



Public Testimony on Resolution 200336 to Philadelphia City Council Joint Committees on
Finance & Commerce and Economic Development
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Good morning committee members.

Thank you to the Co-Chairs of this hearing for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Lena Smith. I am the Philadelphia campaign manager for PennFuture. As a statewide environmental advocacy organization, our team is working daily to protect public health, restore and protect natural resources, and move Pennsylvania toward a clean energy future.

I am here to speak with you today about addressing many of the intersecting crises the city is currently facing through investments in a green economy. COVID-19 and the federal government's lack of response has laid bare the fragile foundation that our political economy was built upon. A state and local strategy reliant on fossil fuels and extractive economies has created divestment from the people and neighborhoods that make this city great.

One thing the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed is that our communities are also not prepared to withstand the impacts of climate change. Amid the pandemic we saw the neighborhood of Eastwick flood during heavy storms, and families are still struggling to recover. In the hottest months of the year under stay at home orders, neighborhoods of Hunting Park and Point Breeze experienced a 22-degree temperature difference. A phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect caused by redlining and a disinvestment from neighborhoods has resulted in a high density of asphalt rooftops and pavements, and a loss of trees and green space.

One strategy for recovery is to rebuild and grow our green economy through investments in green space. Philadelphia has seen success in creating green space with the *Green City, Clean Waters* program. The citywide program is led by the Philadelphia Water Department in partnership with businesses, community groups, and non-profits. It has created over 1,000 jobs since its creation in 2011 and generates an annual \$89 million in economic impact. Programs like PowerCorps PHL and the Horticultural Society's Roots to Re-entry program are training youth and adults with history in the criminal justice system in land care professions.

Green City, Clean Waters is an innovative approach to stormwater management investing in historically neglected communities and increasing access to green space. Studies have shown that access to green space increases the quality of life for the surrounding communities and reduces the impacts of the Urban Heat Island effect. In one study, researchers concluded that an increase in green space can reduce violent crime. The program is not the linchpin to solve all the



problems we are currently facing, but it is an investment in Philadelphia's neighborhoods that, with combined investments, can address many of the crises we face.

The Philadelphia Water Department, as the institution implementing *Green City, Clean Waters*, is one of the institutions hardest hit by the pandemic. It is an anchor institution providing over 2,000 career track jobs and clean water for Philadelphians. Moratoria on water shutoffs and deferred payments have caused an unexpected loss of revenue, threatening Philadelphia's ability to ensure the continuation of vital water services for everyone. The American Water Works Association estimates nationwide an aggregate financial impact on water and wastewater utilities exceeding \$27 billion. Our water utilities are also in need of stimulus funding and public investments to continue to provide an essential life sustaining resource and invest in the city's green economy future.

Growing our green economy requires thoughtful considerations into our priorities and consider innovative financing decisions. A Green Bank is a publicly capitalized entity established specifically to facilitate private investment into domestic low carbon, climate resilient infrastructure and other green sectors such as water and waste management. Green Bonds are designated bonds intended to encourage sustainability and to support climate-related or other types of special environmental projects.

Our recovery should not place a heavy burden on residents. Policymakers should learn from the 2008 recession and reject pressures to cut their way out of this recession. Privatizations and deep spending and public sector job cuts will put a drag on economic regrowth, will further entrench racial inequality, and create a ripple effect through the economy. City council should call on the federal government to pass a stimulus for sustainability and funding for water infrastructure.

This summer PennFuture released "A Green Stimulus and Recovery Platform for Pennsylvania," an agenda to take advantage of Pennsylvania's homegrown sustainable industries to put people back to work as well as rebuild a more equitable economy through the lens of sustainability and clean energy. City council can work with the state legislature to pass policies laid out in the platform to invest in our local green economy.

Philadelphia needs local strategies to address the intersecting crises we are facing, strategies that invest in the people and neighborhoods of Philadelphia and shift our economy to one that prevents future crises to build a Philadelphia where people can thrive.