

## Legislation Text

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Authorizing Philadelphia to officially join the National Stepping Up Initiative, to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.

WHEREAS, Jurisdictions across the country provide treatment services to the estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses booked into jail each year; and

WHEREAS, Prevalence rates of serious mental illnesses in jails nationwide are three to six times higher than for the general public; and

WHEREAS, Almost three-quarters of adults with mental illnesses in jails in the United States have co-occurring substance use disorders; and

WHEREAS, Adults with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and, upon release, are at a higher risk of recidivism than people without these disorders; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 16% of the individuals in Philadelphia's jails on a given day have a serious mental illness; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 38% of all individuals in Philadelphia's jails on a given day are medicated for mental health illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Without the appropriate treatment and services, people with mental illnesses continue to cycle through the criminal justice system, resulting in avoidable tragic outcomes for these individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia takes pride in its responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare, and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways; and

WHEREAS, Through Stepping Up, the National Association of Counties, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation are encouraging public, private, and nonprofit partners to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through the Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Commission of Crime and Delinquency, has launched a statewide Stepping Up initiative to increase the number of Pennsylvania counties participating in Stepping Up, bolster the use of accurate data, and help counties enhance diversion options and reentry assistance; and

WHEREAS, Under the direction of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board, Philadelphia is engaged in a major criminal justice reform effort through the MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge to safely reduce the size of the local jail population by 34% in three years and reduce the rate of racial, ethnic, and economic disparities in the criminal justice system, and one of the major strategies of Philadelphia's reform effort

involves safely reducing the number of individuals with mental illness in our jails; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes Philadelphia to sign on to the Call to Action to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our local jails, commit to sharing lessons learned with other counties in Pennsylvania and across the country to support the national Stepping Up initiative, and encourage all City officials, employees, and residents to participate in Stepping Up. To decrease the number of mentally ill residents in Philadelphia jails we resolve to:

- Convene or draw on a diverse team of leaders and decision makers from multiple agencies committed to safely reducing the number of people with mental illnesses in jails;
- Collect and review prevalence data, assess the need to better identify adults entering jails with mental illnesses, and use that baseline information to guide decision making at system, program, and case levels;
- Examine county treatment and service capacities to determine which programs and services are sufficiently available for people with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders;
- Identify state and local policy and funding barriers to minimizing mentally ill residents contact with the justice system and providing treatment and supports for these residents in the community;
- Develop a plan with measurable outcomes that draws on the jail assessment and prevalence data and the examination of available treatment and service capacity information, while considering identified barriers;
- Implement research-based approaches that advance the plan; and
- Create a process to track progress using data and information systems, and to report on successes and challenges.