

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Council of the City of Philadelphia to hold hearings on the use and occupancy of 2100 W. Girard Avenue by the City of Philadelphia and its contractors and in furtherance of such investigation, authorizing the issuance of subpoenas to compel the attendance of Parker Administration officials including the Mayor, and other such witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of the Home Rule Charter.

WHEREAS, The Parker Administration has proposed an initial \$100 million to build capacity for centers for individuals struggling with addiction to combat open-air drug markets in Kensington; and

WHEREAS, The Parker Administration plan has been scant on details, with omissions about the location of said triage facility being a particular concern for Philadelphia residents; and

WHEREAS, The Parker Administration has not provided details about proposed treatment options, operators, care providers, existing crisis resource alternatives in Kensington, or the role of law enforcement in potential involuntary removals of open-air drug addicts from Kensington to the triage facility; and

WHEREAS, On May 2, 2024 *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that the Administration was seeking to open a triage facility in Fairmount, nearly five miles from the epicenter of the Kensington drug crisis, within a matter of days without any input or consultation of the surrounding communities in Fairmount, Francisville, Sharswood and Brewerytown; and

WHEREAS, In that same article Mayoral spokesperson Joe Grace disputed the characterization of the proposed facility as a “triage center,” preferring to use the term “wellness center” before declining “to detail the difference between such facilities”; and

WHEREAS, In that same article it was noted that the “Parker administration declined to provide more details about the center, and some key stakeholders were in the dark Thursday,” including Councilmember Jeffery Young, Jr., in whose district the proposed facility resides; and

WHEREAS, On May 6, 2024 during a budget callback hearing before the Philadelphia City Council, Managing Director Adam Thiel did not provide a clear answer on if the proposed \$100 million for the triage center would be used at the triage center in Fairmount; and

WHEREAS, In that same hearing, no mention was made by Director Thiel of Fairmount or any other communities impacted by the proposed triage facility, nor was any explanation given for why the Administration chose to keep Philadelphia City Council in the dark on the proposed triage facility; and

WHEREAS, A frustrating hallmark of the Kensington drug crisis has been its effect on local schools, with Kensington schoolchildren often walking along encampments past overdose victims lying unconscious on the street and in playgrounds, syringes and feces all over the ground on their way to schools that lock down once a year due to nearby drug-related shootings; and

WHEREAS, 2100 W. Girard Avenue, formerly Philadelphia Nursing Home and now the proposed site for the Mayor's Fairmount triage facility, is located nearby the Bache-Martin School, the Gesu School, the City School, St. Joseph's Preparatory School, and is across the street from Girard College; and

WHEREAS, The Parker Administration has pursued these measures in an extremely short time frame, sacrificing prudent policymaking for expediency as reflected by the Parker Administration's unwillingness to provide consistent explanations for the actions they're taking in real time; and

WHEREAS, On May 14, nearly two weeks after *The Philadelphia Inquirer* first reported on the Mayor's proposed Fairmount triage center, Managing Director Adam Thiel appeared before the Fairmount community unwilling to offer clear answers about the types of medical care the proposed "wellness center" would provide, whether or not drug rehabilitation would be ruled out as a service provision at the site, and where other proposed triage facilities would be located; and

WHEREAS, On May 9, Councilmember Jeffery Young, Jr. introduced a bill prohibiting the Commissioner of Public Property, or any other official of the City of Philadelphia, from entering into, executing, or authorizing a lease renewal or new agreement between the City and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania at the property located at 2100 W. Girard Avenue; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned bill was heard before the Committee on Public Property on May 22, where it was reported out of committee with a favorable recommendation and a suspension of the rules to permit its first reading at the next session of Council; and

WHEREAS, The Parker Administration declined to provide in-person testimony during the hearing even as residents of the Fairmount community took time out of their day to make their voices heard about the proposed triage center in City Hall, preferring to submit written testimony on the bill briefly reiterating the Mayor's vision with no other details; and

WHEREAS, These actions track with a pattern of secrecy that has soiled trust in the Parker Administration from residents of the Fairmount community and across Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Parker Administration officials have an obligation of transparency to the public when acting on matters that affect their daily lives, and should be willing to make themselves available before a representative body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it is hereby authorized to hold hearings on the use and occupancy of 2100 W. Girard Avenue by the City of Philadelphia and its contractors and in furtherance of such investigation, authorizing the issuance of subpoenas to compel the attendance of Parker Administration officials including the Mayor, and other such witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of the Home Rule Charter.