

## Sergio Cea Testimony

Good afternoon Councilmembers. My name is Sergio Cea and I'm a Democratic committee person serving in West Philadelphia's 46th Ward, not far from where I was tear gassed by police while riding my bike.

No warning was given before the police advanced violently on May 31. I was only made aware as I saw dozens of people fleeing past me. I saw an armored vehicle descend down 52nd Street accompanied by rubber bullet gunshots going off indiscriminately and plumes of chemical weapons going everywhere. Cars with unaware passengers stuck on 52nd St had to quickly roll up their windows as their vehicles filled with teargas. A helicopter loudly hovered above, making its gaze known.

I tried to escape to a residential block on 52nd and Delancey where there were no protestors. Still, police shot a teargas canister down this block near me. My vision got really bad at this point and I stumbled or hit things while biking and fell over several times. A stranger saw me and rinsed out my eyes and gave me water to drink in a nearby park. I could see police advancing down 52nd Street continuing to shoot tear gas. People walking their dog or otherwise enjoying the park fled terrified. As I left I biked past a stranger rinsing out the eyes of a mother and child on 51st and Larchwood.

My lungs still burned when I got home and bothered me for hours. A fellow committee person was shot by police with a rubber bullet in her leg. She sent me pictures of the armored vehicle I had seen and the bruise left on her leg. Another committee person had also been shot at close range with a rubber bullet.

This incident has left me and my community feeling traumatized. The disdain and lack of compassion for the violence imposed on a Black-majority community was underscored when, less than a month later, Kenney and Outlaw apologized for what happened to protestors on I-676 and made it seem like the people harmed in West Philadelphia deserved it.

Here are changes I'd like to see. A new vision for deescalating crowds with roles for transparent communication to inform citizens about the intentions of police and trained mediators to listen to the demands of protestors. Demilitarization of the police department, and an end to chemical weapons and rubber bullets being used on residents. We need greater transparency about what police are doing. We need real discipline for police who behave badly. Those who made the orders to deploy chemical agents in the city should resign or be fired. We also need higher expectations for what the city can do and their role in managing the police. They need to hold police accountable and they fail to do so when they agree to bad contracts with the FOP.

We all have a role in reimagining what policing and accountability should look like. Thank you for creating this space and listening to my testimony.