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Title: Recognizing the urgent need for comprehensive mental health services for Philadelphia's youth.

Sponsors: Councilmember Ahmad, Councilmember Phillips, Councilmember Gilmore Richardson, Councilmember Brooks, Councilmember Harrity, Councilmember O'Rourke, Councilmember Driscoll, Councilmember Squilla

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12/5/2024	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar		
12/5/2024	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED		

Recognizing the urgent need for comprehensive mental health services for Philadelphia's youth.

WHEREAS, mental health is a critical public health issue that impacts the academic performance, physical health, and overall well-being of Philadelphia’s youth, and it is complicated by systemic inequities and adverse socioeconomic conditions; and

WHEREAS, According to the 2023 Philadelphia Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 40% of high school students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, with higher rates among female students (53%) and LGBTQ+ students. Additionally, 18% of students seriously considered attempting suicide, with female and LGBTQ+ students again reporting higher rates; and

WHEREAS, The fallout of the pandemic has intensified the mental health crisis among young people, with the CDC reporting that nearly 45% of teens nationwide felt persistently sad or hopeless during the pandemic, a trend mirrored in Philadelphia’s youth population; and

WHEREAS, Data from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia indicates a significant increase in mental health-related emergency room visits among children, with visits for depression, anxiety, and self-harm nearly doubling between 2020 and 2023; and

WHEREAS, Communities of color in Philadelphia face disproportionate barriers to accessing mental health care, with Black and Hispanic youth experiencing higher rates of unmet mental health needs compared to their white peers, due to factors such as stigma, lack of insurance, and limited access to care; and

WHEREAS, In light of recent state legislation banning Kooth Mental Health services, which previously served over 18,000 Philadelphia students across 139 schools, there is an urgent need to address the gap in accessible mental health resources for children and adolescents; and

WHEREAS, Community organizations such as the Philadelphia Mental Health Center, Child Guidance Resource Centers, and the Children’s Crisis Treatment Center provide essential services, including crisis intervention, outpatient therapy, and school-based mental health programs, yet they often face resource constraints that limit their reach; and

WHEREAS, Addressing the youth mental health crisis through education, awareness, and comprehensive care will foster resilience, improve academic outcomes, and enhance the quality of life for children and families in Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we recognize the urgent need for expanded and equitable mental health services for the children of Philadelphia. We emphasize the importance of continued efforts to meet the growing demand for youth mental health support.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Council urges all stakeholders, including City leaders, healthcare providers, educators, and community partners, to prioritize mental health care as a fundamental component of public health and invest in solutions that ensure all children in Philadelphia have access to the care they need.