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Statement for City Council Commerce and Economic Development Committee
preliminary draft September 8, 2016----- Hearing on Co-op Businesses October 24, 2016

The West Powelton/Saunders Park RCO supports co-op businesses. We urge the City to develop policies to support, promote, and expand co-op businesses.

We look forward to progressive and innovative ideas from Council to make Philadelphia a world leader in co-op businesses. We hope to see an Office of Co-op Business, support from all City Departments and employees, promotion of best practices for our co-op businesses, and inclusion of all residents in the co-op business effort.

Co-op businesses have numerous benefits for the City and the neighborhoods, including:

- retention of money within the City
- local control
- civic participation and strengthening of communities
- employment of those not employable by absentee corporations
- training and employment of unemployed
- wholesome participation activities for youth

Co-op businesses can encompass many types of businesses and several forms of ownership. Several food co-ops already operate in the City. Credit unions and some insurance companies are also a form of co-op.

Co-op ownership could include:

- customers
- employees
- community members
- union members
- churches
- combinations of the above

Candidate businesses to begin the program include stores, small businesses, gardens, and rental real estate. All of these offer an opportunity for community ownership responsive to community and worker needs and serving as a unifying force in the community. As experience is gained businesses size can grow.

There are many vacant stores throughout the City. Other businesses are owned by elderly who are looking for an opportunity to sell and retire. Neighborhood business districts in many neighborhoods are in need of vibrant businesses. Residents have difficulty finding affordable housing. All of these are opportunities for a strong co-op business program to rejuvenate the City.

Needed is leadership, business training, community education, and startup funding. These can all be provided by a City Office of Co-op business. Once the program is well underway the wage and business taxes generated might result in revenue in excess of the office's cost.

We look forward to strong and vibrant leadership from the City to develop co-op businesses. Tomorrow's successful city will not focus on big corporations and money, but instead on community well being.