



**PUBLIC INTEREST LAW
CENTER OF PHILADELPHIA**

AFFILIATED WITH THE LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW

**City Council Committee on Law and Government Hearing of April 28, 2014
Testimony of the Amy Laura Cahn, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia
Resolution Number 130884**

I am here, today, to testify in support of Resolution Number 130884, proposing an amendment to the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter to provide for the creation of an Office of Sustainability. I wish to begin by offering thanks to Chairman Greenlee and the committee members for the opportunity to testify, today. My name is Amy Laura Cahn and I am testifying in my capacity as a staff attorney with the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia.

The Law Center has a forty year history working to support environmentally just communities. We are dedicated to ensuring that vulnerable populations have the vital resources all of us need to live productive, fulfilling lives: including a home, a safe and healthy neighborhood, and access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food. Over the past two and half years, the Law Center's Garden Justice Legal Initiative has provided pro bono legal and policy support to Philadelphia's gardens and farms. No city agency has been more impactful or more of a partner in this work than the Mayor's Office of Sustainability (MOS).

MOS has been a partner of our Garden Justice work from go. When the city's many land holding agencies began revising its disposition policies, prior to the creation of the land bank, MOS staff was instrumental in making certain that the needs and perspectives of the city's growing constituency of community gardeners and market farmers were incorporated into these policies. MOS staff also stewarded the Mayor's Food Policy Advisory Council from its nascent stage to a diverse and vibrant council – a council I believe is poised to take national leadership on issues of urban agriculture, including vacant land access and soil safety; anti-hunger; food waste; and food procurement. Finally, MOS has demonstrated the policy expertise and institutional knowledge necessary to support the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to be the City's lead agency on urban agriculture. DPR's FarmPhilly program will make a huge difference to gardeners and farmers and, thus, to food and open space access citywide. MOS has been a significant collaborative partner in the creation of FarmPhilly.

My experience of MOS's work extends way beyond food, farming and vacant land. Two years ago Law Center began working in partnership with the Eastwick community to address environmental justice issues. As members of Council are aware, much of Eastwick is in the floodplain. Eastwick's residents have historically been hard hit by catastrophic flooding events, as well as chronic stormwater problems. Thus, climate change has become a critical issue for Eastwick's residents and environmental partners. Residents have reported to this Council that Eastwick flooding is occurring with increasing frequency and intensity. Climate change data projections allow us to anticipate increased flooding, stormwater runoff, saltwater intrusion, erosion, drought, and heat-related stress, not just for Eastwick, but communities throughout this city.

MOS is our link between Philadelphia and a national conversation on climate adaptation planning. We need a citywide plan for resident and neighborhood resiliency. MOS offers expertise and leadership and the ability to coordinate amongst multiple agencies necessary to make this happen. I rely on MOS to assist us in becoming a healthier, safer, and more sustainable city. I urge this Committee and the full Council to pass Resolution Number 130884.