



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Calling for a moratorium on the imposition of any death penalty in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania until a fair and impartial study of the application of the death penalty is conducted.

WHEREAS, The death penalty is an extreme, irreversible act of violent punishment carried out by the representatives of our government; and

WHEREAS, The American Bar Association, the Pennsylvania Bar Association, and the Philadelphia Bar Association have all called for a moratorium on the death penalty; and

WHEREAS, Every nation in Europe and the vast majority of the democratic nations of the world have abolished the death penalty and now the United Nations Human Rights Commission has called for an international moratorium on executions; and

WHEREAS, Almost 90% of the people sent to death row from Philadelphia are people of color; and

WHEREAS, More than 90% of the people on Pennsylvania's death row are indigent and cannot afford private counsel. The quality of counsel for the poor in Pennsylvania capital cases has been characterized as a "problem of major proportions" by a joint task force of Pennsylvania State & Federal Courts; and

WHEREAS, Almost 70% of the inmates on Pennsylvania's death row are people of color, giving Pennsylvania one of the highest percentages for people of color on death row in the Nation; and

WHEREAS, Two of the nation's foremost researchers on race and capital punishment, law professor David Baldus and statistician George Woodworth, conducted an exhaustive study of Philadelphia's death sentences which revealed that the odds of receiving a death sentence in Philadelphia are greater if the defendant is African American. Now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of Philadelphia calls on the Pennsylvania Legislature to enact legislation which results in a two-year moratorium on executions and the signing of death warrants in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We call on the Pennsylvania Legislature to conduct a fair and impartial study of the application of the death penalty. We call for a moratorium to remain in place until the legal, political, racial, economic, moral, and ethical problems surrounding the death penalty are fully resolved and the policy of State execution can be certified as a legal, just and humane form of capital punishment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the members of the Pennsylvania Legislature in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.