



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Joint Committees on Public Health and Human Services and Legislative Oversight to hold public hearings on adoption and foster care policies and programs in the City of Philadelphia, and to explore ways to improve the process by decreasing wait times, implementing strategies to reduce the number of children that age out of the system, and address concerns that discourage people from considering adoption.

WHEREAS, In Pennsylvania, there are approximately 20,000 children in foster care with an average stay of 25.4 months; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, approximately 3,000 children come into out-of-home care each year. Of these children, 36 percent are placed in foster homes with non-relatives, 9.5 percent live in group homes, approximately 20 percent live in institutions, and 25 percent are placed with relatives; and

WHEREAS, Children in the child welfare system face many obstacles, such as a lack of stability, adult advocacy, cultural sensitivity, and deficient life skills instructions, all of which can lead to deleterious outcomes in both childhood and adulthood; and

WHEREAS, Temporary placement can be the right option while the family and social workers work together to build upon a family's existing strengths, address concerns before the child is reunited with the family; however, frequently a child can not be reunited and in those cases, adoption can be an appropriate option to provide permanency, support, and care for the child; and

WHEREAS, Every year in Pennsylvania, 1,000 children "age out" of the system, meaning that they turn 18 years old and are therefore ineligible for adoption or foster care. Children at this point often struggle to find the appropriate care, services, and support for their unique needs including housing, financial literacy, employment, and educational training opportunities; and

WHEREAS, To protect children from aging out of the system, a child's situation should be honestly evaluated so that they can have the best chance for permanency as quickly as possible; and

WHEREAS, Juvenile delinquency, violence, and victimization are issues that must be confronted by the child welfare system, since children are often placed in the system because of past instances of abuse or neglect. The average juvenile delinquency rate for children previously abused or neglected is almost 50 percent higher than for children with no history of abuse or neglect - demonstrating a strong correlation between the two; and

WHEREAS, Families that adopt a child are eligible for a tax credit authorized through the Hope for Children Act (Public Law 107-16), which took effect on January 1, 2001 and provides an adoption tax credit of \$10,000 and a tax exclusion of up to \$10,000 for employer-provided adoption benefits; families that adopt from the foster care system are also eligible for a subsidy; and

WHEREAS, An adoption of a child from foster care costs state and federal government about \$115,000, but saves the government approximately \$258,000 in child welfare and human services costs, netting a savings of about \$143,000. For the 50,000 children adopted each year from foster care nationally, the savings would be

approximately \$1 billion in government expenditures; and

WHEREAS, Outreach and public awareness is imperative to generating interest in providing foster care and adopting a child; and it has been demonstrated that once families are aware that children wait to be adopted, they come forth to adopt them.

WHEREAS, The National Adoption Center has helped create adoptive families for more than 22,000 children since its inception in 1973 and is at the forefront in expanding the pool of potential permanent families. It has recently launched the first program in the Delaware Valley to encourage members of the LGBT community to consider adoption and connect them with welcoming adoption agencies; and

WHEREAS, Every child has the right to a loving, nurturing, and permanent family, and people from a variety of life experiences offer strengths for these children and can be successful parents; and

WHEREAS, Both foster and adoptive families are invaluable community resources and crucial to the healthy development of the most vulnerable children in our City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That authority be given to the Joint Committees on Public Health and Human Services and Legislative Oversight to hold public hearings on adoption and foster care policies and programs in the City of Philadelphia, and to explore ways to improve the process by decreasing wait times, implementing strategies to reduce the number of children that age out of the system, and address concerns that discourage people from looking to care for children and teens through adoption.