

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the creation of a “Special Committee on Poverty Reduction and Prevention” to hold hearings to propose and implement actionable policies and programs that substantively prevent and alleviate poverty in every Philadelphia neighborhood.

WHEREAS, For far too long, the poverty rate among Philadelphians has remained stubbornly high. At current levels, the persistent challenges of poverty are an unacceptable, daily reality for over a quarter of Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, Despite poverty being Philadelphia’s most significant challenge, in the past the City of Philadelphia has taken an incremental approach to an issue that urgently demands a far more aggressive, comprehensive, and unified policy approach. In the creation of this Special Committee, Philadelphia City Council aims to end the incremental approaches of the past; and

WHEREAS, In March 2019, Philadelphia City Council released a report entitled “Narrowing the Gap”, a series of actionable strategies for preventing and alleviating poverty through identifying successful policies and programs from across the country, some of which are already underway here in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, While the Special Committee on Poverty Reduction and Prevention is charged with addressing all aspects of poverty, the list of strategies in “Narrowing the Gap” focus on three policy areas: housing, jobs and education, and the social safety net. The report frames poverty at its most fundamental level to be a gap between the income needed to live a dignified, stable life and the income earned by many Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, Each strategy proposed in “Narrowing the Gap” aims to either increase household incomes, by cutting burdensome costs such as the cost of housing, or by bolstering the City’s commitment to protect its vulnerable residents from financial dislocation. The strategies proposed are diverse in subject matter as well as in terms of their timeline and complexity. Some represent changes to existing policies that could be accomplished in a matter of months, while others recommend entirely new programs; and

WHEREAS, Through prioritizing poverty in future City budgets, City Council plans to work in close partnership with our colleagues in Federal and State government, the Office of the Mayor of Philadelphia, key community institutions, philanthropic investors, and the private sector to begin a dynamic, new approach to addressing our City’s greatest challenge; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council hereby authorizes the creation of a “Special Committee on Poverty Reduction and Prevention,” consisting of members appointed by the Council President, by proposing and implementing actionable policies and programs aimed at reducing and preventing poverty in every Philadelphia neighborhood.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That in furtherance of these goals, the Special Committee’s duties shall include, but not be confined to: convening regular meetings for planning and coordination purposes; tracking the City’s progress towards the implementation of actionable strategies and recommendations found in the “Narrowing

the Gap” report; examining the efficacy of current programs and policies, identifying local and national best practices; engaging community leaders; increasing capacity for data collection and analysis; developing metrics to measure progress toward strategic goals; reviewing allocation of City resources to ensure optimization of results; holding public hearings to highlight the Special Committee’s progress and solicit public input.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That Council hereby authorizes the creation of a Special Committee consisting of Council members serving on the Special Committee on Poverty Reduction and Prevention, which is hereby authorized to issue subpoenas to compel attendance of witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Special Committee shall submit a full report to the Council and the Mayor and make its findings and recommendations available to the public.