

City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 200521)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing the Committee on Public Property and Public Works and the Committee on Labor and Civil Service to hold joint hearings to evaluate the impact, effectiveness, experience and outcomes of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic on the City of Philadelphia's citizens and workforce and calling on the City of Philadelphia to produce an action plan to guide future remote work of City employees.

WHEREAS, Working from home, remote work, and telecommuting are defined as a work arrangement in which an employee or independent contractor completes work from a location other than their employer's primary physical premises or location. Remote work occurs primarily through email, telephone, online conference call and meeting software and other electronic tools; and

WHEREAS, US Census data released in 2018 reported that 5.2-percent of workers in the United States work entirely from home. In a 2017 Gallup Poll, 43-percent of Americans have spent at least some portion of time working remotely; and

WHEREAS, As a result of COVID-19, the number of Americans working remotely has increased dramatically. By late April, more than half of all workers, accounting for more than two-thirds of all US economic activity, reported that they are working from home. According to Stanford University economist Nicholas Bloom, only 26-percent of the U.S. labor force continues to work from their job's premises; and

WHEREAS, Without the ability to transition workforce to remote work, the COVID-19 stay at home orders could have caused the total collapse of the economy and workers would have been forced to return to work. Returning to work would have resulted in a spike in infection rates. Effectively implementing and maintaining remote work options for employees is not only essential for the economy, it is a critical element of preventing the spread of COVID-19 and future pandemics; and

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WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a shift in the work locations of employees in the private sector, including Google, Facebook and Twitter. These companies plan to make “remote” or “telework” for many employees permanent; and

WHEREAS, There are pros and cons associated with remote work. Employees engaged in remote work report both positive and negative experiences with remote work, citing increased isolation and stress as the line between work and home blurs; and

WHEREAS, Stanford researchers also found that the shift to remote work could increase income inequality as workers. Workers with higher levels of education and earning power are more likely to be able to work remotely and are able to continue to advance their careers from remote locations. Low wage, service sector workers in retail, health care, transport, or other customer-facing in person services cannot as easily transition to remote work; and

WHEREAS, However, research conducted before the pandemic found that remote work offers significant positive effects on employers, including increased employee productivity. In 2012, the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office began a program allowing patent examiners to live anywhere and found that those who chose to work remotely, productivity rose by 4.4 percent. In 2015, a Stanford study found that employees working at home increased their productivity by 13 percent; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the rapid implementation of a requirement that certain City employees were required to work remotely and mainly from home. The City of Philadelphia’s implementation of work from home employment enabled the City of Philadelphia to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic while preserving its workforce and continuing to fulfill critical City of Philadelphia functions; and

WHEREAS, The shift of a portion of the City’s workforce to work from home and remote employment presents opportunities for City leaders to evaluate changes to the physical space, technology and training needs associated with ongoing remote work; to evaluate the role of work from home/remote employment of City employees in the future; to identify the opportunities to improve the effectiveness of work from home; to determine which City functions can be effectively performed from remote locations; and to consider the benefits and challenges of remote work on employees and citizens attempting to access and utilize City services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Public Property and Public Works and the Committee on Labor and Civil Service is authorized to hold hearings to evaluate the impact, effectiveness, experience and outcomes of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic on the City of Philadelphia’s citizens and workforce.

FURTHER RESOLVED, BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Public Property and Public Works and the Committee on Labor and Civil Service call on the City of Philadelphia to produce an action plan to guide future remote work of City employees.

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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 first day of October, 2020.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Henon

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Henon, Bass, Brooks, Domb and Green