

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Council Committees on Education and Finance to hold hearings for the purpose of taking testimony from the Board of Education of the School District of Philadelphia and Superintendent David Hornbeck on their plans for major capital renovations of the School District of Philadelphia's public school buildings and facilities including, but not limited to: a comprehensive report providing an assessment of the condition of school buildings and facilities; the need to construct new schools, additions, annexes, improved playgrounds, athletic fields, computer and science labs; to analyze the public school district's system of determining the growth of student population, the allocation of space and the need for future additional school buildings and facilities; to determine the extent of ongoing school maintenance; and to review and analyze the public school capital improvement programs of other cities and school districts; and to discuss the costs of a fully funded capital improvement program and analyze capital funding options, including, but not limited to, newly state authorized capital facilities tax revenues, combined support from the City and School District capital budgets, current state government programs, and proposed federal government programs for the purpose of ensuring that the City of Philadelphia's public school buildings and facilities are "world class" edifices of education.

WHEREAS, The City's public school buildings and facilities are in critical need of repair as dilapidated, aging school buildings exhibit obvious signs of serious neglect and pose a serious threat to public safety; and

WHEREAS, Many of the City's public schools suffer from severe overcrowding which negatively impacts a child's learning environment; and

WHEREAS, It is important to assess and determine the condition of all existing City public school facilities to correctly determine the extent that each requires capital investment to improve, renovate, or repair existing facilities and which require additions or annexes; and

WHEREAS, In order to bring the entire public school system up to an acceptable level of academic performance, the City must address the poor condition of many of the City's school facilities; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, Perks Reutter Associates issued a report which set forth that \$765 million in capital and maintenance expenditures were needed in order for the City's public schools to be raised to a minimum standard; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that the School District of Philadelphia requires approximately \$300-350 million in capital funds to immediately and rapidly address the capital needs of its public schools; and

WHEREAS, A comprehensive plan, which incorporates quality control, consistency, and cost efficiency to enable each school to successfully exceed any established minimum standard, is crucial; and

WHEREAS, The City is currently considering massive investments in a financing plan to create two "world class" sports stadiums as "palaces of play" for professional athletes which are estimated to cost nearly \$800 million; and

WHEREAS, Other cities have implemented successful and comprehensive capital improvement programs for public schools, such as the City of Chicago’s \$2.0 billion Public Schools Capital Improvement Program which, for example, has constructed 10 new schools, 23 additions, 309 new roofs, initiated over 1000 renovation projects, as well as any and all other similar programs, which should be reviewed for their results; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides funding support for school construction which should be more fully examined and explored; and

WHEREAS, All issues and avenues of funding, including President Clinton’s education plan which would potentially allot \$350 million in construction bonds to Philadelphia for school renovations, require thorough review and discussion; now therefore

Resolved, by the Council of the City of Philadelphia, That the Council Committees on Education and Finance are authorized to hold hearings for the purpose of taking testimony from the Board of Education of the School District of Philadelphia and Superintendent David Hornbeck on their plans for major capital renovations of the School District of Philadelphia’s public school buildings and facilities including, but not limited to: a comprehensive report providing an assessment of the condition of school buildings and facilities; the need to construct new schools, additions, annexes, improved playgrounds, athletic fields, computer and science labs; to analyze the public school district’s system of determining the growth of student population, the allocation of space and the need for future additional school buildings and facilities; to determine the extent of ongoing school maintenance; and to review and analyze the public school capital improvement programs of other cities and school districts; and to discuss the costs of a fully funded capital improvement program and analyze capital funding options, including, but not limited to, newly state authorized capital facilities tax revenues, combined support from the City and School District capital budgets, current state government programs, and proposed federal government programs for the purpose of ensuring that the City of Philadelphia’s public school buildings and facilities are “world class” edifices of education.