COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND THE HOMELESS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, March 4, 2026
10:38 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN MIKE DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE

BILLS: 250329, 250330

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COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Good morning. Good morning, everyone. I'm going to ask that everyone take their seats so we can get started.

Hello, everyone. I now note that the hour has come and this hearing is called to order. This is the public hearing of the City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and The Homeless. The purpose of this public hearing is to hear testimony on Bill Nos. 250329 and 250330.

Ms. Jones, would you please call the roll.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Bass.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Driscoll.

COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Squilla.

(No response.)

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES:

Present.

THE CLERK: Vice-Chair Landau.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Present.

THE CLERK: Councilwoman Gauthier.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Present. Also joining us today is Minority Whip Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke.

I note for the record that a quorum of this committee is present and this hearing is called to order. Good morning, everyone, and thank you so much for joining us this morning. I think that we

are all here because we understand that housing is the bedrock of a successful life, healthy communities and a vibrant city.

So it may come as no surprise that as the places we live change so do the people that live here. This is a citywide issue, but I want to take off my Chairperson hat for just a moment and put on my District Councilmember hat.

More than half of the renters and more than 1 in 3 homeowners in my Council District, the 3rd Council District, are cost-burdened. They are making the impossible choice every month between paying their rent or mortgage and other essentials like keeping food on the table or the copay for their prescriptions.

And so what does this mean on a community-wide level?

West Philly's Black population east of 52nd Street was cut in half between 2002 and 2020, and we're seeing similar widespread displacement in North and South Philadelphia too. So it is not an exaggeration to say that the very thing that makes Philadelphia is at stake in this moment.

City Council, especially our Housing Committee, has two core tenets, making sure that the city spends taxpayer funding responsibly and effectively as it relates to housing programs and enacting legislation to make life better for Philadelphians. And we've done the work on the budget side through H.O.M.E. And Safe Healthy Homes is how we do the work on the legislative side, and that's why we're here today.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

I want to applaud Minority Whip Nicolas O'Rourke and his team for working so diligently on this legislation.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: It's been months and months of hard work, and we would not be here today without his team's steadfast leadership and determination to get these bills enacted into law, and we would not be here today without the support of so many advocates and impacted people as well.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I also want to thank Housing Vice-Chair Rue Landau, Renters United, One PA --

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: -- and Council President Johnson for working with all of us and Minority Whip Nicolas O'Rourke on

the legislative process for safe, healthy homes. I also want to thank the entire committee for your patience, grace, diligence and working with every stakeholder to make sure that we do what needs to be done in a thoughtful manner. I look forward to today's discussion. Thank you so much.

I'd like to recognize Vice-Chair Landau for comments.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you, Chair Gauthier.

Good morning, everybody. Thank you all for coming out today, and thank you to Councilmember O'Rourke for holding this hearing today. As Vice-Chair of the Housing Committee, as a former housing attorney and as former head of the Fair Housing Commission, I know that this conversation is long overdue.

Everyone, regardless of

zip code, deserves access to a safe, healthy home. Everyone deserves to come back to a place where they feel secure and respected. Everyone deserves the opportunity to speak up about injustices and see those injustices corrected, not thrown back in their faces.

Across Philadelphia, tenants are living in units with mold, leaking ceilings, broken heat, unsafe wiring and more. What's worse is they are living in fear. Many tenants worry if they submit a complaint or organize with their neighbors, that they risk their housing and even their potential for a new rental. And this was the exact reason for the enactment of the Fair Housing Ordinance in 1962 and we're still here. We have to overcome this fear and we have to put in justice.

When tenants have meaningful access to justice and housing disputes, when they are protected from harassment and retaliation, it can mean the difference between living in dangerous conditions and living in a place that truly feels like home. The bills you're hearing today are rooted in the right to repairs and the right to safety. They are the basic standards of humane housing conditions and Philadelphia needs to prioritize safe, healthy homes.

Whether it's the residents who lived faithfully in their home for decades and now is advocating for repairs or a new college grad worried about losing their lease to a broken heater, this legislation will affect all of Philadelphia. We're in the midst of an affordable housing crisis and stability is not a luxury. It's a

bedrock. When tenants feel safe in their protections, the community improves. When rights are clear, public retaliation loses power.

I thank Councilmember O'Rourke for engaging in dialogue and good faith with all aspects of the housing community, including tenants, landlords and his colleagues. And I look forward to this hearing today. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'd like to recognize Minority Leader Councilmember Kendra Brooks.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Councilmember Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Been here a minute, been a part of this committee for a while, but I want to recognize Member O'Rourke for his patience.

He went the whole lot while all of this was going on. Life be lifing irrespective of what we are doing. In the half dozen or so meetings I've had with him, he has been patient to hold things until we had an opportunity to meet with other stakeholders who were not mentioned herefore, the HAPCOs of the world, the Apartment Associations of the world, that they also are stakeholders on a three-legged stool that we need to recognize, along with the Administration.

What I am proud of is that this process that you engaged in and went head forward into has made a lot of progress, which I'm looking forward to hearing from, so that everybody in this process gives and takes a little. One of the things that I'm proud of is that we did Good Cause, one of the authors of that legislation.

And when some of the other interests were saying we negotiated it once, we don't want to negotiate it again, I said, we'll negotiate it as we get new information so that we make it better for everyone. And I'm thankful to have you as a colleague. And hopefully through today, after your comments people will see why.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I will recognize the bill sponsor for any comments.

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Vice-Chair as well and the entire Housing Committee, for having me and for considering these bills. Once again, very much appreciated.

Y'all have heard a lot from me and my team in recent

weeks, probably too much. You've heard a lot from Philly landlords of varying sizes, both big landlords and small. And I know you've heard from the many, many, dedicated, organized tenants who've been fighting for these bills. And I don't want to underplay the importance of this issue, of the relationship between landlord and tenant and the entire civic sphere that surrounds a lease agreement, no matter how much it might seem like a private affair.

Really there are only a few issues that so reliably draw the public, as we hear them here today, things like our schools, our kids, right, our safety, our health and our homes, our homes. Housing or the lack thereof is something that everybody has a story about. We're going to hear those stories today from everybody's point of

view.

But I want to be clear about something. The stories that inform the creation of this legislation come from the tenants. And I want to be clear about why. Since the Great Depression, more or less Americans have lived in a country that has made homeownership the core of public policy, has made the single-family home the most important asset the average Philadelphian could own and has structured our tax system to protect that asset.

Today low-income tenants who see the taxable value of the place they live reflected in their ever-rising rent are the most burdened by property taxes in the city due to decades of policy choices. But it's more than money. Tenants in Philadelphia have long had to fight for the right to

dignified living, dignified living.

I didn't say in bright mansions above. I didn't say a private island on a helipad. Dignified living, a condition that they have less control over than those who own the place they actually live in. The names of these bills, they aren't abstract. They're pulled from the life experience of tenants in Philadelphia.

So to those in the room, if you hear your name or your group, just wave at us so people know that you're here as through the course of this hearing. Is One PA in the house?

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: Last year Council passed the Right to Relocation bill, that was last April, a policy ripped straight from the headlines of Ms. Melissa

Monts life as she was displaced by cease-operations orders from L&I. Today we're fighting for the right to safety for protections against those select bad landlords who retaliate against tenants trying to speak up or organize when they're mistreated.

Ms. Kadi Ashby is right now in a case before our Fair Housing Commission contending that she has faced that exact retaliation. And we're fighting for the right to repairs. And I know there are a couple tenants from Upsal Gardens, who are in the room today who are suing their landlord. Why? Because even after L&I deemed their building unsafe, that's a qualification, they were charged rent for months, despite the fact that collecting rent under these conditions is flat-out illegal under current law, not what

we're creating, as the law exists. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. These are the stories. These are the traumas. These are the frustrations and the betrayals that drive tenants to organize, that drive tenants to fight back, that drive them to advocate, to sue and to rally, to draft legislation and to pack City Hall like folks have done today.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

They are the stories that have established, that have fixed my North Star when it comes to this issue. And other stories matter too. And I'm glad to hear from landlords of all different stripes, of all different persuasions, of all different perspectives on these bills. In fact, I don't want anybody to suggest that we didn't hear everybody out because we did.

So let me be abundantly clear. The day after last year's Safe Healthy Homes hearing when the bills before us today were held, we reached out to HAPCO, we reached out to PAA, we reached out to the BIA for more dialogue. And since then, we've engaged with these primary organizations representing landlords and developers on over 20 separate instances, in person, by email and one-on-ones and in group settings. We've gone above. We've gone beyond in seeking their engagement and been quick to respond when they have reached out to us.

Nobody, and I do mean nobody, who has wanted to be in the mix has been shut out. And to the public servants in the middle of this maelstrom as it were, the diligent workers at L&I and our Commission on Human Relations,

please know that, please know that I know as this body knows, you need more, that you do vital work, that we are grateful to you for doing and also you need more. We are asking you to do more, which means our financial dedication to your work has to grow deeper.

On that point, I was encouraged by a conversation that I had with our Mayor yesterday about the work that we must do to build an L&I that ensures safety for our tenants, while responding to the very real struggles of small landlords that so many landlords have talked to me about. I'm not going to count any chickens before they hatched. But I'll say that Mayor Parker and I agree to work together to make that vision for L&I a reality.

I know there's some landlords in the room that would be

pleased to hear that. So I'm encouraged for the health, for the safety and the future of all the different actors in the room today, at least I will be if we pass these bills and do the work that it takes to implement them with diligence, without losing sight of compassion, without setting grace aside because we are all in need of it in the course of a life. Do I have a witness in the room?

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: Now, I want to end where I began, and that is with the tenants. I have to return to these tenants, to the brave and bold members of One PA Renters United Philadelphia, with affection for our friends at Philly Thrive, I want to thank you. Thank you. Thank you for setting an example, your willingness to fight for yourself and your neighbors,

for the city that you believe in and for a city that loves you back, is the reason I am honored to do this work. Your solidarity, your steadfastness, your stories are what have brought us here. The pressure that you apply is why we could get here.

I heard Mayor Parker say yesterday the pressure is a privilege. And in this case, it certainly is. The year we have spent on this campaign is only a brief moment when put up against the years of struggle, the years of displacement, of disappointment, mistreatment that led you to organize in the first place that led us here today. That's something that everyone here should be able to acknowledge.

People don't band together to fight for safe, healthy homes because they're living on

easy street. That's not why we get together. They do it because it is a human right. I'll say it again. They do it because housing is a human right. That should not be poetic language. That should be principled to how we ought to construct society.

Human beings need shelter. God calls us to care for those who are unhoused. Housing is a human right. I'm going to honor that with every single thing that I have. Now, actually I do want to close for real, for real, just by noting some of the arguments informing me in opposition to these bills, because I think it matters.

A HAPCO member reached out earlier sharing many of the arguments that very willingly we've heard from the organization. As usual, they shared that they "couldn't evict the tenant who

clearly violate the number of the good cause protections," chronic overdue rent, illegal activity in the home, which demonstrated that this HAPCO member doesn't really understand what good cause actually is.

What really stood out to me was how this member closed their argument. They had another vision for good cause. This is a quote. "Good cause, bad people. Is that not reason enough. Some people are just bad." Listen, I am a minister. I pastor a small church. I'm honored to be able to be called their pastor. The concept of forces that are pure evil is not foreign to me. It's part of how I process and understand the world.

But my training teaches me a different thing about people. My tradition teaches me about grace. It teaches me about mercy.

And when a tenant hasn't violated any of those good causes for eviction, then, yes, I believe that grace should, in fact, reign because evictions ruin lives. There was a woman who came here to public comment and mentioned after her eviction she actually lost her foot. It impacts lives physically, straight up.

In a city where nearly half the tenants are spending way too much on rent when the cost of moving is severe, eviction is a nightmare. There's more to back up that claim than any resolution, informed or not, from the many landlords who might oppose those measures.

And also to conclude, I want to offer a quick clarification for the Housing Committee members about the provision around tenant organizing, which is a part of

this. This provision allows for tenant organizers to have the same level of access to buildings as any other non-resident. I'll say that again. It allows for tenant organizers to have the same level of access to buildings as any other non-resident, such as canvassers.

Based on this bill, tenant organizers would not have the same access as tenants. Let me say it again. Based on this bill, tenant organizers would not have the same access as tenants. I'm open to offer clarifying language once the bills move beyond committee, if needed. But the intent of this bill is to allow tenant organizers to perform lawful organizing activity without retaliation, which I think is a righteous thing to do.

That having been said, I've talked too long. Let's go

ahead and see what the end is going to be. Thank you so much for the time.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you. Thank you so much.

I'm going to next recognize Majority Deputy Whip Cindy Bass and then Minority Leader Kendra Brooks, and then we'll get this hearing rolling.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you. I'm going to be brief. I just really wanted to thank the bill sponsor because we've had several meetings, and wanted to get this right. This is a very comprehensive bill. And so, looking at it sort of holistically, the whole of it all, we wanted to make sure that this bill actually does what it's intended.

I want to thank you for clarifying. There were a number of

provisions in the bill that weren't crystal clear to the members of the committee. And so, we took the time this morning to make sure that everybody had the appropriate information and some of the concerns that were brought to us from the landlord community were adequately addressed in my opinion.

I also appreciate that the sponsor is willing that after today's vote, assuming the bill comes out of committee, after today's vote is still willing to have dialogue. And so listen, there are some great landlords and some not so great landlords, right. There are some great tenants and some not so great tenants. We want to make sure that we can fix the problems that exist.

I am a product of both worlds. When my parents divorced when I was a young child, we became

housing insecure. We moved into what was back then known as $1 house, if anybody remembers $1 house program. We had tint up on the windows and a big hole in the living room. And I still remember that. I still remember the effects of not really feeling, number one, that you had a home or being somewhat embarrassed about your living conditions.

And so, fast-forward to many years later my mother was able to purchase a property in which she was able to rent it out to a tenant. But if something went wrong in that property, it was a disaster in our household. Because if their heater went out, that little bit of rent that we got, which really was what sustained our home, everything went towards that property to make sure that our tenant was taken care of.

And so, I know both sides of the issue. And I'm glad to know both sides, and I'm glad to be able to have a colleague who is willing to hear and listen and work with everyone. So I just want to tell you I appreciate that and I'm looking forward to working with you as we get through these bills. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN JONES: Madam Chair, just real quick.

One other issue on that three-legged stool is the city's administration, meaning L&I and other departments that will be a part of this process. As you come up and testify, you need to say what you need to be able to complete your task. So I understand how it is being on the other side of that, but now's the time a closed mouth don't get fed.

