

Legislation Text

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Authorizing City Council's Joint Committees on Legislative Oversight and Education to hold public hearings on establishing a Philadelphia School Construction Commission to conduct a needs assessment and use and capacity study of Philadelphia's Public School buildings and to further make recommendations to enhance the environment within the school buildings to foster a safer and more stimulating learning environment.

WHEREAS, The School District of Philadelphia is the eighth largest school district in the country with 257 schools serving over 150,000 students; and

WHEREAS, The District's mission is to provide a high-quality education that prepares, ensures, and empowers all students to achieve their full intellectual and social potential in order to become lifelong learners and productive members of society; and

WHEREAS, According to the United States Department of Education, a number of studies have shown that many school systems, particularly those in urban and high-poverty areas, are plagued by decaying buildings that threaten the health, safety, and learning opportunities of students; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, the Department of Education states that good facilities appear to be an important precondition for student learning, provided that other conditions are present that support a strong academic program in the school. A growing body of research has linked student achievement and behavior to the physical building conditions and overcrowding; and

WHEREAS, Creating a Commission to review and make recommendations on school facility improvements would provide the School District and the City of Philadelphia with the insight necessary to prioritize and initiate improvements to better the learning environments and bolster academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, The Commission's work would complement the School District's Facilities Master Plan and aid in the establishment of a timeline for rightsizing, sale and reuse plans, renovations, systems improvements, and general repairs; and

WHEREAS, The City should consider issuing a municipal bond in an amount to be determined for the funds to complete these renovations and improvements; and

WHEREAS, As an added bonus, construction work in Philadelphia would receive a boost which would provide additional benefits to our local economy; and

WHEREAS, Improving the conditions of our public schools will directly impact student learning and academic achievement. Learning environments that are clean, safe, and support learning will put our City's youth at an advantage and possibly help to address other issues that deter and distract learning within our school facilities; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's schools play an important role in attracting and retaining residents. By enhancing

the facility conditions and improving the learning environment and academic success of our children, Philadelphia will be better positioned to attract new businesses and families to Philadelphia and students to our schools; and

WHEREAS, The Commission would consist of five members, three appointed by the Mayor and two appointed by City Council, with one having experience in architecture and engineering, one having experience in sustainable design and development, one having experience in construction, one having a master's degree in business administration with experience in the finance sector, and one who has experience as a procurement specialist; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That authority be given to the Joint Committees on Legislative Oversight and Education to hold public hearings on establishing a Philadelphia School Construction Commission to conduct a needs assessment and use and capacity study of Philadelphia's Public School buildings and to further make recommendations to enhance the environment within the school buildings to foster a safer and more stimulating learning environment.