

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the joint City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold public hearings to examine the benefits of having a more robust homeless prevention program in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Many people are experiencing homelessness nationwide. Even though in 2014, an estimated 578,424 experienced homelessness nationally on a given night, and in 2015, approximately 1.5 million Americans utilized a homeless shelters, the total number of homeless people is likely higher than either of these estimates; and

WHEREAS, Many times statistics measuring homelessness do not reflect those who are housing-unstable and living doubled up with others. The true estimate of people in this country who experienced at least one episode of homelessness in one year may be as high as 3.5 million; and

WHEREAS, The developing housing landscape in Philadelphia has had far reaching consequences for low income residents. As the Philadelphia housing market continues to develop more and more low income housing is being replaced with market rate projects and the lack new development for low income housing has had and will continue to have serious consequences for low income Philadelphians. With approximately 26% of our residents living in poverty, and the growing cost of living many low income Philadelphians are being left behind, which will likely increase the risk of homelessness for many; and

WHEREAS, Homeless prevention programs are better able to address the number and complicated causes of homelessness and provide a more targeted and robust approach that is needed in order combat the issue; and WHEREAS, Homeless prevention is less expensive and has shown to be effective in other American localities and countries including Germany and England. Homeless prevention aims to help those who may be in fear of losing their homes, it creates a system to keep individuals housed and thus preventing them from becoming homeless; and

WHEREAS, In September 2004, New York City's Department of Homeless Services introduced a comprehensive homeless prevention program called HomeBase. This program model was charged with working to stabilize families at risk for homelessness in six community districts in New York City; and

WHEREAS, HomeBase is rooted and was conceived as an alternative to shelter; this was a dramatic shift away from the traditional homeless intervention method. This shift is focused on targeted community-based housing stabilization services can be an effective tool for preventing episodes of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, Homebase functions by identifying and engaging people with a serious threat to housing stability, and then working with these households to help alter their decisions, before individuals and families are displaced. Services currently provided by HomeBase include landlord mediation, benefits advocacy, counseling, employment and training, legal assistance, and short-term financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, Research on HomeBase finds that for every one hundred (100) families enrolled, shelter entry

falls 10 to 20%. Thus, HomeBase programs yield significant cost savings to the City of New York. In 2013, it was estimated that HomeBase saved New York tax payers approximately \$2235 per participant; and.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia could benefit by establishing a homeless prevention program such as Homebase. Establishing a new conceptual framework, one that will facilitate the transition from a reliance on shelter-based services to the wholesale prevention of homelessness is crucial to ending homelessness in Philadelphia, and would likely result in cost savings for the City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL, Does authorize the City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold public hearings to examine the benefits of having a more robust homeless prevention program in Philadelphia.