Tell us what you need.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Thank you.

Minority Leader Kendra Brooks.

COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

Good morning, colleagues. And thank you to the Committee Chair Jamie Gauthier and Minority Whip Nicolas O'Rourke for allowing me to say a few words in support of the Safe Healthy Homes package. I want to commend my fellow Working Families Party Councilmember for his diligent work on this bill and to get us where we are today.

Over the last year, he has worked with members of the committee, tenants and willing landlords alike and the administration to strengthen this bill. I fully support the home package, and I look forward to this

bill becoming a law. This law will protect tenants, strengthening Philadelphia's rental protections and making our city a leader when it comes to good cause protections.

Empowering tenants to be able to speak up about their living conditions is only going to make us a fairer city. And through these bills, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that housing is truly a human right. I want to thank the committee for their diligence and I also want to shout out Renters United and One PA for their relentless advocacy. We all know that people power has the ability to change the hearts and minds, and their incredible advocacy is just what got us here today.

I am here today to encourage the committee to support these bills and to ensure swift

package today -- the swift passage today. I'm sorry. Thank you so much. That's it.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much.

Ms. Jones, will you now read the titles of the bills.

THE CLERK: Bill No. 250329, an ordinance amending Chapter 9-3900 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Property Licenses and Owner Accountability" to clarify licensing requirements, authorize the Department to create a Proactive Inspection program, reporting related to Code compliance and establish remedies, damages and protections for tenants, all under certain terms and conditions.

Bill No. 250330, an ordinance amending Chapter 9-800 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled

"Landlord and Tenant" to modify the requirements related to the good cause for ending a tenancy as protections against retaliation and harassment for tenants and tenant organizations, specify tenants rights related to the implied warranty of habitability and provide a legal presumption related to breaches of the implied warranty of habitability, create a tenant right to organize, specify deadlines for asserting claims and establish and enhance enforcement mechanisms, remedies, damages and protections, all under certain terms and conditions.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: The Clerk will please call the first panel of witnesses to testify on the resolution. Can all witnesses please summarize their testimony. We have a very packed agenda today and we will be setting

a timer for five minutes per witness.

Now, a lot of you guys have been in here with me before. You're used to me being really, really nice. I'm going to be less nice today because the goal is that we have to move through this discussion. So once you hear the timer, I'm going to ask you to summarize briefly and please don't take it personally. It's just to move the hearing along.

Ms. Jones.

THE CLERK: For Panel 1, we have Dr. Tyra Bryant-Stephens, Medical Director of the Community Asthma Provision Program and Chief Health Equity Officer at the Center for Health Equity at CHOP; Kadie Ashby, Tenant at Alden Park Apartments; Cincere Wilson, Tenant at Upsal Gardens Apartments, Theresa Howell, Tenant in

Philadelphia.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

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

DR. BRYANT-STEPHENS: Good morning, Sponsor O'Rourke and members of the City Council's Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and Homelessness. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Bill Nos. 250329 and 250330, intending to protect Philadelphia renters from unsafe, unhealthy housing conditions.

My name is Dr. Tyra Brian Stevenson. I'm a Board-Certified pediatrician in clinical primary care practice for over 30 years, Chief Health Equity Officer at CHOP and founder as well as Medical Director of the Community

Asthma Prevention Program. And this is an asthma program that utilizes community health workers to implement asthma interventions in underserved, poorly-resourced innercity communities.

I'd like to begin by grounding us in a fact we've known for decades. Disparities in asthma outcomes have persisted across the United States for as long as we've been tracking them. Non-Hispanic Black children are twice as likely to be diagnosed with asthma and four times more likely to be hospitalized and die compared to their non-Hispanic White peers.

These disparities are especially pronounced among children living in substandard housing, which we have in many of our rental properties in Philadelphia. CHOP's Community Asthma Prevention Program has

delivered over 25,000 home visits for thousands of children with asthma in Philadelphia. 80% of these children live in rental housing.

Many of these children suffer from asthma attacks triggered by poor housing conditions and resulting in asthma hospitalizations and emergency room visits as well as school absences. In the more than 200 homes we've repaired in our Capitalist Home Repair program, we find needed roof repairs, plumbing leaks and substandard flooring in most of the homes. These conditions create environments where asthma triggers such mold, pests and allergens thrive. For these reasons, it's very important that we assure that rental homes are safe and healthy for children.

I've had the privilege

of working with the team at CHOP to study how community-based interventions impact asthma in low-resourced areas like West Philadelphia. Our team mapped asthma rates, code violations from Philadelphia's L&I Department and CHOP's emergency room department use in 2019. The results were clear, more code violations meant higher asthma rates and more emergency room visits for children.

While housing disrepair can happen anywhere, it's far more common in low-income neighborhoods, especially those with predominantly underserved racial and ethnic minority residents historically redlined. We have found that when we make those home repairs to remove the source of asthma triggers exposure, we reduce asthma-related emergency room visits by 40% and hospitalizations

by 70%. This evidence proves the value of doing everything we can to make sure that children with asthma and all children live in safe, healthy housing.

We appreciate City Council and the Mayor's commitment to thoughtful consideration of how to best build and repair existing homes so that one day all of Philadelphia's children have access to healthy housing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you for your testimony. We're going to hold questions until the whole panel speaks.

So can the next person please state your name.

MR. WILSON: Good morning, Councilmembers. My name is Cincere Wilson. I'm a resident of Upsal Garden Apartments in

Northwest Philadelphia, and I'm here to support the Safe Healthy Homes Act. We believe that all Philadelphians deserve to live in homes that are safe, secure and well-maintained no matter our neighborhoods, our income or who we are.

I support this legislation because I've lived it. Upsal Gardens has been found to be an unsafe structure by the city's Department of Licensing and Inspections, and the owners are currently the defendants in the class action lawsuit due to their mismanagement of the property. Last year, my wife and I noticed a large crack in our living room ceiling early one Saturday morning and I put it in our maintenance panel. And then I went down to the onsite office to report it.

Less than 12 hours later

at 12:06 in the morning by a loud crash, and we got up to find that our entire living room ceiling collapsed. While we waited nearly two days for management to get this stuff together, luckily no one was hurt and luckily we had renters' insurance. And after those two days, the insurance put us in a hotel. We stayed in a hotel eight days.

Now, insurance paid for the hotel, but there were other essentials that we had to pay for, like food and other toiletries and other essentials. So during the course of this eight days, we were in constant contact with management letting them know that the rent would be a little late and it's coming -- like, we got out the hotel on a Wednesday. Our rent is coming Friday.

And before Friday, we

got consistently harassed, emails, texts. When we got home, there was a note on our door that said overdue rent. It had the amount and the due date. This is just one of the many problems that have occurred in my building. I say my building, but it's an eight-building complex just to be clear.

It's a building that's been so compromised that the city officials said it posed an immediate danger to human life. I know this story is not unique. Throughout the city, there are Philadelphians living at the mercy of absentee landlords. They may be different buildings with different owners, managers and business models, but nonetheless, an all too familiar story.

Tenants are forced to live in unsafe conditions while predatory landlords keep turning a

profit. The Safe Healthy Homes Act stops negligent landlords from cutting corners at the expense of tenants. It increases transparency and accountability insurance maintaining homes that are habitable. This legislation provides commonsense answers to the issues tenants face, protecting renters who speak up about unsafe conditions from landlord retaliation, authorizing proactive and L&I inspections and requiring proof of code in compliance to evict or collect rent.

Nearly half of Philadelphia residents rent their homes. City Council has an opportunity right now to protect renters, to protect our health and our safety. I am one of thousands of renters across this city who have lived through dangerous conditions because of bad actors,

out-of-state landlords who have gotten away with this for far too long. Too many renters have lost their lives in the city from the fires or the building collapsing or asthma attacks from the mold.

I urge the Housing Committee today to pass the Right to Repairs and the Right to Safety bills to guarantee all renters a basic human right to safety in our homes. Our life depends on it. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. ASHBY: Good morning. My name is Kadi Ashby. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today because this legislation is all too

personal, both to myself and my neighbors at Alden Park, which is a historically-registered property in Councilman Jones' District and which, like many properties in our city, is owned by an out-of-state investment firm.

Shortly after moving into my apartment, I discovered that what I believe to be a large section of water damage on my ceiling was actually an active leak that my landlord had painted over. I notified the landlord as soon as I noticed. And when they ignored my initial maintenance request, I notified them again and again. And eventually, black mold began to form and rapidly took over my carpet, walls, ceiling and baseboards.

The plaster on my ceiling started buckling under the leak and began falling off in

chunks, which exposed even more mold and holes that centipedes would crawl out of. Over months I begged my landlord to remediate the mold and fix the leak. I explained that I was an asthmatic and I was experiencing health issues due to the mold, but continually my request fell on deaf ears.

Three months after my initial maintenance request, with mold still covering my bedroom and no end in sight, I was forced to hire a lawyer. Suddenly the issues were repaired. Had there been a proactive inspection program at the time, I wouldn't have been forced to spend money I didn't have in order to have a lawyer advocate on my behalf.

After this experience, I connected with my neighbors and realized that I was not unique in this situation. In addition to

leaks and mold, my neighbors deal with bricks and concrete falling off the facade of the buildings, heat and hot water that would sometimes be out for months, roaches and mice infesting their apartments. If management bothered to respond to resident complaints at all, it was often insufficient.

Last year alone our landlord was handed almost 50 violations from L&I and the city even placed a lien on the property for unpaid work relating to one of those violations. Despite all of this, they've been able to renew their rental license. They have continued to sign certificates of rental suitability for new tenants, and they maintain the highest eviction rate in the city.

Together my neighbors and I decided the only way to advocate for ourselves against

these absentee landlords was collectively. And early last year, we formed a tenant union. Unfortunately, due to this organizing effort my landlord is now retaliating against me by refusing to renew my lease, forcing me to leave my home and my community.

I'm lucky enough to know my rights and to have friends in the city who have provided me with more help than I can describe but most Philadelphians don't have that luxury. So without this legislation, where are they in my situation. For too long, we've allowed negligent absentee landlords to use Philadelphians as a stepping stone to increase their already substantial personal profits. It's long past time to prioritize our communities and focus our attention and empathy on

the tenants. So I'm asking you today to vote yes on this historic bill. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much.

Good morning. Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. HOWELL: Good morning. My name is Theresa Howell and I am a proud member of One PA Renters United. Good morning, members of the Housing Committee --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please speak into the -- I don't know if we can move the mic a little closer.

MS. HOWELL: The Housing Committee, Committee Chair Councilmember Gauthier and Vice-Chair Landau. Reaching this point required considerable effort and support, including Councilmembers

here today. We raised our concerns about our landlords and our message reached the right people, including Councilmember Nick O'Rourke, who partnered with us, and introduced our Safe and Healthy Homes Act.

For the first time in years, this City Council is focusing on often overlooked individuals. To give examples, this City Council passed the POWER Act protecting thousands of workers in this city. You prioritize low-income residents first in the Mayor's H.O.M.E. Initiative. We now have right to relocation thanks to this very committee and we thank you and City Council as a whole.

Now, it's time to protect renters from landlords that put profit over people. They have been lining their pockets with money and not making repairs. They are living in luxury, and I do mean

luxury. I mean $5 million homes. I mean $2 million homes. I mean homes upon homes upon homes, while we live in unsafe conditions. Our children's health have suffered tremendously because of the neglect of repairs.

I have an egregious landlord that owns hundreds of properties. His name is Drew DeMarco and he does not make repairs, but rent better be there by the 5th of the month or it's going to be problems for you. I'm not the only one who lives with these conditions.

Is it anyone here that lives with a bad landlord? Raise your hand. I want to ask you in this room to raise your hand if you have ever dealt with mold and leaks. Raise your hand if you ever had to deal with problems with heat. Raise your hand if you ever

had to wait too long to get repairs from a landlord. Raise your hand if you ever was afraid to speak up because you was in fear of retaliation. Raise your hand if you ever had your life threatened, which I have, dealing with issues from a landlord that was absent or just didn't make repairs.

Keep your hand up. And, Councilmembers, I ask you to look around the room and see all the hands of the people in all of the neighborhoods of this city who are represented here and going through these issues. There is a crisis for renters in this city, living in dangerous conditions and afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation, and you have the opportunity today to move forward legislation that can protect renters.

This is a great city with much potential. This is the

birthplace of America, but look at the conditions we're still living in. We're at a 250th year anniversary. But what are we giving the people of Philadelphia in 2026? I believe this city has been trying for years to find a solution to the rental repair crisis that plagues the city. And we believe the Safe Healthy Homes Act is a great start.

We also believe this committee, along with City Council, agree. My organization One Pennsylvania Renters United met with all of you on this committee and you greeted us with kindness and understanding and we thank you for that, offering up help with our landlord issues even though they weren't in your district and getting us results from our landlords.

But let me tell you, it

should not take a Councilman to happen to call the landlord for us to get repairs. We have laws on the books that should protect us immediately.

(Applause.)

MS. HOWELL: When we call L&I and say, this landlord is doing this, that and the other, we don't get results. It's a reactive program that does not work, and we need to pass this legislation so children don't suffer. These children in the city -- we just heard from a doctor that asthma is up. Every grandchild I have, have asthma. They were born with asthma. Why are these children being born with these conditions that's crippling the health system? It's ridiculous. We can't work every day because our children are sick --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Thank you so much. Can I ask for you to wrap up? Thank you very much.

MS. HOWELL: Okay. You know I'll go on and on and on. But it's a shame that we reach out to our Councilpeople. We have to reach out to you in order to get repairs. Every day that we wait to pass this, renters will continue to live in unsafe conditions without these basic protections. The time is now, right now today. I ask City Council to follow through and pass this legislation out of committee today. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you. Thank you all so much for your passionate testimony and for all of your work.

Unless there are questions from the committee, we'll move on to the next panel.

(No response.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Ms. Jones, will you please call the next panel of witnesses.

THE CLERK: Commissioner Bridget Collins Greenwald, L&I's Quality of Life; and Executive Director Renee Chenault Fattah, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good morning, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER COLLINS GREENWALD: Good morning.

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

COMMISSIONER COLLINS GREENWALD: Sure. Good morning, Chairperson Gauthier, members of the Housing, Neighborhood

Development and Homeless Committee. My name is Bridget Collins Greenwald and I'm the Commissioner of the Department of Licenses & Inspections, Quality of Life department. I'm here today to provide testimony on Bill No. 250329, introduced by Councilmember O'Rourke.

