?

18 What's the process of
19 federal law enforcement, such as
20 ICE, would ask the city LiveScan or
21 any of its data storage partners for
22 the fingerprinting information?

23 SHERIFF BILAL: Any one of
24 you-all.

1 MR. LEE: Well, I don't
2 work with Live --

3 SHERIFF BILAL: Talk about
4 our fingerprinting that we have
5 outside. That's our Warrant Unit.
6 Basically, all our data is kept with
7 us. That data does not go in a
8 cloud to the city. It's kept within
9 the server that we maintain in the
10 Sheriff's Office.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
12 Excellent.

13 SHERIFF BILAL: And we
14 don't give that information out.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
16 Excellent. Thank you so much.
17 Wait, that's it for now. Thank you.

18 CHAIR BASS: Thank you,
19 Councilmember.

20 Chair recognizes,
21 Councilmember Ahmad.

22 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
23 you, Chair --

24 CHAIR BASS: And before I

1 do that, I want to recognize
2 Councilmember Mark Squilla is
3 present. Member Ahmad.

4 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
5 you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon,
6 everyone.

7 MR. MCSORLEY: Good
8 afternoon.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Good
10 to see you all. I first have a
11 quick question for the First
12 Judicial District. Good afternoon,
13 Madam Judge. I wanted to know what
14 training do judges get around human
15 trafficking and child welfare
16 issues? Is there a specific
17 training module as new judges come
18 on around these issues? And then I
19 have a second part question.

20 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
21 Yes, there is training. Thank you
22 for that question. The AOPC,
23 Administrative Office of
24 Pennsylvania Courts runs -- we call

1 it affectionately Baby Judge School.
2 Every time we get a lot of new --
3 any new judges that come in, and
4 they cover a lot of that substantive
5 information.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: And
7 the follow up is, do you have --
8 give us an overview of how the
9 branches within First Judicial work
10 with DHS, with Department of Human
11 Services, with respect to trial,
12 welfare, Family Court cases? And
13 where do you see gaps either in
14 communication or cooperation? And
15 particularly do you have any
16 interaction with the CUAs -- CUA
17 case managers, and the DHS case
18 managers? We -- the feedback we
19 get, particularly from constituents,
20 is that there seems to be a
21 disconnect.

22 And a lot of times the
23 information doesn't seem to reach
24 the judge sitting in on, you know,

1 reviewing these cases and they feel
2 a lot gets lost. So this is from
3 the outside looking in, and of
4 course not everybody is allowed in
5 the court. So this is also some
6 hearsay involved. So I just wanted
7 to clarify what exactly -- what
8 engagement is there to have a really
9 nuanced, solid, you know, sort of,
10 briefing that the judges get in
11 order to pass judgment?

12 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
13 Well, the judges have all of those
14 workers right there in the
15 courtroom, and they can testify.
16 The workers can testify. The judges
17 can follow up; they can ask for
18 additional resources to be ordered
19 for them, and they periodically
20 reschedule those matters, especially
21 in Dependency Court. So if there's
22 a change of circumstances that can
23 be made known. A lot of times,
24 because those cases are so intimate

1 and emotional --

2 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Yes.

3 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

4 -- you may have people who are
5 displeased with the result, and that
6 can end up in a -- in a complaint.
7 But the judges work really hard to
8 try to get it right. Our Family
9 Court judges are hardworking, and
10 they really do want to make the
11 right decision, I mean, who doesn't
12 want to make the right decision? Of
13 course they do.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Well,
15 thank you. Because this is
16 traumatizing for them as well, but
17 it is many more times traumatizing
18 for those who have gone through the
19 system to stand in front of them.

20 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:
21 Yeah.

22 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: So I
23 just want to make sure I can tell
24 our constituents that there is a

1 grounding in understanding all of
2 this. So thank you. I know I have
3 very little time. I want to pivot
4 to our Sheriff. Thank you. My
5 question is you talk about including
6 workplace stabilization and wellness
7 as a FY27 priority. Can you give us
8 a quick example of what this
9 initiative could look like?

10 And I will tell you why I
11 am asking. I just passed a bill on
12 workplace accommodation, and I
13 wanted to see how those trickle down
14 to you. Meaning how do you see
15 those in your work and how does that
16 come into the wellness conversation,
17 including those who come to court
18 and are traumatized by whatever
19 decision is made. And I have seen
20 this happen in Family Court where
21 one side will not, you know, maybe
22 have their child removed, and they
23 have a meltdown, and then it becomes
24 -- there's violence and all of that.

