



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee of the Whole to hold hearings regarding the Plain View Project database on objectionable social media posts of law enforcement officers.

WHEREAS, The Plain View Project ("PVP") has maintained a database since 2017 of offensive social media posts numbering into the thousands by current or former members of law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, PVP's findings were detailed in an investigative feature published jointly by Injustice Watch and BuzzFeed News on the first of this month; and

WHEREAS, The database covers incidents PVP matched between published employee rosters and public posts or comments made on Facebook including racist memes, conspiracy theories, and expressions of violence, such as expressing the desire to use a taser or deadly force on suspects; and

WHEREAS, These posts have been - and are - condemned by members of this City Council, Mayor James Kenney, the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, and Police Commissioner Richard Ross, who has announced an ongoing investigation into the alleged posts as potential violations of policy or law; and

WHEREAS, PVP's founder, Emily Baker-White, was prompted by alarming Facebook posts by police during a fellowship at the Federal Community Defender Office in Philadelphia that she found working on a police brutality case, namely several public Facebook pages linked to officers involved in the case that contained offensive memes and messages; and

WHEREAS, That experience inspired the database, which contains posts made by 3,500 current or former law enforcement officers that seemed to endorse violence by officers or members of the public, posts that appeared to show bias against minority groups, and dehumanizing language that referred to protesters or people of color as "animals" or "savages"; and

WHEREAS, Law enforcement officers are sworn to protect and defend, not specific races or subcategories of people whom they choose - nor to pass judgment on other members of our communities - but the entire City of Philadelphia, all of our citizens and residents; and

WHEREAS, Communities have the right to rely on our police officers to impartially and consistently enforce our laws, without fear of retribution, retaliation, hostility, disregard, or other animus; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby authorize the Committee of the Whole hold hearing regarding the Plain View Project database on objectionable social media posts of law enforcement officers.