If enacted, this bill would amend Chapter 9, Section 3900 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled Property Licenses and Owner Accountability, to clarify licensing requirements, authorize the department to create a proactive inspection program, require public reporting on compliance and establish remedies, damages and protections for tenants.

As amended, the bill proposes additional protections and notification requirements for the

tenants and licensed rental properties. The administration remains supportive under the intended legislation and recognizes the importance of safe and healthy housing for all Philadelphia residents.

Encouraging property owners to communicate with tenants and maintain their properties is critical to preventing hazardous conditions and avoiding the displacement of residents whenever possible. During the first hearing on this bill in June of 2025, the administration raised several concerns with the legislation as introduced. We appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with Councilmember O'Rourke and his team over the past several months to address those issues and refine the legislation so that it more effectively achieves its intended

goals.

We reviewed and provided feedback to the most recent version of the amendments, which were worked on as recently as yesterday. And at this time, we believe the administration's concerns have all been addressed and that the bill as amended can be successfully implemented. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of the Department of Licenses and Inspections, Quality of Life. I'm happy to answer any questions at this time.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much, Commissioner.

Good morning, Director Chenault Fattah. Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. CHENAULT FATTAH: Good morning, Chairperson Gauthier

and members of the Housing, Neighborhood Development and Homeless Committee. My name is Renee Chenault Fattah. I serve as the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, PCHR. I'm here today to provide testimony on Bill 250330, introduced by Councilmember O'Rourke. This bill modifies the requirements related to good cause for ending a tenancy.

In the section entitled Rights to Safe and Health Homes, the bill also provides tenants the right to organize and provides protection to tenants and organizations for their advocacy. Additionally, the bill reiterates that tenants like all Philadelphians have the right to safe and sanitary living conditions.

I am proud to serve as

the leader of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. We are the city's civil rights agency and peacemaking agency. We enforce an important set of laws that prevent discrimination and promote equality. Within the PCHR is a separate commission called the Fair Housing Commission. It works to ensure that renters have safe places to live with decent and appropriate living conditions.

Through the enforcement of the city's Fair Housing ordinance, we ensure that both landlords and tenants abide by landlord-tenant laws. The FHC is comprised of four members who are appointed by the Mayor. The commissioners investigate unfair rental practices and conduct hearings to decide complaints.

The FHC's work is supported by a dedicated team of

city staff. Together, they processed last year more than 600 cases. PCHR plays a role in the community by providing educational and training materials to inform all Philadelphians about their fair housing rights and available resources.

It is vital that Philadelphians understand their rights and protections afforded to them in the housing market, and that's the goal we seek to achieve. I would like to thank again Councilmember O'Rourke for his continued advocacy to ensure that Philadelphians have access to safe and healthy housing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. And of course, we're here to answer any questions you might have.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I just want to sincerely thank you

both on behalf of the committee. Obviously, this package was a lot of work from Member O'Rourke and his office, but it took a lot of work from the Administration and particularly from you all too. And it was a great good faith effort and I think an example of the type of partnership between the Administration and Council that gets things done. So thank you, thank you, thank you.

And unless there are questions or comments from the committee, we will move on to the next panel.

Vice-Chair Landau.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you both so much for your comments. I wanted to also reiterate Councilmember Jones' request. What do you need from us in order to effectively enforce these laws? And also, I want to

take a moment to state our commitment as Council to be your partners on this and to make this happen.

MS. CHENAULT FATTAH: Thank you. Commissioner, would you like to take that first?

COMMISSIONER COLLINS GREENWALD: I think since we're in the midst of the budget process right now, I'd like to discuss that with the Finance Department and then get back to you with that through that process. Since we're right in the thick of that right now.

MS. CHENAULT FATTAH: I guess just following up on that. And thank you, Councilmember Landau, for the question. You know the saying you only get one bite at the apple, other than saying exactly what we need, I would really love to have the opportunity

down the road to speak to each of you once we assess what our resources are, how these changes are going to impact us and then come back to you with what the needs are, but rest assured that we are committed to protecting the rights of tenants.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: So the too-long-didn't-read version is they need resources. So we look forward to having those discussions with you all. Thank you so much for being here today and for all your work.

MS. CHENAULT FATTAH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER COLLINS GREENWALD: Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Ms. Jones, will you please call the next panel of witnesses.

THE CLERK: Paul Cohen, General Counsel at HAPCO; Steve

Chintaman, Vice-President of Government Affairs at Pennsylvania Apartment Association; Jackie Zaneri, Supervising Attorney at Senior Law Center; Katherine Nelson, Ph.D., Assistant Director at Rutgers Center on Law and Inequality and Metropolitan Equity.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good morning to all of you. Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. COHEN: Paul Cohen. Good morning, Commissioner -- Madam Chairwoman, Vice-Chair and members of the committee. My name is Paul Cohen, as I said. I am the founding partner of the law firm of Cohen Marraccini. I've been practicing landlord and tenant law in the City of Philadelphia for over 40 years. My firm now has 13

attorneys that practice throughout the state of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and New York. I am very familiar with landlord and tenant law, as you can imagine.

I was also appointed as an advisor to the Uniform Landlord and Tenant -- the Right to Uniform Landlord and Tenant Act as part of the Uniform Law Commission. That's an act that was adopted in over 21 states, not in full, but in some form or another. And the reason I'm telling you that is because I spent over two years painstakingly looking at landlord and tenant law, every single word of the Landlord and Tenant Law Act to make sure that it was done correctly.

We have two bills that are being introduced. And I can say stepping back, the concepts are good. We are not opposed to the concepts of safe and healthy homes.

Landlords are not opposed to that at all. They are not. The problem we have is that we have a law, two laws, that are trying to be introduced that are 23 pages long. They are very, very complicated. I spent days and days going through it to see what should be done with it, reading every single word to make sure that it's correct.

The problem is this law should be done correctly from the beginning, and it's not. That's not what's happening. And I'm going to give you an example of what's going on. So we had suggested that there should be a safe harbor. And to Councilman O'Rourke's credit, he came out with a safe harbor provision.

That we got late Monday night. So now, I'm having to review it late Monday night to figure out exactly what that says.

The problem is along with that, there was a section that was done for another group that was changed, and there was a change made to one of the definitions, which you have to look at when you look at the law, and some Councilmembers know what I'm talking about.

You have to look at definitions. You have to look at how other sections of the Act, the ordinance and the laws of the state are affected. That wasn't done. So what ended up happening is there's a safe harbor that actually doesn't help and actually got worse because of the definition of non-compliance was changed.

So to just go ahead and pass this bill is not going to be the right thing to do in its present form. We're not saying not to pass a bill. What we're saying is not to pass the bill until it's

done properly. This is not done correctly. We need to make sure that this bill is right.

Now, I'm going to give you another real quick example, and I could go on for hours but I know I only have so many minutes, so I'm just going to give you real quick another example. Suppose -- and I've had this situation and it happens a lot. Suppose you're a person whose parents passed away and you inherited a property.

You have a cousin that was taking care of your parents and that cousin is living in the property. And the cousin says to you, listen, I've been living here for three years taking care of your parents. Can I stay in the property? And you say, sure, you can stay there. Pay me $1,000 a month.

The person pays you

$1,000 a month. They do it for two years. They paid you $24,000. They were doing a good thing. They were helping out their cousin. But you know what, they didn't have a license. They didn't have a residential property license. Mind you, property has no violations, nothing wrong with the property. They're helping out their cousin.

Cousin then stops paying the rent. What happens? They want to try to now get their property back. They have to file an eviction. Mind you, it takes eight months for an eviction to go through. But guess what, that tenant under this bill now has a right to sue the landlord and get a refund of the $24,000 that they paid. That is not right. There was nothing wrong with that property. They did the right thing by helping out a cousin. And now,

they're going to get penalized by it.

We had talked about that and tried to get a safe harbor for that type of thing. This safe harbor doesn't accomplish that. So what I'm suggesting is we take a really hard look at this Act. I'm happy to go through it with anybody that wants to talk about it and go through and figure out a way that we can fix this, to make the bill say what we actually want it to say, to make it actually have safe and healthy homes for tenants, but at the same time --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please wrap up.

MR. COHEN: -- making sure that your good landlords are protected. There's a lot of good landlords that are out here that need protection as well. This isn't only about protecting

tenants. This is also about protecting --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Mr. Cohen. Mr. Cohen, please wrap your testimony. Five seconds please wrap.

MR. COHEN: Okay. Thank you for letting me be on the panel today. Appreciate it.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your testimony. And I know that Member O'Rourke's office is willing to have discussions even after today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. CHINTAMAN: Good morning, Chairwoman Gauthier, Sponsor Councilmember O'Rourke and members of the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and The Homelessness. My name is Steven Chintaman and I'm the Vice-

President of Government Affairs for the Pennsylvania Apartment Association, representing over 310,000 units and 316 property management companies across the Commonwealth.

Locally here in Philadelphia, we represent over 38,000 units and 49 property management companies. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Bills 250329 and 250330. To be clear, the Pennsylvania Apartment Association is firmly committed to promoting safe, well-maintained housing for every resident. We believe achieving that goal requires policies that are clear, enforceable and balanced, ensuring resident protections while enabling responsible housing providers to continue to invest in their communities.

Over the past several months, PAA, alongside key stakeholders, including BIA, HAPCO GPAR, has engaged in extensive good-faith discussions with Councilmember O'Rourke's team to raise serious concerns and offer practical, balanced amendments to these bills. Following our February 13th stakeholder meeting with the sponsor and his staff coordinated with Council President Johnson's Office, we submitted a comprehensive Excel document on February 24 detailing approximately 41 targeted drafted by our counsel Paul Cohen. And there has been some. There has been some amendments that did reflect our thoughts, and we do appreciate that from the sponsor and his team.

However, we feel like those revisions aren't far enough. Our association, together with

stakeholders referenced above, continue to have serious and unresolved concerns with these bills, which are not limited to strengthening the safe harbor provisions to protect responsible housing providers acting in good faith, ensuring that rent forfeiture applies only to violations that materially impact habitability, not technical or administrative issues and then specific concerns regarding the good cause provisions.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to hold these bills and allow continued meaningful engagement with the sponsor and his team to address these serious concerns. We remain committed to working collaboratively to preserve the intent of these bills while ensuring that they are balanced,

workable and do not unintentionally harm housing providers and the residents we serve. The Pennsylvania Apartment Association is eager to continue to collaborate with the sponsor and with this committee and all stakeholders. Thank you for your time.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with the testimony.

MS. ZANERI: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Jackie Zaneri and I'm from Senior Law Center where I'm a supervising attorney in the Housing Justice Project. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today to voice our strong support for the Safe Healthy Homes Act.

(Applause.)

MS. ZANERI: At Senior Law Center, we seek justice for older adults by using the power of the law, educating the community and advocating on local, state and national levels. We're the only nonprofit organization in Pennsylvania whose mission is dedicated solely to protecting the rights of older people and one of the very few in the nation. We provide free legal assistance to thousands of older people each year, including victims of elder abuse and financial exploitation, older homeowners and tenants facing housing crises and homelessness, grandparents raising grandchildren and older individuals facing undue or neglect in guardianship.

Our Housing Justice Project provides representation to tenants facing various landlord-tenant issues, including evictions,

ejectments, Fair Housing Commission complaints as well as providing advice to tenants regarding their rights. It also provides representation to homeowners for mortgage foreclosure assistance, mortgage modification to correct deed and title problems and resolve property tax delinquencies. And finally, we provide advice and education and conduct systemic advocacy in all of those areas.

Our clients need affordable, stable and safe housing, and that is what Bill Nos. 250329 and 250330 will move us toward. I want to focus on a few important measures in the bills. First is Bill 250330, removing the exemption and good cause eviction for yearlong leases, and that would extend good cause to all tenants. Nationally, I'm not aware of any other jurisdiction that has that

exemption that the bill would remove.

Good cause for eviction is a basic legal protection that tenants rely on for their health, safety, security and for stable neighborhoods. It does not mean no one can be evicted. In fact, there are nine good cause reasons for eviction in the law, but it does mean that a landlord has to provide the tenant with a reason and cannot evict them without one.

If there is no good cause, right now a landlord can write in the lease that they do not even have to provide the tenant with a written notice to vacate prior to filing for eviction in court. Having no good cause means that a tenant is essentially unpredicted, and that is the current situation of many Philadelphia tenants and a large

percentage of our clients.

Our clients are older adults. Frequently they're living in substandard housing and many are particularly medically vulnerable or frail. Many are afraid to call L&I, because if they don't have good cause protections, the result may be that the landlord labels them a problem tenant and decides not to renew their lease. And that happens regularly.

The best protection against this retaliation and against discrimination is good cause which is a set of clear legal rules that specify the cause for eviction that apply to everyone. That means if there is a cause, the landlord can set out that cause and a notice to the tenant. The tenant then has the option to move out if they see the cause and agree that it is valid or they can challenge

it in court.

The goal of providing this notice is that everyone is aware of the reason and the landlord's intention. So again, if it is valid, the tenant can avoid the court filing by moving out. As it stands, most Philadelphia tenants do not enjoy the protection of good cause for eviction. Although the law was a great idea, landlords are contracting around it.

Landlords are writing leases which tenants are bound to accept, which say that the lease is from year-to-year, and that eliminates good cause protections. Removing this exemption will have a substantial impact on our client's ability to request repairs and on evictions in municipal court.

Additionally, the provision in Bill 250329 that

applies the certificates of rental suitability is extremely important to our work. The problem that this is attempting to solve is substandard housing. There are currently tenants paying full rent despite serious violations already cited by L&I.

There are also currently tenants who stop paying rent because of those violations who are then evicted for nonpayment. We need a bright line rule where both sides agree when the city says that the violations are serious, the tenant can't be evicted or can withhold rent until they are fixed, and requiring a certificate of rental suitability in that instance will fill that gap. The current status quo is too variable and it creates a large risk of eviction for tenants who are trying to protect their right to safe and

healthy housing.

Finally, we support the creation of a proactive inspection pilot program through the Department of Licenses and Inspections that would allow serious habitability issues to be addressed before they snowball into emergencies that result in displacement. It also prevents tenants from having to call L&I and experience that negative response from their landlord. And it is very likely to improve the quality of the city's housing supply as it incentivizes timely repairs.

The Safe Healthy Homes Act is aimed to stop the problems of landlords who are violating the law and the disruption and danger that it causes to tenants. And the best way to address those violations is clear across-the-board legal standards that apply to

everyone. We urge you to pass both bills. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILMAN JONES: Madam Chair.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please state -- Councilmember Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Briefly, two things I want to put on the record underline and make sure it's there. The author of the legislation, Councilman O'Rourke, has agreed to continue to work with the stakeholders to figure out where we are, and I'm seeing and hearing substantial consensus on where we are. So that still is the case, correct, Member O'Rourke?