1 So I was looking to see how wellness
2 is integrated in those spaces as
3 well.

4 SHERIFF BILAL: Thank you.
5 When we say in our accent, workplace
6 stabilization and wellness, it's
7 dealing with the amount of time that
8 our deputies are working overtime.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: I
10 see.

11 SHERIFF BILAL: And because
12 of the amount of hours that they're
13 working overtime to make sure
14 everything that we have to do gets
15 done, that right there becomes an
16 issue. Because now you're looking
17 at burnout, looking at those that
18 are getting stressed because of the
19 amount of hours that they're doing
20 right now. And so when we put that
21 in there, hiring more people reduces
22 the amount of overtime, stops the
23 burnout, and therefore deals with
24 their mental health and their

1 wellness. That's when we talked
2 about stabilization of the office.

3 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: And
4 so are you also looking at
5 stabilization of wellness in the
6 spaces that you work? I know you're
7 talking about your workers, that's
8 clarified. That because you're the
9 frontline sort of workers in some of
10 these traumatic spaces, I just
11 wondered, what do you need either
12 from your office or the judicial
13 system to really stabilize those
14 spaces as well for so the clients
15 and the constituents, so it doesn't
16 escalate into problems?

17 SHERIFF BILAL: That sound
18 like the chief question. What are
19 you doing over there?

20 SHERIFF THORNTON:
21 Listening to that question. Good
22 afternoon again. Chief Deputy Sean
23 Thornton, chief of our Court
24 Operations. Basically, what we do

1 is we maintain professionalism
2 throughout the day. If we see
3 something happen, we're more
4 proactive with it. If there's some
5 issues with families, again, you're
6 coming into the courthouse, right?

7 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Yeah.

8 SHERIFF THORNTON: There
9 may be some issues with trials. You
10 have opposing families and things of
11 that nature. So things are in place
12 where we try to keep the peace. No,
13 we do keep the peace and if
14 necessary, we separate families and
15 things of that nature. But again,
16 it all goes into professionalism;
17 being there, being aware, being
18 alert. And that's what we preach to
19 our staff.

20 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: All
21 right. Thank you. Thank you,
22 Council President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Thank you. I just had a brief

1 question first. Good afternoon.

2 MS BILAL: Good afternoon.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 I want to thank Member Cindy Bass,
5 who is part of my leadership team
6 for holding me down. I know as we
7 wrap up, I just had a -- just some
8 brief few questions and also
9 comments. Always good to see you,
10 Sheriff Rochelle Bilal.

11 SHERIFF BILAL: You, too.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

13 Thank you for your hard work and
14 your dedication and things that
15 you're doing to move the City of
16 Philadelphia Forward. And Nina
17 Wright Padilla, we thank you, and
18 the work that you're doing with the
19 First Judicial District.

20 On the First Judicial
21 District, we have a follow-up
22 conversation as well. I just want
23 to know the progress we have made
24 regarding the CURE Report. The CURE

1 Report was a report that focused on
2 racial equity, nepotism at the First
3 Judicial District. And it was a
4 report that I worked on as a
5 Councilmember and just wanted to get
6 an idea of where we're at in terms
7 of how we are addressing the --

8 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

9 Thank you for the --

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

11 -- racial climate, diversity,
12 equity, and inclusion, and all of
13 those things to make sure that it's
14 a healthy environment for
15 individuals to thrive. Just want to
16 get to know if any progress has been
17 made since then.

18 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

19 I'm so glad you brought that up.
20 Thank you for that question. I have
21 been concerned about that CURE
22 Report from the time you brought it
23 to my attention some time ago, thank
24 you for that. So what I've done

1 during my time as President Judge is
2 I've convened a committee for the
3 board of -- Board of Judges
4 Committee for the CURE Report.

5 And the purpose of the
6 committee is to go through all the
7 recommendations on that report and
8 try to see how we can effectuate it,
9 to effectuate change. I think it's
10 really important to be aware of that
11 CURE Report and all those
12 recommendations and protocols that
13 were mentioned. And I plan to
14 continue that work to change -- to
15 make a change while I have this
16 time. So thank you. I appreciate
17 it. And we will do that. We will
18 follow up too if you're interested.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 Yeah. Well thank you. And yeah, we
21 can just do a follow up and just
22 say, here's a recommendation that
23 were proposed. Here's the progress
24 we have in making as relates to the

1 recommendations. Just a status
2 update. And always good to see
3 Richard McSorley as well, thank you
4 for your hard work, your dedication.
5 Always been on the case because you
6 were around at that time when we
7 were working on this particular
8 issue.

