

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Joint Committees on Law and Government and Public Safety to hold hearings to support the creation of a robust, active Family Justice Center in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime with domestic violence being the leading cause of injury to women while studies suggest that as many as ten million children may witness some form of domestic abuse annually; and

WHEREAS, The costs of intimate partner violence in the US alone exceed \$5.8 billion per year: \$4.1 billion are for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly \$1.8 billion; and

WHEREAS, Domestic violence victims - through no fault of their own - often face a fragmented system of service agencies; and

WHEREAS, Many domestic violence victims simply give up, and do not seek Protection from Abuse Act Orders against their abusers, do not seek prosecution and do not ask for the services that they and their children need; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia in 2009, there were 11,965 petitions filed seeking a Protection from Abuse Order, and further in 2009, Domestic Relations court conducted 4,890 hearings in criminal cases alleging contempt of a Protection from Abuse Act Order; and

WHEREAS, Other major cities, including Brooklyn, San Antonio and San Diego have begun to successfully address similar challenges by establishing Family Justice Centers; and

WHEREAS, A Family Justice Center can house under one roof advocates from non-profit groups and victim service organizations, law enforcement and prosecutors, and other representatives from community-based organizations who can also assist domestic violence victims, their children and other family members; and

WHEREAS, A robust Family Justice Center can provide medical services applications, crisis intervention, victim advocacy, legal assistance service, assistance in completing a Protection from Abuse Act request, and assistance with law enforcement investigation while making a victim's search of justice more effective and efficient; and

WHEREAS, A robust Family Justice Center would address the needs of domestic violence victims, their children and other family members; and

WHEREAS, The Council of the City of Philadelphia recognizes the need to work collaboratively to identify and secure dedicated funding sources to sustain a Family Justice Center; and seeks to work with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and victim service agencies to ultimately expand its scope to help other victims, including victims of sexual assault; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency has recently awarded the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office \$200,000 in one-time funding to be used to rent space to house the Family Justice Center; and

WHEREAS, To sustain a Family Justice Center, additional and sustained funding will be needed; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Joint Committees on Law and Government and Public Safety to hold hearings to support the creation of a robust, active Family Justice Center in the City of Philadelphia.