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: Yes.

COUNCILMAN JONES:

Secondly, we also would ask you to make sure that the departments that are affected that sometimes don't say what they need. Closed mouths don't get fed, that they need. They need to tell us what budget they need to be able to do these things. And you're committing to work with them on those numbers?

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Thank you, Member Jones.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MS. NELSON: Katherine Nelson and thank you. Chairwoman Gauthier, thank you. And thank you to the whole committee for this opportunity to testify today. Oh, closer -- thank you. So I'm

Dr. Katie Nelson and I oversee a Housing Studies Initiative based out of Rutgers Law School at an organization called CLIME or The Center for Law Inequality and Metropolitan Equity. We're dedicated to public scholarship focused around place-based inequality.

I'm also a long-term resident of Philadelphia, a housing expert and I've spent more than a couple decades now studying housing here in Philadelphia and in the region. I'm the last person testifying today on the third panel, so I'll endeavor to keep my comments brief.

We're living through what everyone knows is the housing affordability and habitability crisis. All of us are feeling it, but those of us who are feeling the greatest strain are our renters,

and especially our lower-income renters. Tenant protections are critically important tools that can offer tenants security from arbitrary eviction, retribution, discrimination and other threats to stability.

Moreover, there is a longstanding power imbalance between landlords and tenants. Passing these types of protections that are in these two bills can help to rectify that imbalance and level the playing field at a time when the city is struggling mightily with habitability and instability. The right to safety will expand good cause eviction to most tenants in the city. This is welcome and it is not without a long precedent of good and just cause clauses in cities and states throughout the country.

The first such law was

passed more than 50 years ago right next door in New Jersey. It's known as the Anti-Eviction Act. And since then, good cause laws have passed now in seven states and dozens of cities, including recently Baltimore, New York and St. Paul, Minnesota. The laws produce greater stability to renters. They protect them from evictions that are at no fault of their own. And research has continued to document that these laws reduce evictions, reduce eviction filings, and they also have been shown to reduce displacement and slow down the effects of gentrification.

With less fear of reprisal, tenants will be emboldened to advocate for themselves around severe habitability and repair issues, as we've heard already here today

numerous times. Far too many Philadelphians live in rental units in need of significant repairs. The right to repairs addresses this by introducing greater opportunities for tenants to push for those repairs without fear of retribution, again leveling an unbalanced playing field.

Our city is unique, it's special, and that we have pretty good regulations on our books. But we've been challenged and hampered by our ability to actually enforce those regulations. The clear intent of the collection of amendments in these two bills is to create new openings for tenants to be able to express their rights to their safety, security and health through improved transparency, more and specific timelines and by shifting some of the compliance burden off the shoulders of tenants

and onto landlords.

Not surprisingly, landlords on this panel have raised concerns about these bills, and this legislation should take those concerns seriously, but concerns do not negate the will of our local institutions to act in whatever manner you see fit to address the health, safety and general welfare of the residents of our city. Thank you for providing me this opportunity to testify.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you all for your testimony.

Unless there are questions or comments from the committee, we are going to move on.

(No response.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much. Okay, everybody. We have a number of people for public comment, but in order to

keep quorum and do the work of the committee, we're going to have to move into the public meeting and then come back for public comment.

And so, at this point we'll now go into a public meeting to consider the action to be taken on the bill today.

Can the Clerk please call the roll.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Driscoll.

COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Squilla.

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Bass.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
Present.
THE CLERK: Vice-Chair Landau.
COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
Present.
THE CLERK: And, Chair Gauthier.
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
Present.
The Chair recognizes Vice-Chair Landau for a motion on the amendment to Bill No. 250329.
COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
Thank you, Madam Chair.
I offer an amendment to Bill No. 250329. A copy of the amendment has been circulated to all members of the committee. I move that the amendment to Bill No. 250329 be approved.
(Duly seconded.)
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
It has been moved and properly

seconded that the amendment to Bill No. 250329 be approved.

All those in favor of the motion will signify by saying aye.

(Aye.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Those opposed?

(No response.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: The ayes have it and the motion carries and the amendment to Bill No. 250329 has been approved.

The Chair recognizes Vice-Chair Landau for a motion on the amendment to Bill No. 250330.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I offer an amendment to Bill No. 250330. A copy of the amendment has been circulated to all members of the committee. I move that the amendment to Bill No. 250330 be approved.

(Duly seconded.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

It has been moved and properly seconded that the amendment to Bill No. 250330 be approved.

All those in favor of the motion will signify by saying aye.

(Aye.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Those opposed?

(No response.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

The ayes have it and the motion carries. And the amendment to Bill No. 250330 has been approved.

The Chair recognizes Vice-Chair Landau for a motion on Bill No. 250329 as amended.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill No. 250329 as amended be reported from this committee with a favorable

recommendation and further move that the rules of Council be suspended to permit first reading of this bill at the next session of Council.

(Duly seconded.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: It has been moved and properly seconded that Bill No. 250329 as amended be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation and further move that the rules of Council be suspended to permit first reading of this bill at the next session of Council.

All those in favor of the motion will signify by saying aye.

(Aye.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Those opposed?

(No response.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

The ayes have it and the motion carries.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Bill No. --

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: All right. Y'all, got to let me finish now. Come on. Bill No. 250329 as amended --

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: We got to get through it. We got to get through it, y'all. When we're done, we can have the most applause but you have to let me get through it. Let me get through it please.

The ayes have it and the motion carries. Bill No. 250329 as amended will be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation with a request that the rules of Council be suspended

to permit first reading at the next session of Council.

The Chair recognizes Vice-Chair Landau for a motion on Bill 250330 as amended.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill No. 250330 as amended be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation and further move that the rules of Council be suspended to permit first reading of this bill at the next session of Council.

(Duly seconded.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

It has been moved and properly seconded that Bill No. 250330 as amended be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation and further move that the rules of Council be suspended to permit first reading

of this bill at the next session of Council.

All those in favor of the motion will signify by saying aye.

(Aye.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Those opposed?

(No response.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: The ayes have it and the motion carries.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: The ayes have it and the motion carries. Bill No. 250330 as amended will be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation and with the request that the rules of Council be suspended to permit first reading at the next session of Council.

Congratulations, Member O'Rourke.

(Applause.)
(Background interruption.)
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: All right. All right. Thank you so much everybody. Thank you so much everybody. We have a number of people for public comment. We have a number of people for public comment.
(Background interruption.)
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: If we could have quiet in the chamber. If we could have quiet in the chamber. If we can have quiet in the chamber. If we can have quiet in the chamber. At this point --
(Background interruption.)
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: At this point --
(Background

interruption.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

At this point, at this point -- at this point, if we can have order and quiet in the chamber, we are going to go back to public comment. At this point, if we can have order and quiet in the chamber, as I said, before we go back to public comment. Please have order and quiet in the chamber.

(Background interruption.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

At this point --

(Background interruption.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

At this point, we are going to go back into the public hearing and hear everyone who has signed up for public comment.

(Background interruption.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
Quiet please.
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
If we can have quiet and order in the chamber. If everybody could calm down, if everyone could calm down, we will hear public comment from everyone who has signed up to testify.
(Background interruption.)
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
If we can have quiet and order in the chamber.
COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You got to listen. You got to listen.
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
At this point, we are going to go into the public hearing and listen to everyone who signed up for public comment. All right. Where was this five minutes ago.
All right. At this point, we are going to go back into

the public hearing. We are going to hear public comment from everyone who has signed up to give public comment today.

Will the Clerk please call the roll.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Driscoll.

COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Squilla.

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Bass.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

Present.

THE CLERK:

Councilmember Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES:

Present.

THE CLERK: Vice-Chair Landau.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
Present.
THE CLERK: Chair Gauthier.
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
Present. We are resuming the public hearing.
Will the Clerk please call the first few public commenters.
THE CLERK: We have Daniela Ascarelli, Mike Reed, Anna Maria Vona and Jacen Bowman. Are those people here today?
(Witnesses approached witness table.)
COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
Okay. Alrighty. Thank you so much for being here today. We are going to give three minutes for public comment today. You're going to hear a timer when your time is up. If you could kindly wrap when you hear that timer, that would be

great.

So please state your name for the record and proceed with your public comment.

MR. BOWMAN: My name is Jacen Bowman. I'm a Philadelphia native, born and raised. I'm from Uptown, West Oak Lane to be exact. I come from a long line of advocacy and political influence in this city. My aunt, the late great Donna Reed Miller, dedicated her life to public service and fighting for the people of Philadelphia. Watching her work taught me early on that leadership means standing up for community and speaking out when something isn't right.

About 15 years ago when Brewerytown, what many of us know here as North, was going through early changes of gentrification, I was one of the residents who witnessed that change happen in

realtime. Recently I found myself, along with 25 other residents, dealing with something that frankly should never have happened in this city.

We were living in what was marketed as a luxury building, a building that a developer took out a multi-million dollar loan for. But behind the marketing promises, the reality of the tenants was very different. There were serious issues in that building, issues that were so severe that Licenses and Inspections had to come out multiple times to fine the building because of the conditions that we were living in.

The building, which was an old warehouse, had become a haven for mice, rats, mold, leaks and heating issues, just to name a few. What made the situation even

more troubling was what I later discovered. The building itself had actually been given to a developer through a city program. Yet despite receiving that support, the property did not even have a valid renter's license and had serious issues with compliance.

During that time, I reached out to multiple people, including people who represent my district, asking for help regarding what myself and the other tenants were experiencing. Not a single person I reached out to responded. And what's more important to understand is that I'm somebody who has access, I understand systems and I know how to advocate. If someone like me with resources and the ability to navigate systems couldn't get help, imagine what that means for residents who don't have the same access.

Because I was able to speak up for myself, organize, advocate, I was ultimately able to move and relocate somewhere safe. But many of the residents that I lived with did not have that same option. And that's the part that we cannot ignore. I later discovered that one of the very people I reached out to for help had received campaign donations from the same developer that I was having issues with. That raised a serious question about accountability and whose voices are truly being heard. Because at the end of the day, safe and healthy housing should not be optional in Philadelphia. It should be the baseline. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your comment today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MS. ASCARELLI: My name is Daniela Ascarelli. Thank you for allowing me to speak. I've been a landlord for over a decade here in Philadelphia. I'm a small landlord. I think I'm one of the landlords that are helping us have affordable housing through the NOAA system, if you will.

I've been fortunate. I've only had a few bad tenants, but those that have been bad have been really bad and have created havoc for me. One tenant, for example, told me that they had a small lap dog but, in fact, it was more like a Doberman. Not a problem, you say, except tradespeople won't enter houses if there is a large dog that they have to deal with.

The tenants did not want to cage their dog because they felt it was inhumane. That meant that I couldn't do repairs. In the end, they called L&I. I get a violation. It doesn't matter that I've been trying to get into the house for months. I'm the one held responsible. My question to you is, how does this bill take care of us when we do what we are supposed to do, but our tenants don't allow us to do it?

Just this past year, I had a tenant call me about a broken fridge. We had a snowstorm. You guys might know about that. That created problems. But to add to that, my tenant ghosted me. They didn't answer texts, they didn't answer phone calls. They didn't answer the door. Over a month to get a fridge fixed. They didn't call L&I, but they could have and I

would have been at fault, and I had no recourse to say these are all the things that I have tried to do to hold up my end of the bargain.

What I'd like to have happen in this new bill is that the same rules that you ask us as landlords to follow, that the city follows, that when you send me a violation, it doesn't take me a year to get it. Then I get it within seven days and that when eCLIPSE is down for weeks on end, that I am granted a respite from all of your rules.

If the city can have schools, rec centers and libraries that are nowhere near safe and clean, free of black mold, why do I have to follow all of those rules? Why am I fined when you all aren't fined for the same things? Why is it that PGW and the Water Department can shut off people's

water and their gas and they don't have to wait nine months to go through an eviction diversion program and then wait yet again for the Sheriff to help you out.

Go ahead. Let's have PGW and the Water Department go through an equivalent diversion program and then work with the Sheriff's Office to actually turn off water. And then when those tenants reapply for gas, don't treat them any differently than those who have always paid on time. If the city wants us to follow rules, you should follow those same rules.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please wrap your comment.

MS. ASCARELLI: All I ask is that before you enact this legislation, you think about how we as landlords are supposed to follow

it if you as a city won't hold up your end of the bargain. We're the ones who create housing for the city. Are we not allowed to earn something? Are we not allowed to have justice?

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you. Please wrap up your comment.

MS. ASCARELLI: That's all I ask.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much. Thank you very much. I know that there's more work to be done on the city's part. I also know that Member O'Rourke is willing to have continued conversations with the landlord community. Thanks for your comment today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MR. REED: Good

afternoon. My name is Michael Reed. I am a Navy veteran. I'm also a landlord here in Philadelphia. I'm a small landlord. I have two quadruplexes, two triplexes. I've been able to provide housing for 14 families here in the City of Philadelphia since I made my first real estate purchase in 2022.

And I know every landlord's experience is different, but I'd like to take an opportunity to thank the City of Philadelphia at this point for all of the programs that have been put in place to assist people. I first became a landlord right before the COVID-19 pandemic. And I watched 90% of my tenants fall on hard times through lost work.

Then the city came with the rental assist program, and it allowed me to continue to pay my

mortgage payments and allow my tenants to remain in their buildings. So thank you for that. As my buildings aged, as I was short on capital myself, there was another program that I had the opportunity to take part in, and that is the Rental Improvement Fund.

I received at least $50,000 for each of my properties and I was able to allow my tenants to have more updated living conditions, more outdoor space, safer homes. So thank you for that. Most recently, I had a tenant who I gave her the information for the Turn the Key program, and she did an application for the Turn the Key program. She got accepted.

And her biggest worry was, Mike, we're in the middle of another lease but I did receive the

opportunity to join this program. And because I'm so supportive of the city and the program, I allowed her to break her lease early. And as of March 1st this year, she moved into her Turn the Key home with her son and her partner.

(Applause.)

MR. REED: I've been a licensed general contractor with the city and I've completed all the requirements for that and has given me the opportunity to learn so much about what it takes to have a safe and healthy home. And I'm proud to say that all 14 of my units have washers and dryers in units, Quartz countertops, central air, Ring cameras. All of my rents are at least 20% to 30% below what the developers in my neighborhood are charging.

