

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings to examine more equitable solutions to crime scene cleanup policies that place the logistical and financial burden on the families of homicide victims.

WHEREAS, Crime scene cleanup is a term applied to the forensic cleanup of blood, bodily fluids or other potentially infectious materials after an incident, such as a homicide, occurs; and

WHEREAS, After a homicide occurs, crime scene cleaners are not automatically called to a scene once it is released by the coroner to clean, sanitize and deodorize a space; and

WHEREAS, Current city and state policies regarding crime scene cleanup place the logistical, psychological, and financial burden of cleaning a murder scene onto the family members of the victim. Many family members of murder victims aren't aware that professional cleanup services exist or don't know how to contact them. Others simply cannot afford the cost of hiring a professional cleanup service and are left to do the cleanup on their own; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency (PCCD) has a Victim Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP). Under this program, crime scene cleanup is an eligible category of reimbursement up to \$500 per crime scene inside of private residences. However, the cost of biohazard cleanup services after a homicide can range from \$2,000 - \$20,000; and

WHEREAS, The VCAP program also assumes that the individual seeking reimbursement for crime scene cleanup owns their own home and has homeowner's insurance. The individual has to pay the \$500 and any excess costs out of pocket on top of funeral expenses, medical bills and possible loss of earnings; and

WHEREAS, Policies leaving the burden and responsibility of crime scene cleanup on the families of homicide victims has a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Over 90% of fatal shooting victims in 2020 were non-white; and

WHEREAS, The loved ones of a homicide victim should not solely be left with the burden of cleaning a murder scene. It should be examined how municipal governments can share in this responsibility or reduce and cap costs for these services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the City Council Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings to examine more equitable solutions to crime scene cleanup policies that place the logistical and financial burden on the families of homicide victims.