

Legislation Text

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Resolution recognizing The Mütter Museum's ambitious exhibition detailing the size, scope, and impact of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 in Philadelphia, and its historically significant research on the topic.

WHEREAS, In 1918 the Influenza Pandemic hit Philadelphia, ultimately killing more than 17,000 people. Philadelphia suffered the highest mortality rate of any major American city, the epicenter of a disease that arrived in summer 1918 and stayed until March 1919. The Influenza Pandemic is also known as the Spanish Flu; and

WHEREAS, The Influenza Pandemic killed between 50 million to 100 million people worldwide, and 700,00 in the United States alone; and

WHEREAS, The Liberty Loan Parade was set up by the Federal Government to encourage patriotism and the purchasing of bonds. Physicians attempted to warn the public of the flu, as 300 sailors in the City had recently been hospitalized with the Influenza Flu. However, the parade continued as planned, and roughly 200,000 people lined the parade route; and

WHEREAS, This number of people congregating on the two-mile route of the parade probably helped spread the Influenza, serving as a pivotal moment for the awareness of the pandemic. The parade unknowingly helped spread the sickness that would kill roughly 17,000 people in six months; and

WHEREAS, While the flu had a lasting impact on the people of Philadelphia - the flu has been lost to history. No monuments, no recognition for the people who lost their lives. Shortly after the flu ended, the First World War ended, distracting people from their recent losses; and

WHEREAS, On October 17, 2019 the Mütter Museum opened an exhibition titled "*Spit Spreads Death: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 in Philadelphia*". The exhibition details the facts around the pandemic, the impacts of the Liberty Loan Parade, and the people that lost their lives; and

WHEREAS, The digital interactive exhibits will include the ability to explore the impacts of the pandemic block by block in Philadelphia, allowing individuals to look through death certificates, photographs and more; and

WHEREAS, Before the exhibition officially opened, The Mütter Museum partnered with Blast Theory to produce a commemorating parade on September 28th, recognizing the fallen people, and to acknowledge the heroism of the public health workers and volunteers who risked their lives to care for the victims of the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The Mütter Museum also partnered with Blast Theory to produce a film of the commemorative parade; and

WHEREAS, In order to produce this exhibit, The Mütter Museum cataloged more than 20,000 death

certificates of individuals who died during the pandemic. This historically significant research provided an exact number of deaths associated with the pandemic, as opposed to the estimates we were using before; and

WHEREAS, Its research showed that 17,500 area residents died in the Influenza Pandemic between 1918 and 1919; and

WHEREAS, This important work will raise the public profile of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918, and will hopefully help physicians and government officials make better decisions moving forward; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize The Mütter Museum's ambitious exhibition detailing the size, scope, and impact of the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 in Philadelphia, and its historically significant research on the topic.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to The Mütter Museum as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.