(Applause.)

MR. REED: Right now in

order to participate in many of the programs that the City of Philadelphia offers, they got all up in my business, but it was good because it made sure I stayed compliant as a landlord. All of my units have active rental licenses. All of my tenants have received their lead paint safety. Everybody has property insurance, and I am a tax-paying rental landlord in the City of Philadelphia.

And what the Safe and Healthy Homes Act is going to do, thanks to you guys, is hold these other larger developers accountable for --

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you. Can you wrap up.

MR. REED: Well, again this was just my opportunity to say thank you for the work that you all put in, to bring this program to

fruition. Small landlords like me you definitely got my support. And if there's anything I could do to offer more affordability to the city, please don't hesitate to reach out.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thanks so much to all of you.

Will the Clerk please call the next few public commenters.

THE CLERK: Gareth -- excuse me, Garth Even, Linnea Bond, Jax Hebner, Sonya Sanders.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

MS. SANDERS: Hi. My name is Sonya Sanders. I'm a proud member of Philly Thrive. I lived in Grays Ferry for all my life. I lived on 32nd Street for 27 years with my husband Ray. In this house, we had holes in the

floorboards, in the sheet rock. You can literally see through the floorboards when you are standing in the basement, the holes, and look upstairs.

This also led to utility and electrical challenges, including incredibly high bills on top of everything else. We had bugs flying into our house. We had so many holes in our walls from the outside in, that bugs could fly in. Literally big cockroaches would fly in our home. And we had to -- do you know how bad it is that you have to tape -- and desperate you are that you have to tape your walls so the bugs won't come in. We had to tape our walls and tape our ceilings. That's all we had. So we used what we had.

These living conditions were detrimental to my physical and mental health as well as my

family's health. Then Ray, he passed away, and I had no choice but to move out of that house and out of my neighborhood that I lived in all my life. When I moved, I was excited. I was like I'm getting a chance to move out of this terrible home into a better home, that this has got to be the only landlord that's terrible, a slumlord.

But I was mistaken. I was forced into another unsafe rental because I couldn't afford anywhere else to live. In this rental, I didn't have electricity for weeks during summer hot heat waves, including no refrigerator, no air conditioner, no stove. I went months without water, months without bathing, months having to buy water from the store to even flush my toilet. But did my landlord do anything? No.

I have text after text of complaints to him. This is my story. But I know it's also the story of people across the city. 40% of rental properties in Philadelphia need major repairs. We need the city who works for us to hold slumlords accountable, to hold these bum-lords accountable, so everyone can live in a safe, healthy home.

I say today that I think y'all, because I'm not here to complain about the landlords who are doing their job. That's not what I'm coming here to do. That's not what we are here to do. We're talking about the landlords who don't do their jobs. We're talking about the ones who are home with health conditions. We're talking about people who can't even get downstairs --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

I'm sorry. Can I ask that you wrap up your testimony in the next 10 seconds.

MS. SANDERS: -- because the elevators wasn't working. We are glad that this is now a part of safe, healthy homes, that we can live in safe, healthy homes. We are thankful for that.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much.

MS. SANDERS: You're welcome. Nicolas O'Rourke, thank you. Thank you so much for all you did for us. We appreciate you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much. We're going to move on to the next public commenter.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MS. HEBNER: Hello. My

name is Jax Hebner. I'm a member of the Philadelphia Tenants Union, and I'm also a law student at Temple and I'm a legal aid worker on the front lines of the city's housing crisis. I've spoken to thousands of tenants in the city about their living conditions. And time and time again, I hear and see deteriorating ones. Conditions I'm sure all of you, and especially landlords, would not want to live in, much less pay rent for.

Demanding rent for unsafe living conditions is theft. Landlords rent out properties to get rental income and we understand that. So we want landlords to understand that their rental income is our hard-earned money. If we are paying rent to them, it better be up to healthy standards.

The profit interest of landlords are as light as a feather

in comparison to the gravity of consequences tenants face when they are forced to live in unhealthy conditions. Proactive inspections do not harm good landlords. Regulating unfair evictions does not harm good landlords. The current inadequate legal system that allows for negligent, absentee landlords to profit at the expense of tenants must change. We, the people of Philadelphia, deserve a government capable of ensuring that we have access to safe and health healthy homes. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MS. BOND: My name is Linnea Bond. I'm a renter with four other adults in District 5.

I'm lucky to have a great landlord, but I live next to a house owned by a landlord that I can only guess has had multiple violations because the home was pictured in a WHYY article about this legislation.

He has told his renters to open windows when they smell gas, rather than call PGW, which makes sense. Because when they did call PGW, the PGW found an illegal heater on the other side of the wall that I sleep on, that would have been caught in a preemptive inspection. This is not to mention the mold my neighbors complained of and the fact that the third floor tenant had to store all of her cereal and pasta in the fridge because of infestations.

But as the Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania, I want to highlight what doctors have told

me about the impact on patients. You already heard from Dr. Tyra Bryant-Stephens, the founder of the Community Asthma Prevention Program from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, who wrote to me that she sees the impact of indoor conditions on asthmatic kids, as she mentioned here, 80% of whom live in rental housing.

I have so many pediatricians telling me when they're sending kids home to a house with mold infestations and a landlord who doesn't care, you know you'll see them again. Kids are particularly vulnerable, but obviously housing conditions affect everyone's health, regardless of age. So thank you for your vote today and we'll keep working to educate your colleagues.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Thank you so much. Thanks to all of you.

Will the Clerk please call the next few public commenters.

THE CLERK: Bill Vargas, Sandra Bryant, Dawud Bey, Mary Laughlin.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good afternoon. Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment -- sorry, one second.

Councilmember O'Rourke.

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just wanted to offer just some remarks that in the course of the last couple of weeks, as we're getting down to the nitty-gritty on these bills, I had the opportunity, thanks to you

actually, to be able to connect with the next commenter here today, Mr. Dawud Bey, who is a small -- is a landowner, a landlord here in the City of Philadelphia. I just want to thank him for his conversation and really shedding the light on some things that we can be addressing.

As Member Jones has mentioned already, my commitment to continue to work through things with stakeholders as we go forward towards final passage. And so, I appreciate those persons who offer genuine ideas around things that we commonly agree are concerned to create a better city and a better process for all persons.

Certainly we're winning for tenants today. And also, I hear the concerns with small landlords that we share as it relates to L&I and things of that

nature. And I appreciate Mr. Bey for engaging in good-faith conversation to be able to address those things. I just want to lift that up before he begins to speak, that I do appreciate him. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Madam.

MR. BEY: Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you, Member O'Rourke.

Please, first person, state your name for the record and proceed with your testimony.

MR. BEY: Would I be first?

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Sure.

MR. BEY: Okay. Thank you, ma'am. My name is Dawud Bey and I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. I was actually not going to speak because I seen the

bill was passed through committee, but I did want to speak kind of to even speak to the point that Councilman Jones made as it relates to putting on the record that we will continue to work with Councilman O'Rourke on the bill to try to see where we can find more common ground. So I wanted to thank him for that.

And I also just still wanted to kind of place a little bit of balance. Again, my name is Dawud Bey. I'm a representative of the BIA, which is the Philadelphia Building Industry Association. I am also a long-term resident of Philadelphia. My company is called Fine Print Construction, and we specialize in affordable housing as well as affordable rentals.

Literally out of 15 of my units, so I'm still considered a small landlord, 10 of those units

is PHA, so I'm completely committed to affordable rentals and affordable housing. But at the same time, what I'm hearing in these type of settings is the fact that we looking for accountability, right.

So in accountability, it goes both ways, you know, because we got that slumlord that don't want to do nothing, want to leave people stranded in their units and don't fix the units and things to that extent. But you also have what we call the professional renter. That professional renter is the person --

(Applause.)

MR. BEY: That professional renter is the person who have no intent at all to pay their rent. These people can write legislation better than some of our lawyers that's writing these

legislations right now. They know the law backwards. So I say that to say that we have to find accountability.

While we have eviction diversion program, a beautiful program Councilwoman Rue, me and you have spoke about it in the past. It allows me to be able to, you know, get a tenant an opportunity to get on their feet, collect my three months' rent, but at the same time, I may not want to deal with that tenant no more, not for no retaliation or anything to that extent. I might want to raise my rent or I might just don't want to be dealing with that tenant because I got to chase the tenant around in order to pay my mortgage.

So you're looking at a building that's six units and you lose three tenants that's not paying no rent, your whole

performance is messed up. You literally can go bankrupt. You literally will have to file bankruptcy. Because at the end of the day, I'm a person, I do affordable housing. I'm a general contractor as well so I make other money, granted, right. So I'm able to float some of the months that the tenant is not paying the bills.

But at the end of the day, should I have to pay they bills? No. At the end of the day, people got to be accountable for their own actions and their own responsibilities. We got to stop playing that game on the city, blaming it on landlords and everything. Like I said, we talking about -- a lot of these people, a lot of these associations, we talking about the small landlord.

When you look at these

big landlords that own 10,000 units, 100 units, they represent 2% of the landlords in the City of Philadelphia. We just need to find more balance. I want to continue to work with City Council to figure out where we can find that balance. The BIA is committed to working towards those actionable items that we believe that's in good faith and that we know that there's a middle course to that route. So thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I'm very grateful. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you.

MR. BEY: Sorry, Chair. You wasn't here, but thank you so much. Appreciate what you did as far as making the connection with us as well. Thank you very much.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: We appreciate you. Thank you.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your public comment.

MS. BRYANT DOWNING: Hi. My name is Sandra Bryant Downing. I live in Northwest Philadelphia -- okay. I live in Northwest Philadelphia. I'm a proud member of the NDAA and One PA. I used to live in a basement apartment. It was okay at first. As soon as winter came, it was leaking and the mold was on the wall. It affected my breathing and I started breathing short all the time.

I used bleach. I called the landlord. He cursed me out and I'm thinking like I should just unlive in it, and I stopped paying the rent so he took me to court. And the judge said I shouldn't have to pay because this house, it was -- it shouldn't be rented from the first place.

So I'm just asking you, Councilmember, just be like -- just offer renters and we are counting on you to vote yes and protect renters. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your comment.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your public comment.

MS. LAUGHLIN: You're talking to me?

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.

MS. LAUGHLIN: Hi. My name is Mary Laughlin. I live in a 183-unit apartment building in Holmesburg. The owners are from out of town. The conditions have worsened over the last five years. No snow plows, mice and bugs. No carbon monoxide detectors for over a month. Five fire alarms three

weeks ago every day, Monday through Friday while at least 3 inches of ice in parking lot. Throughout the building, all three buildings, giant holes in ceilings, washrooms.

Many of us are senior citizens. We call and complain to property management and all we get are lies and excuses amongst ourselves. We complain, but tenants are afraid for them to retaliate and not renew leases. Their goal is to get longstanding tenants out so they can update into luxury apartments. We are begging for the Safe and Healthy Homes bill to be passed.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your comment today.

MS. LAUGHLIN: Thank you. Thanks for hearing me.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Will the Clerk please call the next few public commenters.

THE CLERK: Debbie Rhoe, Reverend Greg Holston, Carlos Boothe, Joy Ahn, Kim Neubauer.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MR. VARGAS: I'm Bill Vargas. I apologize for my earlier outburst. I thought you were not going to take comments. Especially, I apologize to Councilwoman Landau. Last time I sat in front of this committee, you had put out a series of bills which were going to be very harmful to landlords. And I guess you must have listened to our testimony because I guess that got tabled.

I'm not going to

apologize to Mr. O'Rourke. He put out a bunch of bills earlier. They were found to be unworkable. Now, they're being regurgitated and brought back and they're ridiculous. They will never result in any kind of healthy homes like they're supposed to.

And I'll tell you why. I had a tenant who sucked $28,000 out of my pocket. I'm going to say that again so that Representative Gauthier can hear this, Councilwoman. She sucked $28,000 out of my pocket. This woman made $114,000 a year, so we're not talking about helping people who are poor and broke.

And the way she did it and the way she was able to --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I just wanted to make sure you said your -- I wasn't sure if you said your name on record.

MR. VARGAS: Bill Vargas. I'm a landlord. The way that she did it was, well, first of all, four months she didn't pay. I took her to eviction court, but three of those months I was unable to get my rental suitability certificate. You know why? Because the City of Philadelphia, and they do this every year, they send you a bill, they say you owe taxes, they give you no details and they give you no way to appeal.

So I was fighting the city. That means calling every day, being on hold hours and hours before they hang up on you at 5 o'clock, and then you come back the next day and do the same thing. So for three months, I was fighting with the City of Philadelphia over taxes and could not renew my rental license. So the judge threw out those three months out of the four

that she owed me, out of the 8000 that she owed me, 6000 thrown away. And that's what we're talking about.

We're talking about nothing that's going to help tenants. We're just talking about landlords being penalized for not printing a piece of paper. And he said, Mr. Vargas, I'm very sorry that I have to do this, but the idiots at City Hall keep passing these legislation and I have to uphold the law.

So then she paid the 2000, avoided eviction, and then didn't pay again rent for another several months. So I had to take her back to court. Now, she was ordered to pay me $10,000, and then she appealed. She didn't have to put up a dime. I had to put up money because you have one of these crazy, insane Philadelphia rules

that says, if you're an LLC, you have to hire an attorney. So I had to pay $1,500. She didn't have to pay a dime.

Now, I won again because she keeps going into court falsifying documents. And now, she's ordered to pay me $16,000. Now, when I had this happen in Delaware County on my properties, when people get defeated in court, they have appeal, they have to put up money that they've been -- the judgment amount. And then if they lose the appeal, I get that money.

But in Philadelphia, 10,000, 16,000, guess how much of the 16,000 that she was ordered to pay me I've received in the 10 months that have gone by since? You already know it. Not a dime, not a dime, because of how this city operates. So, therefore, I did at least have one thing. That

is, the court order that she has to be evicted.

So the first month, I'm waiting on the Sheriff --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please wrap up your comment.

MR. VARGAS: Okay. You did allow somebody who was a tenant to testify for nine-and-a-half minutes.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please wrap up your comments.

MR. VARGAS: At any rate, I was unable -- I have to -- while I'm waiting for the Sheriff to show up for three months, my license expired. I have to go in and get a lead paint test. So I bring a guy in and of course, we are surrounded by her relatives pulling in cars threatening us --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please wrap up your comment.

MR. VARGAS: And in my

case, I'm a big guy. I can handle it. But we are --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Sir, please wrap up your comment.