9 MR. MCSORLEY: I was,
10 Council President. And we have made
11 significant changes. Our population
12 has changed. Our numbers are
13 changing. The upper-level
14 management, old people like me don't
15 get out as much, but our
16 demographics are changing. They've
17 changed since the last time we
18 spoke.

19 We've instituted new hiring
20 policies; we have hiring panels; we
21 have promotional exams that have
22 been changed. We've gotten rid of a
23 lot of testing; we don't do that
24 anymore. We have changed a lot of

1 our policies, our personal
2 appearance policies, to make them
3 more neutral. And in fact, myself,
4 my DEI Chair is back there, Cordell
5 --

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 Say that again one more time. I
8 like how you said that. Say it
9 again.

10 MR. MCSORLEY: Our DEI
11 Chief Cordell --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Yeah.

14 MR. MCSORLEY: He's back
15 there. He has been working with a
16 lot of training in the FJD, doing a
17 lot of brown bag lunching, doing a
18 lot of different training, and
19 making the staff aware of different
20 cultural differences. And we've
21 undertook -- it was -- it took us
22 about two years. We went through
23 every personnel policy in the FJD
24 with that eye, with that different

1 lens and updated everything to try
2 to make it more inclusive, try to
3 make it more gender neutral. Try to
4 make sure that it was up-to-date
5 from the 1980-something that it was
6 originally written. So we have been
7 making progress ever since then, and
8 my staff and I and along with the
9 judge, we're going to continue to do
10 so.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 Good. I see Gary, but Mr. Jones,
13 stand up, sir. And he's part of
14 your team over there doing some good
15 work. And so I want to continue to
16 encourage the young man to keep up
17 the good work while you over there
18 in the First Judicial District.
19 That's all I have.

20 Chair recognizes Councilman
21 Nicholas O'Rourke.

22 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

23 For the good of the order, I'll pass
24 all my questions, Mr. Chairman --

1 Mr. President. Thank you very
2 kindly.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 That's it? Okay. Thank you very --
5 listen, we want to thank the two of
6 you for being here. Thank you for
7 your hard work and your dedication
8 to our Sheriff's Office, and the
9 people that work for the Sheriff's
10 Office and particularly those who
11 put those uniforms on. It is not
12 guaranteed that you will come home,
13 especially in this climate in
14 America on any given day. So just
15 thank you for -- on the work that
16 you are doing from a law enforcement
17 perspective and just protecting
18 those who need protection. So with
19 that being said thank you very much
20 for your testimony.

21 PRESIDENT JUDGE PADILLA:

22 Thank you.

23 MR. MCSORLEY: Thank you,
24 Council.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 With that being said, is there any
3 other questions for members of this
4 Committee as we wrap up for today?
5 Hearing none, the Chair calls on
6 Councilwoman Cindy Bass for a motion
7 to adjourn.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
9 you, Mr. Chairman -- thank you,
10 Mr. President. So moved.

11 Councilmember: Second.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Okay. It has been moved and
14 properly seconded that the public
15 hearing and meeting on the bills and
16 resolutions before the Committee
17 today stand in recess until --

18 MALE VOICE 2: Supposed
19 recess until tomorrow.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Yes.

22 MALE VOICE 2: Say that.
23 Just say in recess until tomorrow at
24 10:00.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: I'm reading it now.

3 It has been moved and
4 properly seconded that the
5 public hearing and meeting on
6 the bills and resolution before
7 the Committee today stand in
8 recess until Wednesday April the
9 29th at 10:00 a.m. All those in
10 favor of signify by saying
11 aye.

12 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Anyone opposed? The
15 ayes have it, and the motion
16 carries. This committee will
17 stand in recess until Wednesday,
18 April 29th at 10:00 a.m., at
19 which time we will reconvene at
20 Room 400. Thank you very much.

21 (Committee of the Whole public hearing concluded at
22 4:10 p.m.)
23
24
25

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

I hereby certify that the proceedings
and evidence are contained fully and accurately in
the notes taken by me of the above case, and this
copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda J. Rios

Court Reporter
Notary Public of Pennsylvania

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City of Philadelphia

Meeting Calendar

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Criteria : Begin Date: 4/27/2026, End Date: 4/30/2026

Date	Time	Meeting Body	Meeting Location
<u>April 2026</u>			
4/27/2026	10:00 AM	Committee on Public Property and Public Works	Room 400, City Hall
4/27/2026	1:00 PM	Committee on Streets and Services	Room 400, City Hall
4/28/2026	10:00 AM	Committee of the Whole	Room 400, City Hall
4/29/2026	10:00 AM	Committee of the Whole	Room 400, City Hall
4/30/2026	10:00 AM	CITY COUNCIL	Room 400, City Hall