

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Public Health and Human Services to conduct hearings concerning the rapidly evolving and worsening crisis of overdose deaths and their impact on neighborhoods, particularly in Black communities across Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The overdose death crisis is evolving and getting worse across the City of Philadelphia. The latest data shows at least 1,413 people in Philadelphia died from opioid overdose deaths in 2022. Overdose deaths by Black Philadelphians rose by 87% since 2018, the fastest-increasing rate of growth in any group; and

WHEREAS, Nationwide, Black men suffered four times more overdose deaths in 2023 relative to 2015. A disproportionate amount of those deaths are occurring in Black men aged 30-40, and those numbers are projected to get even worse through 2025. Black and Brown communities now experience four to six times more overdose deaths relative to white communities; and

WHEREAS, The reason for this disproportionate change in overdose deaths in Black communities is due to racial inequalities. Research shows that Black people have a harder time getting into treatment programs than White people do, and are less likely to be prescribed the best medications for substance use therapy; and

WHEREAS, A Black American with an opioid use disorder is likely to receive treatment five years later than a white person according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health. Since Treatments are extraordinarily useful in terms of preventing overdose death and starting recovery, five years can make the difference between being alive or not; and

WHEREAS, Vastly disproportionate rates of arrest, state-instigated family separation, and incarceration rates mean that Black people with substance use problems are afraid of being caught up in a punitive criminal justice system. Black Americans are less likely to have insurance that allows people to seek help on their own. In addition, racial discrimination in the health-care system makes positive outcomes less likely; and

WHEREAS, With overdose death rates nearly doubling in Black populations across Philadelphia over the past half-decade, there is growing urgency to implement citywide public health interventions that are evidence-based and save lives; and

WHEREAS, The crisis is worsening in communities across Philadelphia. The latest analysis shows significant increases in overdose deaths in North, South and West Philadelphia. Hardest hit zip codes include 19134, 19140, 19124, 19139, 19133, 19132, 19144, 19141, and 19120 as the hardest hit, with 19107, 19111, 19121, 19125, 19131, 19135, 19136, 19143, 19145, 19146, 19148, and 19149, with more likely to emerge as 2023 data is evaluated; and

WHEREAS, The increased rate of overdose deaths amongst Black Philadelphians has had a profound impact on Black communities, straining neighborhoods, families, and support networks in communities that already suffer from disinvestment and racism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the Committee on Public Health and Human Services to conduct hearings concerning the rapidly evolving and worsening crisis of overdose deaths and their impact on neighborhoods, particularly in Black communities across Philadelphia.