

Legislation Text

File #: 210265, **Version:** 0

Calling all social media companies to take a proactive role in fighting the Gun Violence epidemic nationwide by monitoring and removing inciting posts off platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

WHEREAS, As of March 22, 2021, at least 110 people have been murdered in Philadelphia, a 28% increase over the same time in 2020. More than 435 people have been shot fatally or non-fatally as of March 21, 2021, including more than 60 children between the ages of zero to 18-years old , according to the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD); and

WHEREAS, PPD has noticed a trend in homicides and shootings in Philadelphia that point to disputes on social media. Social media has played an increased role in violent confrontations between individuals, both in perpetuating and chronicling the events; and

WHEREAS, Gang-motivated shootings being fueled by social media are happening in real-time, escalating through self-made music videos and social media posts; and

WHEREAS, In social media posts, individuals disclose their affiliation with street crews, boast about crimes, and share taunts and threats; and

WHEREAS, Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw has stated that PPD has become increasingly focused on monitoring social-media activity among shooting suspects, relating to its provocation of the city's gun violence epidemic; and

WHEREAS, The danger that social media poses is not fully known, but the pervasive engagement with social media could promote gun violence at a time when other types of crime have noticeably decreased. Temple University gun policy researcher Jason Gravel has recently observed that, while a global pandemic has greatly reduced face-to-face interactions, social media serves to virtually perpetuate grudges and grievances, and can reveal the locations of potential victims; and

WHEREAS, While potentially dangerous, social media retains the benefit of being used as a tool by PPD to identify suspects. Incriminating selfies and photos posted to publicly accessible accounts have allowed police to identify suspects; and

WHEREAS, 2021 is following a trajectory that could potentially make it the deadliest year for shootings in Philadelphia in decades. In order to combat gun violence, new and out of the box approaches need to be explored. Partnerships with social media companies could be a new tool and resource in the fight against gun violence; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on all social media companies to take a proactive role in fighting the Gun Violence epidemic nationwide by monitoring and removing inciting posts off platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