MR. VARGAS: -- discriminated against minority in Philadelphia called landlords. And not all of us are big guys. Some of us are women. Some of us are older. And we --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment. Thank you for your comment --

MR. VARGAS: -- are being physically threatened in these cases. You all are --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment today. Thank you for your comment today --

MR. VARGAS: -- supposed to be progressive but you're oppressive --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment.

MR. VARGAS: And, O'Rourke, you're oppressive. You're just fools making rules.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment today. Thank you for your comment. We're going to move on to the next commenter.

MR. VARGAS: That's what you are. And nobody will ever take 28,000 out of my pocket again. Nobody --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment today. We're going to move on. You're a very scary man. Thank you for your comment today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment. Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MS. AHN: Thank you. Good morning, Chair -- good

afternoon, Chair Gauthier, Vice-Chair Landau. Thank you for providing time for our testimony this morning. My name is Joy Ahn. I'm a Nurse Advocacy Manager at the National Nurse Led Care Consortium, or NCC, an affiliate of PHMC.

At NCC, our local programming includes three maternal child home visiting programs serving low-income families. My role is to bridge the voices of our clients, nurses and home visitors with the people who have the power to change policy. I'm here today to testify regarding Bill 250329.

As nurses, one of the first things we are taught is to look at our patients and then look around us. As home visitors, we visit families in their homes, sit with them, talk with them, and experience a bit of their home with them. Many of the beautiful

families who we have the privilege of getting to know have the misfortune of living in hazardous and unhealthy housing conditions.

There is a parasite that some mice communities get that affects their brain such that they have no fear. They do not run when people walk toward them. My pregnant client and I had to kick them away from our feet while discussing labor and delivery. Some rental units have holes in the stairs that one must carefully navigate in order to not fall through. I have seen exposed electrical wires that spark sometimes in the bathroom.

A colleague recently told me that her client was afraid to report a toilet that was not working properly and had to troubleshoot in order to relieve herself. Our clients had this in

common, landlords who are unwilling or unable to make necessary repairs and reluctance to call L&I for fear that their landlords would retaliate and they would end up without a home or worse, that DHS would somehow be called into the situation.

Structural and electrical hazards, lead paint, black mold and pest infestations make a home dangerous or unhealthy to live in. They also pose a threat to the emotional and mental well-being of a family. How does a parent keep their crawling or toddling child safe from exposed wires near the floor or random dead roaches or lead dust?

And it's just embarrassing to live in a home with raccoons making a latrine over the bedroom ceiling and feeling the need to explain the smell to guests

because the landlord just can't be bothered. It may be difficult to connect the dots to understand how this all affects public health and why a nurse is here talking to you.

I can discuss more with you later. But I'm sure if we think about it, we can imagine how lack of a working toilet or exposed electrical wires or pest infestations negatively affects the health of families and their neighbors. But proactive L&I inspections can be helpful for the community and for the landlords as well -- I'm wrapping up. Thank you. Removing blight, identifying --

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please take the next 20 seconds or so and wrap your comment.

MS. AHN: Will do. Okay. Thank you. Proactive L&I inspections can protect tenants

from illness and death and protect landlords from liability and potential lawsuits. I'm happy to talk more. Thank you. Three minutes is not enough time.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for being here today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

REVEREND HOLSTON: My name is Reverend Gregory Holston. I'm the Executive Director of Just Nation and just so glad to be here today. I had the choice of being in Washington, D.C., which I believe today is one of the funerals for Reverend Jesse Jackson, or to be here and stand with people fighting for housing, deeply affordable housing, to stand with this Councilmember, this Reverend/politician who has pushed for this piece of legislation. And

maybe in this way, I honor Reverend Jesse Jackson more for staying here than going down there.

The scripture reminds us, Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness and his upper rooms by injustice. That's a scripture that is not just ancient prophecy. It's a warning for our time. Because today in Philadelphia, too many families are living in homes that are not safe, not healthy and not worthy of the dignity every, every human being deserves.

Children are sleeping in mold-infested bedrooms. Seniors are sitting in homes without reliable heat. Families are dealing with pests, leaky ceilings, unsafe wiring and crumbling walls. And I would submit to you that's more important than how much money you may lost. When people lose

their legs because of poison in their homes, that is more important than any dollar figure you will lose.

Many of them are afraid to say anything. Why? Because Philadelphia has a severe shortage of deeply affordable housing. Our city is short more than 60,000 units for families who make the least in our city. That shortage changes the balance of power. When you have 10 families competing for one deeply affordable apartment, tenants know they have nowhere else to go. And when tenants have nowhere else to go, landlords know complaints can be ignored. Scarcity shifts power.

In that environment, silence becomes survival. Families stay quiet because the alternative could be eviction or homelessness. That is why Safe Healthy Homes

legislation is so important. When the free market fails, when market failure happens, government must step in. That's the role of doing government. They are doing their job. They're stepping in because the system is failing, failed so many people in this room and it's their job to write legislation to change that.

Is it going to be perfect? No. Are they going to try again? Yes. Are they going to keep trying? Yes. Does it deal with every situation? No. But still this is the job of government. And let's stand with these legislators. Instead of berating them, let's stand with them to help work together until we get something that's great for everybody, even everybody in this room.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

Rev, if I can ask you to take 20 seconds or so and wrap.

REVEREND HOLSTON: So that's what we're doing here today. And so, I thank you. I thank my friend for being everything that I hoped you would be. I am so proud of you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your comment.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MS. NEUBAUER: Hi. I'm Kim Neubauer and I appreciate that you have stayed this long to listen to the community. So my husband and I own four rental properties and we're the parents of a son, who's also a renter in Philadelphia. We keep our rents way below market rate because we want our tenants to be happy and to

stay. And we've been very lucky except for once.

And that particular problematic tenant almost put us completely out of business. She played the system and succeeded to stay in our property for over a year without paying a penny, not for water, not for rent, not for nothing. In any other context, using services that are rendered without paying for them would be considered stealing. But in this case, her bad behavior had the blessings of city ordinances and other protections and she stayed legally rent-free for over a year.

The proposed ordinances give a message to tenants -- this is what I'm most concerned about -- that they don't have to be accountable even for behavior that harms other people or harms properties. And in both cases,

that applies to us. I had to pay the tenants $1,500 water bill. It took me a year to save up to be able to pay that because I was the one that was held accountable, not the tenant. I was sent to collections. My credit was ruined when I've never missed a bill in my entire life.

We had no choice but to continue to offer safe, affordable housing not only to this problematic tenant, but to her whole extended family, none of whom were on the lease. When they reported a flood late in the evening, we raced to the property. We called an emergency plumber. We stopped the flood before it did too much damage.

We later learned that the flood was due to their moving the refrigerator multiple times because they had a dog in a no-pet

property that was peeing on the floor. And they lied to us about that, but we figured it out. They also stole things from us like the lawn mower and a weed whacker and things that we generously provided for them without even asking them to pay.

So I'm just wondering if this kind of damage, flood damage, floor damage or any of the other damage that they created, plus their stealing, is this considered good cause? The new ordinances, even refund rent if the renter is resourceful enough to catch, gotcha, the landlord on a missing form -- I got 20 seconds left?

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.

MS. NEUBAUER: We got caught up in that when we couldn't renew our license for months even though we hadn't done anything. It

was a system error that the system couldn't even figure it out for months. The last thing I want to say is that if the city wants to offer affordable, safe housing, responsible, responsive landlords need to be able to carefully screen tenants and hold accountable those who harm our business.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you.

MS. NEUBAUER: I have one last sentence, just a sentence.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.

MS. NEUBAUER: If these new ordinances pass, which I believe they did before the public comment, my husband and I have already been talking about it. We are seriously considering getting out of business in the City of Philadelphia.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
Thank you for your comment. I do think that Vice-Chair Landau wanted to respond to some of the things you mentioned.
COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
Thank you. You asked a question of would those tenant activities rise to the level of good cause, and they absolutely would. You would be able to terminate your lease based on that type of bad behavior of the tenant. And you do have -- there are avenues in which you can enforce your rights that include going to court and getting a judgment against somebody --
MS. NEUBAUER: We did and she did not pay a penny.
COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
You have it, that judgment --
MS. NEUBAUER: We have a judgment.
COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Great. And you can collect on it --

MS. NEUBAUER: We cannot collect.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I know also that Member O'Rourke is willing to continue talking about these issues, but we thank you for being here today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MR. BOOTHE: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Carlos C. Boothe, Sr. I am one of the Philadelphia residents, but a resident also of the Philadelphia Restoration Project. I will not bore you with any horrible horror stories. We've heard enough of those so I will not add to that. We all know what's going on. But the reason why I'm here, to lend support to many of your

organizations, and One PA in particular.

(Applause.)

MR. BOOTHE: You're quite welcome now. It's a shame that we have to be here in court to address issues of landlords. I mean, it's not all, and all tenants aren't bad, but why do we have to come to court when you know what's supposed to be done. You rent somebody a property. You take care of that property. You rent a property. You pay the owner. It's really that simple, but we take simplicity and turn it into the complex.

There's something wrong with society. It's inherent in our DNA as a society, but we need to do better. We are facing a housing safety crisis in Philadelphia. Renters across our city are living in unhealthy and life-threatening

conditions. Many landlords and developers are aware of this but they turn a blind eye to the problems of their properties.

They send a maintenance person out to look at the problems and satisfy their needs of saying they responded. Not good enough. Not all, but many. If this offends you, you're living wrong. Today we're asking the City of Philadelphia to vote on the measures to protect the rights of renters, the right to safety, protection from retaliation, the right to repairs, proactive inspections and to enforce the law when landlords violate the housing codes and put tenants at risk.

Why are people getting upset over proactive looking at what's going on? You would take your car to the shop when it's time for inspection. You're not running

around on four bald tires and think you're going to run through the city. Stop this nonsense, people. Stand up for what you know is right. Stand up for what you know is right. Come on.

Act like grown adults that we're supposed to be. Act like children of God when we come into these situations. Stop the nonsense. Stop looking at profits and not people. Now, here's what I look at now. Philadelphia, people, we need effective response. We need to have problems resolved and not just looked at. And we need to have resolutions that enforce the rights of the tenants.

We're not just here to have you collect money from us. We're here to live. Many of us, like myself, we are retired. We done paid our dues. In conclusion -- I feel like I should

be on a farm. I hear the cowbell. Now, I'm going to run to the stable.

Now, because landlords do what is allowed doesn't mean that you're doing what is right. Okay. So get your acts together, those who are doing wrong and you know what you are doing.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you.

MR. BOOTHE: I would like to say thank you to everyone who gave me this opportunity to come out. And thank you City Council for listening to me. And I hope I have the opportunity to come back and finish what I didn't get to say. Thank you everybody. God bless and have a good day.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment and for all of your advocacy and sharing your experience. Thank you so

much.

Will the Clerk please call the next few public commenters.

THE CLERK: Tony Rawlings, Amanda Gleason Matt, Seneca Grant, Edward Golding, Abraham Pardo.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good afternoon.

MS. GLEASON MACK: Good afternoon.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MS. GLEASON MACK: My name is Amanda Gleason Mack. I am a real estate broker and property manager for small landlords. Good afternoon, Chairwoman Gauthier, members of the committee who are

still here of the Housing, Neighborhood Development and Homelessness. I am here to testify in opposition of Bill Nos. 250329 and 250300.

To be clear, I am not opposed to a well-thought-out inspection rule. I would be very happy to see something like that, but I do not see that in these bills. The impact of these bills on small landlords is best illustrated by my client Ms. Mickey. Ms. Mickey is not a corporation. She is a small landlord.

She is not a real estate investor. She was a mother who raised her children in a home. And then when the children grew up, she decided not to sell it. She decided, let me find a tenant and keep that family home. Wanting to do things correctly, you hired a

property management company who she thought was reputable. She thought that they were going to handle things properly. They did not.

The company failed to obtain a rental license on her behalf and failed to tell her she needed to do one herself. When the tenants fell behind in rent, she thought she was going to do the right thing and file the eviction diversion program. She found out for the first time that she lacked a license and that she needed one.

She then hired me to help her bring the property into compliance. We uncovered additional requirements she was not aware of, including the lead safe certificate, the certificate of rental suitability as well as taxes she didn't know she owed. It took over a year for Ms. Mickey to bring the property into compliance

legally. We're talking taxes and paperwork. The home was safe.

During this time, she collected no rent, which, of course, is required by law. Yet the tenant remained in the home. The tenant remained using the water, which Ms. Mickey had to continue to pay, as well as her taxes on the real estate taxes. Ultimately, she made the painful decision to sell the home. Rental license and suitability certificate in hand, she filed for eviction.

The tenant's attorney then threatened legal action over rent collected years earlier when she didn't meet the compliance of the rental license. Knowing this and under that pressure, she agreed to an extended move-out timeline with no rental payment. To date, the tenants still live in the property, until Saturday hopefully.

After waiting two years, she is still waiting. She has no rent and she has to continue to take care of this property. This is the reality for many small landlords. These bills do not educate them. These bills do not help them to achieve the compliance that is already required. They do not distinguish between corporations and individuals. Instead they add more penalties and more barriers for small landlords like Ms. Mickey, who often don't even know the rules until they meet the right person.

We're not talking about large developers. We're not talking about corporations. We're talking about individuals who own one or two homes, follow the rules and think they're doing what's right by hiring professionals. Before adding new requirements, we

must ensure small landlords understand and can realistically comply with the laws that are already in place. These bills would have bankrupted Ms. Mickey because her tenant could have sued her for that background. Thank you for your time.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for being here and for sharing your experience. And let's keep talking. I do know that the city is willing to put resources into education and making sure that landlords understand these bills, but we should keep talking about all of it and we appreciate you being here today.

MS. GLEASON MACK: Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MR. GRANT: Good afternoon. My name is Seneca Grant. Thank you, Madam Chair, Madam Vice-Chair. And thank you, Mr. O'Rourke. On behalf of One PA United and everyone, all these tenants here, we are eternally grateful for your support and sponsorship of Safe Healthy Homes. And without you, we probably couldn't have been here today. So we thank you for that, sir.

To members of committee, I've been living in Philadelphia, born and raised my entire life and pretty much from everywhere, from Bartram Village to Germantown North Village, they've always been in some kind of condition of squalor in one way or the other, from no working stove to flying cockroaches to leaks.

It's even now where I'm living in West Oak Lane, and I'm in

my third winter where there's no heat. I'm one of the examples of a good tenant, a good renter. Not only is my rent always paid on time, it's often early. And I want to thank you guys for arming myself and the rest of us here today with the protections that we definitely require and arming us with the tools that we need to be able to fight these corporate landlords. And that's a (inaudible) against us, because I'd rather not pay my rent this month because I'm cold. It's been a very cold winter, you know.

