City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Title:	Authorizing the Committee on Children and Youth to hold public hearings examining the prevalence of child hunger in Philadelphia and evaluating the efficacy of existing programs addressing child hunger.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Reynolds Brown, Councilmember Blackwell, Councilmember Green, Councilmember Parker, Councilmember Greenlee, Councilmember Domb, Councilmember Taubenberger, Councilmember Bass, Councilmember Oh, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Gym				
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
3/5/2019	0	Committee on Children and Youth			
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3/5/2019	0	Committee on Children and Youth			
9/20/2018	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar	Pass	
9/20/2018	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED		

Authorizing the Committee on Children and Youth to hold public hearings examining the prevalence of child hunger in Philadelphia and evaluating the efficacy of existing programs addressing child hunger.

WHEREAS, The USDA defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to the level of food necessary to live a healthy and active life. According to the Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council, in 2016, 21.7 percent of all children living in Philadelphia faced food insecurity. This amounts to 75,140 children dealing with food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, The impacts of child hunger are significant, and include poor health, risk for developmental delays, emotional distress, psychosocial and behavioral problems, and lower academic performance. More specifically, hungry children do more poorly in school and are 50 percent more likely to repeat a grade, twice as likely to require special education, 60 percent more likely to miss school, and twice as likely to be suspended; and

WHEREAS, The health and special education related costs of food insecurity for households with young children in the U.S. were estimated to total more than $1.2 billion in 2015. The high rate of food insecurity drains resources from families, communities, and the larger U.S. economy; and

WHEREAS, While charitable organizations play a key role in securing adequate food for families, Federal programs make up the bulk of nutritional assistance. A number of these operate in the City with the express goal of lessening the impact of food insecurity, including school lunch and breakfast programs, Summer Meals, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC), and the

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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and

WHEREAS, These Federal programs nevertheless require significant participation from City and nongovernmental agencies. For example, while funding for the Summer Meals programs comes from the Federal government, sponsors from within the City actually arrange for meals and organize sites. Five Philadelphia area sponsors support 95 percent of sites in the City: the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, the Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia, Congregation Beth Solomon, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority. WIC, a special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children, is administered by N.O.R.T.H., Inc., which operates as the largest single county WIC non-profit in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Independent organizations like Philabundance and the Share Food Program also work to meet the needs of children facing food insecurity. Philabundance estimates that one third of the people it serves are children, totaling 30,000 children receiving food assistance each week. Various initiatives, including LunchBox, BackPack, MobilePantry, school produce markets, and other programs, have provided over 250,000 pounds of food to children; and

WHEREAS, While these organizations do great work, the problem of food insecurity persists. Research from Children's HealthWatch, which conducts surveys at St. Christopher's Hospital, indicates that child hunger in Philadelphia has actually increased in recent years. The total rate of child food insecurity among those surveyed rose from 4.6 percent in 2006 to an astonishing 11.8 percent in 2016. Even among families with a caregiver working at least 20 hours per week, child food insecurity more than tripled over the same timeframe, rising from 3.1 percent to 9.7 percent; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's high poverty rate contributes to food insecurity. With 26 percent of its residents experiencing poverty, Philadelphia is the poorest of America's ten largest cities. Philadelphia has a child poverty rate of 32 percent; and

WHEREAS, Another obstacle to eliminating child hunger is the underutilization of existing nutritional assistance resources. For example, less than 40 percent of eligible Philadelphia children participate in the Summer Meals program: in July of this year, approximately 52,000 summer lunches were served per day compared to the 131,000 school lunches served on an average October day. In fact, in recent years, the reach of Summer Meals has actually declined. While 2015 saw 1,453 sites serve over 4 million meals in Philadelphia, 2017 saw 1,157 sites serve just under 3 million. This trend is of particular concern given the rise in child food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, Forces within the Federal government pose threats to these programs. In June, the House of Representatives narrowly passed a farm bill that would, among other things, impose strict work requirements on SNAP beneficiaries, as well as reformulate how incomes and expenses are calculated. The Congressional Budget Office reports that 1.2 million people could be stripped of aid under the work requirements alone. President Trump has voiced his support of the stricter requirements. In the absence of a concerted national effort, alternative approaches to ending child hunger must be studied; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Committee on Children and Youth to hold public hearings examining the prevalence of child hunger in Philadelphia and evaluating the efficacy of existing programs addressing child hunger.

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