City of Philadelphia

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	210089	**Version:** 0	**Name:**
Type:	Resolution	**Status:**	IN COMMITTEE
File created:	2/4/2021	**In control:**	Committee on Public Safety
On agenda:		**Final action:**	2/4/2021

Title:	Authorizing the City Council Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings examining the feasibility of a multi-state reciprocity program for witness relocation using United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Public Housing Agency (PHA) properties.
Sponsors:	Councilmember Jones, Councilmember Bass, Councilmember Gym, Councilmember Squilla, Councilmember Parker, Councilmember Green, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Gauthier, Councilmember Brooks, Councilmember Henon, Councilmember Thomas
Indexes:	
Code sections:	
Attachments:	1. Signature21008900

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
2/4/2021	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar		
2/4/2021	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED & REFERRED		

Authorizing the City Council Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings examining the feasibility of a multi-state reciprocity program for witness relocation using United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Public Housing Agency (PHA) properties.

WHEREAS, The Federal Witness Relocation Program is designed to provide protection to persons who are cooperating with law enforcement as witnesses to homicide and other felonious violent crimes. The program, administered by HUD, relocates witnesses and their families to available public housing units with the assistance of housing vouchers; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office (DAO) acts as liaison between PHA and the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General (OAG). PHA then relocates the witness upon verification of threats and intimidation, among other standards. A witness who is relocated is removed from the established "danger area" to a "safe area," ideally without loss of income or a lower standard of living. DAO creates a plan for relocation, including transport, school changes, and transfer of public assistance; and

WHEREAS, The DAO and Philadelphia Housing Authority already have a memorandum of understanding that the Philadelphia Housing Authority provide up to twenty-five (25) public housing opportunities to persons who witness homicides or other felonious violent crimes, and cooperate with the DAO in such criminal cases; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania OAG administers a $1.2 million witness relocation program funded by the Pennsylvania state budget. The Philadelphia DAO receives funding from the state program; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia Housing Authority is the nation's fourth largest housing authority, owning and operating 13,400 public housing units. Comparable cities, such as Chicago and Baltimore, have more than

50,000 units and 7,500 units, respectively. There are approximately 1.2 million public housing units nationwide; and

WHEREAS, The 2020 homicide rate in Philadelphia was 499, the highest since 500 homicides in 1990. The homicide clearance rate in 2020 was 42.3 percent, down from 52.4 percent in 2019. Both rates are lower than the national average of 61.4 percent, according to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting; and

WHEREAS, Intrastate and interstate witness relocation services are already implemented on a limited basis. However, DAO has cited a need for significant expansion of witness relocation services, based on daily requests. Council should explore the feasibility of having a wider array of options to encourage witness participation in trials and ensure the protection of those witnesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the City Council Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings examining the feasibility of a multi-state reciprocity program for witness relocation using United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Public Housing Agency (PHA) properties.