

Lynn Robinson on Dec 3rd 2020 Philadelphia City Council hearing about COVID-19 recovery and prioritizing climate action as well as environmental justice.

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Good morning Council member Katherine Gilmore Richardson and to all council members. This is Lynn Robinson - teacher, and director of NAGP, resident of Germantown

I'm speaking today in support of the Green Recovery Resolution –(200666.) But I do also support the Healthy Outdoor Spaces Bill

This resolution provides the high road, a clear path to a healthier economy, while improving public health, beginning right now. COVID 19 recovery in itself is a short-term goal, but a green recovery will have long-term effects. Hopefully we will no longer have to accept Philadelphia's normal such as the nation's large city's Cancer and Asthma capital.

One gem in the resolution is the promotion of a circular economy, which honors the dignity of all involved. A circular economy, which builds environmental justice and climate action, will better protect people from falling through the cracks and becoming part of what we politely have been calling "the most vulnerable."

An environmental priority will begin to lift health burdens from certain zip codes in our city, where lower average life expectancy was widely publicized and accepted as inevitable, before the pandemic began. COVID as a threat of contagion has forced the general population to admit who suffers the most from chronic diseases. Now we have to see that our city and nation's health is only as strong as our weakest link.

This is not a trickle down theory resolution. It shifts the city's official perception away from the idea that the salvation and backbone of our city relies on an influx of high income residents, and comes to terms with the reality that our future, while including new people, rests on the diverse population whose ancestors moved here decades to centuries ago, and includes with equity, the 23.3% under the federal poverty line.

Before you lose interest in my applause, there is a fly in the ointment, not within the resolution itself, but in past history. Up until our most recent City Council elections, City Council, when acting on anything environmental, followed the lead of the Mayor's office, often using the OOS as a go between. Now that we've elected 4 new members, we'll see whether you're willing to ruffle feathers with the city administration's fossil fuel advisors.

Before closing, I also wish to point out a small but significant detail that was omitted in the Whereas Section. The resolution rightfully implies the racial disparities in poverty and housing cost burden, citing the 2020 Pew State of Housing Affordability in Philadelphia Report, but it's worth noting that Philadelphia also has a significant number- 32% -of cost burdened "white" households. This means that all of the city's economic failures cannot be pinned on systemic racism alone, and that it's time to take a deeper look at business as usual practices, including zoning exemptions, tax loop holes, and hiring practices in the building trades that fail to recruit and retain local labor.

This resolution embraces every person's right to life itself, every person's right to the liberty of reasonable health, and the right to enjoy a quality of life that sustains that health. If acted upon, we will see a reduction in drug overdoses and homicides, regardless of whether the police department is purged of racist vigilantes, hires more African American Philadelphia residents, and improves their detective work.

I'm sincerely excited to see this resolution, and hope is that it will guide legislation that saves lives.

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