

Legislation Text

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Calling on the School District of Philadelphia to review and enhance school safety policies regarding students, teachers, parents, and staff, as well as provide a report to Council on their findings.

WHEREAS, In 2012, a Blue Ribbon Commission by then Mayor Michael Nutter and Superintendent Arlene Ackerman released a report stating “that Philadelphia School District violence was widespread and underreported, with reporting standards varying widely from school to school. Some cases in which students were seriously injured were downplayed and not counted in the district's serious-incident tally, which stands at 30,000 over five years” according to an Inquirer Report at the time; and

WHEREAS, In February of 2023, City Council unanimously passed Resolution #230091 “Authorizing the joint City Council Committees on Public Safety and Education to hold public hearings to examine statistics for in-school violence protocols, student-to-student violence, violence, parent-to-parent violence, and teacher safety.” Even though hearings were held on this Resolution, there is not enough done to actively report on issues concerning school safety; and

WHEREAS, In 2022, a parent violated school entry procedures by not signing in at the office, walking directly to a classroom, and physically attacking the teacher at a school in the district; and

WHEREAS, In February of 2022, after students got into a fight at George Washington High School in the Northeast, another confrontation took place between a parent and the group of students. The parents were on campus to discuss a mediation plan, but one of the parents in the group decided to attack the students believed to be involved. In a separate fight, one student sucker punched another student causing him to lose a tooth and require stitches. Some fights are even being attributed to racial tensions; and

WHEREAS, In August of 2022, an unrelated shooting outside of Willard Elementary School where three people were injured, a bullet went through a window and got lodged in a lobby wall; and

WHEREAS, In November of 2022, a fight between adults at Thomas Edison High School ended after a grandmother was maced and then proceeded to stab a parent in the shoulder and a student in the finger; and

WHEREAS, According to an Inquirer article from January of 2023, “Last school year, there were a total of 98 incidents of assaults, threats, or harassment by students’ family members, according to district data. So far this school year, among the district’s 217 schools, there have been five assaults on employees by parents and 35 threats by parents to employees. By the same time last school year, there were two assaults, four instances of harassment, and 41 threats by family members”; and

Whereas, In May of 2023, a firearm was discharged in the bathroom of E. Washington Rhodes Elementary School in the Allegheny West neighborhood of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Each of these examples display the need for greater reporting and accountability for school safety. Parent-to-parent violence, student-to-student violence, and teacher safety must all be prioritized in any reports

released by the School District of Philadelphia. Until every school in the district is safe, no school in the district is safe; and now therefore be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on the School District of Philadelphia to review and enhance school safety policies regarding students, teachers, parents and staff, as well as provide a report to Council on their findings.