

Testimony of Alex Balloon
Director, Tacony CDC
On Bill No. 180261
May 22, 2018

Good morning, my name is Alex Balloon and I am the executive director of the Tacony Community Development Corporation located in Northeast Philadelphia. I'm here today to testify in support of Bill No. 180261. We currently participate in the program with our partner Waste Management. We applaud Councilman Henon not only for his leadership with respect to this bill, but also his unwavering support for our revitalization efforts in Tacony. The CDC Tax Credit Program has been an enormous success in Philadelphia and a critical tool for "middle neighborhood" revitalization. Working hand-in-hand with the Commerce Department we have championed the low-cost high-impact investments to move our market from disinvestment towards new investment in our neighborhood. Many of our city's "middle neighborhoods" don't qualify for CDBG programs because their average income may be just slightly over the limit.

The most critical piece of the CDC Tax Credit Program is the 10-year term. Any community development professional would tell you that neighborhood economic development moves at the speed of trust. It takes years to build and cultivate that trust with neighbors and business owners to encourage them to undertake a storefront project, camera project, or new business investment. This work doesn't get done on an annual grant cycle. Six years in, we would not have been able to fix up our 32 storefronts or install more than 100 cameras without this long term financial stability. The city's other grant programs are on a very short-term cycle, typically 12 or 24 months. That makes it difficult to budget long-term. It's far more difficult to be strategic and intentional on that short-term calendar.

Finally, commercial corridor revitalization is one of the best returns on investment the City of Philadelphia can make. For every dollar invested, we leverage \$18 additional dollars in private and other investment. No other economic development program achieves that kind of leverage. We know other neighborhoods want to follow this model and they too can achieve success. We at the Tacony CDC urge the City Council and the Mayor to approve Bill No. 180261 to continue the critical investment in our city's neighborhood economic development.