

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Joint City Council Committees on Education and Children and Youth to hold hearings to investigate the resources and current practices available to students and their families within the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services to prevent suicides among children and youth in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention reports that suicides are the 10th leading cause of deaths in the United States, claiming 44,193 American lives annually; and

WHEREAS, The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention also reports that on average there are 121 suicides per day and for every suicide there are 25 individuals that attempt to commit suicide; and

WHEREAS, The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) reported that suicides among children and adolescents ages 10 to 14 have increased dramatically, surpassing homicides and motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of the death among children and adolescents ages 10 to 14 in FY14. Overall, the CDC reports that suicide is the third leading cause of death among persons aged 10-14 and the second among persons aged 15-34 years; and

WHEREAS, In 2015, the CDC reported that 17.0% of students seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous 12 months (22.4% of females and 11.6% of males); 13.6% of students made a plan about how they would attempt suicide in the previous 12 months (16.9% of females and 10.3% of males); 8.0% of students attempted suicide one or more times in the previous 12 months (10.6% of females and 5.4% of males); and 2.7% of students made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or an overdose that required medical attention (3.6% of females and 1.8% of males); and

WHEREAS, In 2015, the CDC also reported that the prevalence of having seriously considered attempting suicide among Hispanic students in grades 9-12 stood at 18.9%. Additionally, Hispanic students in grades 9-12 that made a suicide attempt that resulted in an injury, poisoning, or overdose that required medical attention (4.1%) was consistently higher than white and black students; and

WHEREAS, There is no single cause for suicides. The majority of individuals who die by suicide have a mental disorder or are suffering from depression at the time of their death. Depression is often undiagnosed or untreated. Conditions like depression, anxiety and substance problems, especially when unaddressed, increase risk for suicide; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, Times Magazine reported that most children with mental illness who died by suicide had attention-deficit disorder, not depression. About 60% of children ages 5-11 had ADD or ADHD, only 33% had depression; and 66% of children ages 12-14 had depression, and 29% had ADD or ADHD; and

WHEREAS, The stigma associated with mental illness works against suicide prevention by keeping persons at risk of completing suicide from seeking lifesaving help. The stigma associated with suicide deaths seriously inhibits surviving family members from regaining meaningful lives; and

WHEREAS, Suicides impose a huge unrecognized and unmeasured economic burden on the United States in terms of potential years of life lost, medical costs incurred, and work time lost by mourners. Additionally, suicides cost the United States \$51 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, Given the recent tragedies in the City of Philadelphia, it is vital that parents, school staffers, and teachers invest in training and resources that will enable school communities to build the skills and provide the services necessary to ensure the successful prevention of suicides among children and youth; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services work in partnership with The School District of Philadelphia ("The School District") to provide consultation and support to students and staff through the Department's Suicide Response Team. The School District also works with community, faith-based, and support organization to offer assistance to students and families with suicide prevention; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative to build on successful suicide prevention programs and develop more effective suicide prevention initiatives. Suicide prevention efforts should be utilized to the maximum extent possible; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby authorize the joint City Council Committees on Education and Children and Youth to hold hearings to investigate the resources and current practices available to students and their families within the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services to prevent suicides among children and youth in the City of Philadelphia.