So I would like to know that I can -- even though I've always been on time with rent, that I can put my money in escrow and not to have to worry about retaliation. So I want to thank you for that. To my fellow members of One PA Renters United today,

victory belongs to us. In conclusion, to these corporate lobbyists and greedy slumlords who should be ashamed of themselves and show up here today in opposition to what we're trying to get done, you should be ashamed of yourselves. But today you're mad because victory belongs to us. Thank you, Madam Chair.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you for your comment.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MR. RAWLINGS: Antonio Rawlings. Good afternoon, Councilmembers. My name is Antonio Rawlings. In 2018, I moved into my aunt's house in Nicetown from a nursing home after facing a long and hard battle with cellulitis. My aunt was renting from a small

landlord who would not make repairs.

While staying there, I experienced three times where squirrels came into the house. One time I woke up to them licking my foot. My aunt called the landlord and she said that they don't do the wild. She called Animal Control. They told her that it will cost 250 for them to come in, trap it and take it out. We could not afford it.

In 2022, I moved into an apartment complex in Frankford called Avondale, owned by Odin Properties. I experienced broken elevators, multiple ceiling leaks, mold, which was in the form of mushrooms, fire alarms that constantly went off. Now, in 2026 I'm back with my aunt and since being back, I experienced something eating through the wall, making

noises so loud I could not sleep.

My aunt and I did not have any heat in part of our house during the winter back in 2024 and 2025. Thanks to Councilmember Cindy Bass, my aunt's landlord is making sure she does a thorough investigation into what is running amok in the ceilings and in the walls. But what about renters who are afraid to speak out or are not able to get in touch with their Councilmember. We need the Safe Healthy Homes Act to protect us. Thank you for your time.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank you so much for your comment today.

Please state your name for the record and proceed with your comment.

MR. GOLDEN: Edward Golden. Pleased to meet both of

you again. So I do have something scripted. Try to get through it as quickly as possible. And the protocol to distinguish members of City Council, tenants and landlords, my name is Edward Golden. I'm a property manager that resides in West Philadelphia. I don't live in California. My office, two blocks away from my house.

My wife and I own an investment property that we will ultimately pass along to our children. I currently manage 150 units for local owners and some owners across the country. Our company has seven values that we adhere to, the most important being collective value. So we can't run a property management company, we cannot run an investment without tenants, contractors, owners and the City of Philadelphia.

Now, here's where I go offscript a little bit. After hearing everything, it kind of surprises me that there are companies that have violations to the extent that we do -- they do. We spend a majority of our time in two areas, maintenance and compliance, because we don't want any of our clients to fall into some of the situations that I've heard today where people are -- even though we have to, which is a professional tenant, so we have to take a lot of time. I've talked to your Chiefs of Staff, all that.

So what I think I see here, what I think I hear at this hearing, how about that, is that there's two rental communities. There's a rental community of corporate landlords and then there's a rental community of people like me and the people that

I serve.

So I think that, hear me out, why not zero in on us. Listen to us. We'll tell you what we do. We'll tell you the fact that during the pandemic our owner probably lost an aggregate of about $250,000. We're passed that now. It's cool. But we don't want that to happen again, so it needs to be avoided.

And here's the reason why: There's a couple buzzwords that go around the country now. It's called affordable housing and generational wealth. If we don't begin to understand what this does, works to support that or not, we're going to lose affordable housing and generational wealth. Can I talk to y'all guys?

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much for your testimony. Appreciate you very

much.

And can the Clerk call the next --

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Oh, no. One more. I'm sorry. One more.

MR. REYES PARDO: Good afternoon. You guys know me. I'm Abraham Reyes Pardo, VP of Housing and Diversion Services at the Urban League of Greater Philadelphia. The Urban League is very involved with the eviction diversion program, but we also provide homebuyers education and counseling.

Now, some people have left. But as I was looking around the room earlier, I saw many familiar faces, many partners and organizations we work with every day to help families move closer to homeownership. Because of that

work, I know they understand just how critical access to safe, affordable housing is for the people we serve and for the strength of our communities.

I want to thank you for convening these important conversations. They're necessary and I'm confident they can lead to thoughtful, comprehensive solutions. In an ideal world, everyone will simply do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, but we do not live in an ideal world. That is why clear, standards, strong guidance and consistent oversight from the City of Philadelphia are essential.

Without clarity and accountability, regulations can be misinterpreted or ignored, and families are the ones who bear the consequences. Some of the complicated living conditions we

have heard about today are in many cases preventable. When residents are able to remain in stable, healthy housing, they are better able to succeed in school, support local businesses and participate fully in civic life. The Safe Healthy Homes Act represents an important step toward housing fairness and reflects Philadelphia's commitment to equity, opportunity and dignity for our residents. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Can the Clerk call the next list of names for public comment.

THE CLERK: Mark Roesch, Greg Wertman, Seth Floyd, Ethan Kalathil, Jim Kenekelen.

(Witnesses approached

witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you all very much. Can you state your name and proceed with your testimony.

DR. ROESCH: Good afternoon, Councilmembers. My name is Dr. Mark Roesch. I'm both a tenant and a small landlord in Philadelphia. And when there's a problem at one of my seven properties, I go there the same day, be it day or be it night. My units are better than average. My average rent is $1,174 for a three-bedroom.

I maintain all required rental -- I maintain all houses. And of course, I have rental licenses, lead paint CRS. Of course, no questions. If a tenant has a serious problem, I go there myself. I know my tenants. However, I'm concerned that this

legislation in its current form may have a couple of results that we all don't want and that harm the tenants the most. That's why I am here.

Ten years ago, before I took care of my small children because of a family issue, I worked briefly in private equity. I know how those people think with their spreadsheets, with their profit thinking and I know how they value risks. And that perspective makes me concerned about what's proposed here today.

The goal of the bill is clearly good, to remove bad landlords and drive them out of the city, drive them out of business. And I agree housing is essential for everyone. Good policy punishes the bad landlords and drives them out of business. But at the same time, good policy protects the good

landlords, especially the small landlords, especially local owners who know their tenants, maintain their home and pay the property taxes in the city.

Today small landlords are already scared of Philadelphia. They don't want to invest here. They'd rather go out in other counties or they give their savings to bank or Charles Swab or Fidelity. That's a problem. That void of those people leaving, and many did leave, is not filled by other small landlords. That's filled by big Wall Street people. And the legislation on the table in the big picture worsens that. You scare them more.

I with my seven properties, I can sell them here and rent somewhere else. Do you really want that? Do we really help the tenants in the room? My

tenants want me to stay. They ask me every week if I have something for a family or someone else. An L&I inspector told me once, you are clearly a good landlord but we still have to issue this violation. In one case, that happened after the tenant damaged the HVAC system.

Sometimes violations occur because tenants clog drains, leave trash outside which attracts rodents and install unsafe things. I conclude. So I think the goal is right, but speak with especially the small landlords to really target the bad ones and ensure that there's more people attracted to Philadelphia being a good landlord. The best thing for all tenants here is if they have a choice to go somewhere else and get out from the bad landlord and scarcity is the core problem. Let's solve that, and bad landlords will be done in

the city. Thank you for your time.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you so much. Appreciate you.

Thank you.

Please state your name for the record.

MR. WERTMAN: Hi. My name is Greg Wertman. I am President of HAPCO Philadelphia. First though, let me remind everybody if you don't know what HAPCO is, it's a nonprofit organization made up of mostly small landlords, small (inaudible), less than five units.

One of our biggest proponents is we want our members to be compliant. Why? Because we believe that the laws that have been passed have been passed in favor of tenants of course and landlords proper housing, but we also encourage it because we want

an even playing field. And what I mean by that is unfortunately, we don't have that in Philadelphia.

We have an estimated 73,000 unlicensed landlords. How do licensed landlords compete against them? We can't. They're not following the rules and we are. The organization itself is not against the bill as it -- the essence of the bill is good, but there are certain things, as we pointed out, that we'd like to see change in order for that bill to move forward. Unfortunately, at this point it doesn't look like that's going to happen.

But the previous person spoke about keeping the wealth in our Black and Brown community. And what's happened here, HAPCO at one time had 3000 members. COVID crushed us. We're down to 800, 900 members. Again, Philadelphia,

small landlords make up 74% of all low- to moderate-income housing, and that's why you're seeing a giant decrease in this housing. We are proponents that want to grow the affordable housing. It's very, very important. We see it and we know it.

But the problem is we need bills. When these bills and legislation are written, we need a component in there for landlords that are small landlords, similar to what Ms. Landau, Councilwoman Landau wrote into one of her legislations. That is so important because we really need to keep affordable housing, but we also need to grow it.

Legislations that are being passed in the city, it's hard to get investors to come in and say, hey, do you want to invest in affordable housing. Unfortunately,

that's not going to happen. And what we'd like to see is more things written into legislation or even change some of the legislation that we are currently have so that small landlords are not thrown in the same pile as these guys that have 200 to 300 units. Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much.

MR. KALATHIL: Hi, Councilmembers. My name is Ethan Kalathil. I am a small landlord, about five buildings in University City. I started being a landlord 30 years ago and I purchased my first building from my landlord Ollie. I've been doing this ever since. I'm really sympathetic about having safe and affordable housing, because I don't want unhappy tenants. I don't want people who can't pay rent or are not happy with where they're

staying.

But I do have an issue that I want to bring to you. Over the last 20 years, I've seen my taxes go up 500%. My utilities have gone up 300%. Labor and materials have gone up 300%. My rent has only gone up 50%. Okay. And the rules are consistently changing. And I can tell you, I really don't know what it requires to be compliant.

Paperwork is getting to be too much. It's too complex and difficult for both the landlords and tenants to understand what's going on. And there is no transparency or easy-to-understand regulations that makes sense. If I'm going to need a manager to keep up with all these regulations and keep up with the changes, it only makes housing less affordable.

I enjoy the fact that

I'm managing the buildings. Unlike the larger landlords, I cannot spread out my overhead. And again, as everybody is saying, less supply means less affordable housing. I find it really disturbing that I need a cause at the end of lease term or to return payments for services that is rented. It absolutely makes no sense.

It's a serious concern for affordable housing. And I just want to say that overregulation will kill affordability for both residents and small owners. I understand lots of things have not been fair. There are specific abuses that should be addressed specifically without overregulating and killing affordability. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you so much.

Please state your name and proceed with your testimony.

MR. FLOYD: Good afternoon. My name is Seth Floyd. Been a resident in Philadelphia for 46 years. First 17 as a tenant. I've since ascended to graduate from Temple. Being a hometown guy, sports fan, fan of you as well, fan of Councilman O'Rourke. But I'm also a licensed realtor for the last 21 years, also broker, also own a title company, also property manager, also on the Board for HAPCO, also a member of the Greater Association of Realtors, Also a member of Tricounty Realtors, also a member BCAR in New Jersey, broker in New Jersey.

But I'm also a Black man who has lived my entire life in Philadelphia and very, very, very, very, very versed on the challenges and the pain that the tenants come

in here today, those challenges of what they have. For the thousands of calls that you guys receive as complaints, you are not a first call.

The Realtor Association and the realtors and the professionals and the property managers and other property managers and the other professional organizations are most of these people's first call. We are the ones a lot of times placing the tenants in the properties. And so, when later on they have problems with the landlords, they call me because guess what? You got me here, this is what's going on, let me tell you what's happening.

And so, the boots on the ground, which I would consider most of the realtors and the property managers and most of the members from HAPCO to be, we deal with most

of the problems quietly and in silence. We address the issues. We pay money, we instruct, we educate, we go to court and we educate the tenants. We enforce, we write letters, we teach, we preach, we educate, and then only in worse circumstances where every now and then you may hear from a landlord escalating to a Council office.

What we're asking -- and I know that we're leaving committee hearing already, I will congratulate you on what you've accomplished to get to this point and leave here today. The only thing I can ask, and I'm just praying, that the words that have been said here and behind closed doors about implementing the amendments, which have been very well-thought-out and planned, that those do not go away and that this

conversation continues, and that many more of these amendments are actually incorporated into this bill before this goes live in public.

I know that we are in an environment here in Philadelphia, which essentially is a one-party system, where the diversity of thought and sometimes not coming through a legislative part, but the diversity of thought comes in you actually extending yourself and having your minds open to listen and hear from the people important to the city. That you listen to these housing associations, the Apartment Association, that the other professionals as well as some of the individual represented landlords, that you take those comments and now it's on you to take those comments seriously and weigh them against what your

intentions are and make sure that we have something that's safe.

The process here and what we have in this city is a delicate, delicate balance. And what I'm saying to you guys is that the delicate balance can be very easily tipped one way or the other and sometimes with legislation, even if it has good intentions. The real estate community will help you. HAPCO is going to help with this legislation moving forward.

And I'm just asking that you realize that delicate balance. We all want fairness and we were going to help you get there together. Just please make sure that you do not turn a blind eye to us when we leave here.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much. And I know that Councilmember O'Rourke is committed

to that.

COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

Thank you for your testimony, for those who all have testified so far. In the same way that I mentioned earlier, I appreciate the conversation exchange with Mr. Bey, I also want to say that I appreciate the conversation with you as well, Mr. Seth, on as we tried to get to a place where these were prepared to go forward, hearing all that feedback, it's super intentional, important.

And I'm not paying lip service by saying that we are genuinely engaged with conversation with folks to get these as best as we possibly can going forward. That's not lip service. I am not part of the one-party system. I'm an actual independent, which is the reason why I was happy to have the conversation with you.

So thank you for engaging in good faith. I have zero issue with hearing out concerns. The hope is not to cause harm in any area. It's to create help and make things safe and healthy for all. And I believe if we work together, we can get to a good place. So again, thank you for your testimony. And, yes, we will be working together going forward.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Good afternoon. Please state your name.

MR. KENEKELEN: Hi, guys. Jim Kenekelen. I'm a small mom-and-pop landlord. So I came today and I heard the opening comments. And I heard a lot of the comments from tenant rights groups and I didn't hear anything I disagreed with. I'm actually not opposed to this bill. I'm no

expert on it so don't hold me to it.

But just one thing jumps out at me. And it might not just be what's implemented within this bill. It's also other regulatory things. If we don't sign a form or get a form signed at the beginning of a lease, you know, lot of stuff going on, and then we find out a year and a half or two years later we have to rebate all that rent back, a $20,000, $30,000, $40,000 bill. Does that make sense to anybody?

