

Legislation Text

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Calling for hearings to examine the costs associated with the Philadelphia Prison System by discussing alternatives to current policies, which currently contribute to high prison populations. Explore best practices which will lead to lower prison costs while maintaining public safety.

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia spends seven cents out of every tax dollar on holding people in its jail system, which are operating over design capacity; and

WHEREAS, The increased spending for the Philadelphia Prison System is associated with the rising number of inmates, but is not a correlation of crime rates. As the prison population increases, crime rate and arrests are decreasing; and

WHEREAS, Sixty percent of the prison population is not incarcerated for violent crimes; and

WHEREAS, Higher bail and more people being ordered to post it have contributed to the increase in the jail population; and

WHEREAS, Approximately thirty percent of the prison population is comprised of seriously mental ill inmates forty-two percent have reported having abused drugs and alcohol. These offenders would be better served in a specialized program, not jail; and

WHEREAS, The number of inmates jailed for violating the terms of their probation and parole has increased, thereby returning them to jail without services to address their issues and at a greater cost to the City; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Prison System has had a reduction in population over the past year and to continue with this success, should consider streamlining the court process for violators, making changes in the sanctions for probation and parole violations, and expanding the development of new alternative-to-incarceration programs, such as day reporting programs; and

WHEREAS, Reducing the reliance on incarceration does not diminish public safety as demonstrated in New Jersey, New York, Michigan and Kansas. In an effort to reduce the prison populations in these states, each have implemented program and policies which are successful and have had no negative impact on public safety; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the City Council Committee on Public Safety will hold hearings to explore the implementation of alternative-to-incarceration programs in the City of Philadelphia and impact of these programs on public safety.