



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Public Safety to hold hearings examining the use of vehicle immobilizing “window barnacles” as a form of predatory parking by private entities to understand the impact they have on Philadelphia’s residents.

WHEREAS, The window barnacle is a new way to immobilize vehicles that have violated multiple parking or traffic laws. Rather than using a traditional parking boot, parking officers can place the barnacle on the windshield of a car, suction it to the glass, and arm it with a keypad; and

WHEREAS, The barnacles are 20 pounds and stick to windshields with 750 pounds of force. If drivers attempt to driveaway with a barnacle placed on their car, a high-pitched alarm will sound. Unlike a parking boot, abandoned vehicles can be towed away easily without damage to the car. Window barnacles are more efficient in removal after tickets or violations are paid off. A code to the lock is used to remove the immobilization device; and

WHEREAS, Window barnacles were first tested in Allentown, Pennsylvania and have moved into cities such as Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Salt Lake City, Utah, and more. It has also been implemented at universities across the world; and

WHEREAS, Individuals that have been “barnacled” have complained about high fees to remove the immobilization device. Students at the University of Oklahoma stated that there was a \$185 fee for removal for parking illegally on one occasion. These students have also devised a way to remove the suction device, escaping fines. Running a windshield defroster for 15 minutes and then swiping a credit card under the suction cups releases the barnacle has been used to remove the device without fines; and

WHEREAS, The issue of high fines in regards to the window barnacle have been widely reported. A student at the University of Houston reported that she had to pay \$920 to get her car back in her possession; and

WHEREAS, These devices are still being tested and improved with feedback from various cities in Connecticut, Hawaii, Florida, Pennsylvania, and more. They are still not a clear failure or success as of the current moment. To claim they are effective or ineffective, currently, would be misguided; and

WHEREAS, This new technology has clear defects that require further investigation by the city of Philadelphia. Private entities enacting these devices on the community before proper investigation of their effectiveness would be unjust. Due to the lack of confidence in the technology, this legislative body must properly investigate this technology before introducing it; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, parking lots have employed window barnacles as a way to combat expired meters. Many lots will have a tow truck stationed at their site and one minute after a meter expires, a barnacle will be placed. Due to nonuniformity across the City in which these devices are implemented, this Council body must examine the issue to understand the best legislative solutions for this growing concern; 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 hearings examining the use of vehicle immobilizing “window barnacles” as a form of predatory parking by private entities to understand the impact they have on Philadelphia’s residents.