I mean, you guys are Philadelphia employees. If you didn't sign your employee handbook by accident the first day you were hired, you know, I forgot that. And they said, oh, you owe us your two years' back salary for that. Like, no, I don't think you guys would support that, so if you just

watch out for just these little facets of these bills that could really blow someone out of the water.

Again, I don't think anyone would be supportive of you forgot to get this, oh, you didn't know about -- you should get your license but, oh, you forgot that or you didn't get the tenant to sign the certificate that you have and everything's up and running, oh, you need to give them $35,000 back. Again, the word insanity comes to mind.

And that will keep us -- I mean, if some of these things go through, I just will have to sell my properties. And you want me in the city operating my properties. I mean, it's almost like this dichotomy. We're the third peg in the chair. You really, really want me to provide affordable housing,

and you want more supply. I do a great job of it. A lot of these folks do a great job.

A lot of the horror stories are -- and I don't want to bash, it's their own business, but a lot of it is the corporate tenants with 200, 300 units. And I'm not bashing them or anybody or anything, but you don't want to bring me down trying to police them, because I'm doing a really, really good job.

I was in finance. I burned out. I got into this because I know Philadelphia needs housing. I ran into an ex-Penn alum, classmate. I hadn't seen her in more years than I'd like to think, admit. She said, what are you doing? I said, I had to leave finance. She said, what are you doing? I said, I'm a housing provider. I'm doing landlording.

She said, wow, you could have done anything, that's really nice of you. But I get into housing and why does everyone hate me. So a few things we do, we're like the mongooses. That's actual plural for mongoose against --

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Can you get a little closer to your microphone?

MR. KENEKELEN: I'm sorry. We're actually like the mongooses, yes, against the cobras, which would be private equity. I mean, Amazon's even looking to get into urban housing because they want to monetize it. Monetize means they want to profit off it and they see (inaudible) in it, they can get more money out of -- more expensive. But by our existence, we keep them out, the fact that we own these properties. So you don't let that be lost on

you. We fight blight.

And again, we deter gentrification. Because we exist, there's less gentrification. Developers bring justification, not bashing them, but we don't cause gentrification. We fight gentrification by our existence. That's it. Thank you. Appreciate that.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much for your testimony.

Ms. Jones, can you please call the next public testimony.

THE CLERK: Camille Pearsall, Mike Lynch, Nicole Bruce, Amile -- I can't really understand the handwriting and Nadira Branche.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you. If you could just

proceed, others will come and join you. Thank you.

MR. LYNCH: My name is Mike Lynch. I'm a landlord, small time. I listened to the people who were complaining about all the issues that they had with their landlords. And I recognized that almost all of them were all about code violations that the city had the obligation to do something about.

And I guess the tenants didn't want to complain, but if something is already on the books and already can be enforced and I would like to see the city try and do more to get that done to solve the problems of code violations in a reasonable manner. It seems like the city doesn't have enough resources to do that. I'd like to encourage the city to figure out a way to apply more resources to

that.

The other situation that I can think of is that I've known a lot of landlords who've had problems evicting a tenant because of the city's -- they've got the stopgap where you have to wait a month before you can complain about it before you can go to eviction. And then once you get into the eviction stand, it takes another eight months before you can even begin the eviction process because you had to wait for a court period and then you have to find a Sheriff who's willing to do that. And the city has made a rule now that the Sheriff has to be a legal thing.

I understand the city has taken steps to improve the number of Sheriffs. I would like to see if the city can figure out a way to speed up the hearing process because eight months is a lot of

money. And that's basically all I have to say. I just wanted to know that there's a lot of things that just aren't being enforced or being enforced poorly and if you can figure out a way to do that.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much. Minority Leader Kendra Brooks and I, she's taken the lead on this, and I've had my own conversations as well, have been bringing together landlords and tenants to have a conversation about the eviction process. So I think we're identified places that could use a little more efficiency.

MR. LYNCH: One last thing I would like to know, is it possible I can see what the -- you all said you voted on something that was amended after we reviewed it and we have no idea what it was that you just all agreed to pass. And I'd be curious to know what

that was.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: We have copies of the bills today. And this is only on a committee. It still has to go to the entire Council and be voted on again. So there is time and there's plenty of time to talk to the bill's sponsor, which is Councilmember O'Rourke if you have any input. Thank you.

MR. LYNCH: Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Please state your name for the record.

MS. BRANCHE: Hi. It's no longer morning. Good afternoon. My name is Nadera Branche. I'm a lifelong Philadelphia resident. When people say they are a small landlord and have three or four buildings, I have one unit that is literally in my home. I own an owner-occupied duplex. When I didn't have money, that rent paid

my mortgage.

I have worked very hard. I come from generations on public welfare. I've worked very hard to get off of public welfare. Okay. And I am afraid that the onslaught of all these bills are going to either force me back on public welfare because the support -- let me just say what I want. Please create a public advocate -- I'm not sure of the proper noun office -- for really small landlords like me. Okay. Otherwise, I will -- I'm one generation removed from welfare and I'll be back on welfare.

My property taxes increased over 70% one year. I was a federal employee who lost my job because of the new administration change in priorities. Okay. I was on ECA's program to get repairs for my house for two years, two years. But when my income changed -- when

they finally got around to me for two years, my income changed and they said, oh, you no longer qualify.

What? I qualified when it -- what am I supposed to do. What did that do? That led me to no longer be able to be in compliant with the PHDC programs. Because I own an owner-occupied duplex, I qualify for the rental improvement fund program and the one for the owners, two programs.

But because I need some repairs to keep the costs down and the construction workshop, they said go and see if you can apply for ECA to get some of these costs down. The one who spoke before who praised the PHDC programs are contractors. I'm not. That's not my profession. I don't know how to navigate construction projects. It's not my forte. Okay. But

those programs are great for either extremely low-income and you got to wait around or you have to know how to -- you have to have experience in construction projects. I don't have that. So I lost out on all three programs and I still need repairs.

And with the onslaught of all of these bills, I'm afraid to rent. My one unit is off the market. And I'm afraid that I'm going to have to sell my property because what value does it hold. Help people like me.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much. I will say I appreciate your testimony. The Landlord Gateway program through the City of Philadelphia, we're trying to bolster that to get even more education out to landlords for resources. And we hope that

between the Mayor's H.O.M.E. program and what we're doing here, that there will be a lot more resources going out to landlords, and we're still working on that.

MS. BRANCHE: Resources don't equate to actual help. Unless you have a construction manager -- you want me to control my cost of rent. Why don't you have the cost control for the construction projects through these PHDC programs, because they don't tell us, oh, we don't get involved in the price you charge between the construction company and you, but they want to approve what gets done.

So I don't know how to navigate these programs unless I go to construction management school. Help me by giving me an advocate, but don't penalize me if there is an inspection, for instance, and I

fail. And then what, the repercussions are penal? No. Help me. Give me resources to even be in compliance.

And that's what I think a public advocate, construction project manager, I don't know, you policy folk can actually do that. If you want, talk to me because I've been through all these programs. But what I'm afraid of is being back on welfare. Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony.

Please state your name for the record.

MS. BRUCE: Good afternoon. My name is Nicole Bruce. First of all, thank you for staying and listening and everyone that's still present, I appreciate

that. My name is Nicole Bruce and I'm a long, long, long-time resident, almost 55 years. And I'm a single woman asking you to recognize what and so many others prior to me speaking know far too well, that safe healthy housing is not a luxury. It's a necessity.

Housing is more than a roof over our heads. It is stability, dignity and the foundation for a life where we can truly thrive. I have no one to share the joys of housing stability with nor anyone to help the sorrows of its insecurity. Each day of uncertainty weighs heavily, and every barrier to safe housing is not just a personal struggle. It's a challenge that affects my entire community.

I have survived a fire in my home. I have endured a break-in while I was present that

shattered my sense of security. I have lived through winters with no heat and summers with no air-conditioning, freezing inside my house in January and struggling to breathe in extreme heat in July. And recently, as an adult an onset of asthma.

This is not a convenience. That is instability. A home should be a place of safety and peace. Instead I have lived with fear, unsafe conditions and asthma triggered by poor air quality and extreme temperatures. The constant stress of wondering whether your home will protect you or fail you takes a real, lasting toll.

Nearly 40% of Philadelphia residents are renters. That means a significant portion of our city depends on strong code enforcement and real accountability

to ensure that basic standards of safety are not optional. Safe housing is a public health concern. Again, it's about stability and dignity.

I urge you please to consider strengthening these inspections, enforcing heating and coding requirements and holding negligent property owners, not the small businessman, accountable. We cannot claim to be building a stronger Philadelphia while residents are living in unsafe conditions.

We heard the good Reverend Councilmember O'Rourke speak about grace and mercy. Mercy says no one should suffer further. Grace says everyone deserves a home that protects their health and their peace. I ask that you emphasize grace. That means give respect and consideration every

time. Because at the end of the day, a city is only as strong as the homes of its people that are forced to live in it. Thank you so much.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank you so much. Appreciate you.

Ms. Jones, can you please call the next list.

THE CLERK: We have Munira Edens, David Lipscomb and Ugochukwu Opara. That's all we have on the public comment list.

(Witnesses approached witness table.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Can you please state your name and proceed with your testimony.

MR. LIPSCOMB: My name is Dave Lipscomb, also known as Citizen Dave, by many people. I'd like to say good afternoon Vice-Chairwoman Rue Landau and also Councilman O'Rourke. You know, as

we talked here before we do need grace. We do need grace. I think my comments earlier on I saw how today I feel a little disrespected, because not all the people are here that are on your committee.

And I think that call earlier I think was a disrespect to everybody in the room. And I think that's one of the issues that I've had. Now, when it comes to the bill that Councilmember O'Rourke put through, I'm not against passing it, but I'm against passing it as it's written. And the reason why is because many people believe that the narrative believed by many is that the opposition equals support for bad housing or unjust evictions, and that's not accurate.

Proactive inspections and expanding good call standards may sound simple, but the real issue is how they're written,

enforced and paid for. Overbroad definitions, administrative delays and compliance costs can disproportionately impact small landlords and not corporate operators that directly affects long-term asset, stability and retirement planning with small landlords.

We want safe housing? We do absolutely. We want accountability? Yes, absolutely. But policy design matters. If compliance becomes unpredictable, expensive or legally risky, that's not protecting tenants. That's stabilizing small property owners who operate responsibly.

The question is whether standards should exist. The question is whether the structure of this bill strengthens housing overall, will unintentionally weakens the people who provide most

of it. When I heard the people today testifying, especially the landlords, those are horror stories that we hear.

And bringing it back in realtime, I just got a call about 15 minutes ago from a tenant. Okay. They had a problem paying the rent because of their Social Security. Okay. So we're not going to get paid until they get paid. That throws me in. Now, we're not going to throw them out.

Also, I have another case. There was another tenant. They called us and said, look, we're having some hard times. Okay. Can we get the rent reduced. Guess what? We gave them 500 reduction, per month reduction, because they take care of that property. And on that property, what happened is the previous tenant caused a fire to cause

$200,000 damage. Okay. So this is what small landlords are dealing with. And when we deal with all these different things coming through, we got to see it through both lenses because we both want a win-win situation. One for the landlords, one for the tenants.

I've been a tenant. I had roaches running through the apartment. Okay. I'm just going to say this, and what happened was I talked to the landlord, got the people together. And guess what? He went out there after some you know, conversing, sprayed it out and got rid of the roaches. So there are things that happen to tenants and I understand that. But the greatest ones take care of them.

But most people, 60% of people, live in safe and healthy homes and that's what we want. So

we're in agreement with the spirit of your bill, but just not how it's written right now, Councilman.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you.

Please state your name for the record.

MR. OPARA: Good afternoon. My name is Ugochukwu Opara. I am not a Philly native, but I rep Philly very, very hard, West Philly specifically. I am a small landlord. I own about or I cover about maybe 16 families, and it has been my privilege to do so since 2000 when I first got started in this industry.

I have no opposition to this bill with the intentions of the bill. The concerns are the execution of it. A lot of landlords are going to be

absolutely decimated if this passes. And it's not because they're against safe housing or things being properly fun. It's just because the financials of this is going to make it very difficult to look at Philadelphia and say, this is where I'm going to park my dollars, right. So that is my number one concern.

A lot of landlords, as you've heard, do what they need to do. They take care of what they need to take care of. It is the penalties and these things that I think -- and I think the best example was the guy that said something about us, you get hired and you miss part of your onboarding and now you lose a year of income because you missed -- that is insane.

I think that no one here is against having safe housing to

tenants. No one here is against that in any way, shape or form. Like I said, it has been my privilege to adhere to all of these rules with the City of Philadelphia for the past 16 years. Not to say that everything goes perfect, but the intention is there, and all of my properties have the rental license, the lead cert. The whole kit and caboodle is there with all of our tenants.

And if I do miss a piece of paper, I am not responsible for years of rent going back because at the end of the day, they still got service, right. There should not be a zero sum game because paperwork isn't filed. And I think there should be something to intention, right.

The lead cert, for example, there's nowhere on it for a tenant to sign. If I submit it

to them and they choose not to sign it, what happens there? The intention on the landlord has, hey, I submitted it, right, it's been submitted. I could document that it's submitted, but the penalty would still carry forward. And I think those are the little things where this bill needs to be adjusted to make sure that, well, if the intention -- let's look at the intention, did the landlord actually put forth a good effort, you know what I mean.

There are also situations where people can't get into these properties, right. This is a bill that's supposed to protect landlords for retaliation against tenants, right -- or tenants from retaliation against landlords. There's no protection for landlords with the retaliation of tenants.

Sometimes it is intimidating to get your people in to do what you need to do from a property if they invite their whole family that have six dogs and they're just making it difficult. Nine times out of ten, I'll just call the police. They make a report, but I'm still in violation, right.

So I just want to make sure that y'all understand that majority of the landlords here, we are not in opposition to this bill. It makes sense. The intention is absolutely there. It is the execution where a lot of people who are doing the right things are unjust and I think that the bill should focus not just on bad landlords, also bad tenants. That's the only thing I see missing here. And if that's included, I'm 100 percent on board. Thank you

for your time.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

Thank you so much. Appreciate you.

Ms. Jones, can you call the next list of people for public testimony.

THE CLERK: There are no more names on the public comment list.

COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: If no one else wishes to testify on the bill resolution, we will -- that concludes the business of this Council. Thank you very much.

(Committee on the Housing, Neighborhood Development and The Homeless concluded at 1:45 p.m.)

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

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



TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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