Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	Authorizing the Committee on Legislative Oversight to hold a hearing concerning the deaths of individuals incarcerated in Philadelphia correctional facilities in recent weeks, including Amanda Cahill, Michael McKinnis, and Joseph Gabor, and evaluating the changes that are needed to prevent further tragedies.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Brooks, Councilmember Gauthier, Councilmember O'Rourke				
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12/19/2024	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar		
12/19/2024	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED	Pass	

Authorizing the Committee on Legislative Oversight to hold a hearing concerning the deaths of individuals incarcerated in Philadelphia correctional facilities in recent weeks, including Amanda Cahill, Michael McKinnis, and Joseph Gabor, and evaluating the changes that are needed to prevent further tragedies.

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia has reduced spending on harm reduction strategies and pivoted toward an incarceration-based response to substance use despite decades of public health evidence demonstrating the increased mortality resulting from carceral responses to substance use; and

WHEREAS, Amanda Cahill died while incarcerated in a Philadelphia jail on September 7 in an intake unit designed to assess and screen for medical needs. She was arrested on September 4 in Kensington, a few days prior, one of 34 people swept up by law enforcement and incarcerated as she did not have a home and was addicted to opioids. She leaves behind a family including two young children; and

WHEREAS, A week after Amanda died while in custody, Michael McKinnis died in custody under similar circumstances - he was still in an intake unit for medical screening when he died while incarcerated on September 14. And similarly to Amanda's case, Michael was found unresponsive in the morning, with evidence showing that no officers were assigned to Michael's unit - nobody could hear his cries for help. He leaves behind a family including a 21 year old son; and

WHEREAS, In both instances, other people who are incarcerated repeatedly called for help for Amanda and Michael, and yet no help was received; and

WHEREAS, Last week, Joseph Gabor passed away in jail after being arrested in Kensington. He was arraigned at 2:30 pm on Thursday, and died in his holding cell seven hours later near drug paraphernalia - even though he was supposed to have been transferred by 5:00 pm, even though a corrections officer was supposed to check on him every 15 minutes, and even though there are supposed to be preventative measures including medical staff

on-site. He was held due to outstanding warrants for misdemeanors in nearby counties - misdemeanors that proved to be a death sentence; and

WHEREAS, As arrests of low-level offenders have markedly increased, a large number of medically fragile individuals have been forced into Philadelphia's severely understaffed prison system. This system has been tragically shown to be unable to provide needed medical care; and

WHEREAS, The drug supply in Philadelphia is growing increasingly toxic. Fentanyl is mixed with xylazine and now medetomidine, animal tranquilizers aimed at replicating the effects of heroin. These new drugs come with painful side effects including creating painful open wounds on the body that require serious medical treatment. These drugs do not have widely embraced withdrawal protocols, which has led to increased risk of fatality during withdrawal; and

WHEREAS, Experts, advocates, and City Councilmembers have long warned that a return to the failed approach of mass incarceration and forced treatment, most prominently attempted during the "war on drugs," does not work and has tragic consequences for Philadelphians, communities, and families; and

WHEREAS, In the wake of the deaths of Amanda Cahill, Michael McKinnis, and Joseph Gabor, City Council must examine what went wrong and what our City must do to ensure this never happens again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the Committee on Legislative Oversight to hold a hearing concerning the deaths of individuals incarcerated in Philadelphia correctional facilities in recent weeks, including Amanda Cahill, Michael McKinnis, and Joseph Gabor, and evaluating the changes that are needed to prevent further tragedies.

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