

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia Office of the Chief Clerk Room 402, City Hall Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 250352)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing the Special Committee on Kensington to hold hearings on the intersection of homelessness and substance use disorder (SUD) in communities with both unstable housing and addiction.

WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, 12,556 people experience homelessness, with individuals needing more shelter than beds available, 610 shelter beds were empty despite the need, and 1,713 individuals slept outside even though some shelter beds were not in use; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Health Care for Homeless Council, individuals without stable housing are more likely to suffer from chronic illness, mental health disorders, and substance use disorder (SUD) compared to the general population; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, the Kensington neighborhood has become the epicenter of Philadelphia's opioid crisis, plagued by open-air drug markets and encampments, and continues to experience the compounded challenges of SUD and a severe lack of affordable and stable housing; and

WHEREAS, The pervasiveness of Open-Air Drug markets and encampments continuously exposes residents to environments that trigger substance abuse and pose significant health and safety risks, with reports finding 80 such markets within a 1.9-mile stretch of the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, The crisis in Kensington demands a coordinated housing and public health response. While many residents struggle with addiction, others experience housing instability due to economic hardship and the lack of affordable housing options, where transitional housing serves as an essential step in the road to recovery and long-term stability; and

WHEREAS, The demand for affordable housing in Kensington far exceeds the amount available, while Pennsylvania is estimated to have a shortage of approximately 267,000 affordable housing units for extremely low-income renters, and for every 100 extremely low-income renters only 38 affordable units are available; and

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WHEREAS, Systemic issues have kindled a deep mistrust of institutions among Kensington residents, with historically inadequate support and perceived neglect leading to skepticism toward new programs and outreach efforts; and

WHEREAS, Kensington requires complex and coordinated healthcare and social systems in order to address the needs of a population that is grappling with not only SUD but also mental health issues and homelessness. The influx of residents requiring comprehensive services can overwhelm the already inundated systems, limiting the effectiveness of Housing First programs that depend on integrated support systems; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services collaborates with over 60 housing and service providers from the city, state, and federal agencies, with individuals facing homelessness in Philadelphia having the ability to seek emergency shelter, financial aid for rent and utilities, and counseling and mediation through the Prevention, Diversion and Intake Unit of the Office of Homeless Services; and

WHEREAS, There are many SUD-focused programs available in Philadelphia, including, but not limited to, the Riverview Wellness Village, The Recovery House Initiative, Pathways to Housing PA, Ready, Willing, and Able, and Self-Help Movement, where individuals recovering from substance abuse disorders can provide stable housing combined with comprehensive recovery and support services; and

WHEREAS, There are comprehensive issues between the intersection of housing and substance abuse disorder, where residents in Kensington feel left behind by their City government and are unable to navigate the complexities that come with homelessness and addiction. It is critical that The Council of the City of Philadelphia investigate the efficacy of the current systems, engaging with community members and residents to explore new or improved models for transitional housing, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Special Committee on Kensington to hold hearings on the intersection of homelessness and substance use disorder (SUD) in communities with both unstable housing and addiction.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the tenth day of April, 2025.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Harrity

Sponsored by: Councilmembers, Harrity, Phillips, Gilmore Richardson,
Gauthier, Jones, Lozada, Young, Brooks, O'Rourke, Driscoll,
Squilla, Bass and Ahmad