



Legislation Text

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Authorizing Council's Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings regarding the implementation of a focused deterrence program citywide in Philadelphia to reduce gun violence, the creation of an Office of Violence Reduction and the appointment of an executive director and appropriate staff to such an office.

WHEREAS, In 2012, Philadelphia had 334 homicides and 1,279 shootings. This year in Philadelphia there have been over 4,300 violent crimes. This number includes 76 homicides, 307 rapes and 760 gun robberies; and

WHEREAS, Violent crime is concentrated in a limited number of areas, also known as "hotspots" and is committed by a small percent of the criminal population, prolific violent offenders; and

WHEREAS, Many of these offenders are members of loosely associated groups or gangs. A large percentage of the shootings in Philadelphia are committed by group members with a variety of motives including: arguments, disrespect and the drug trade; and

WHEREAS, Cities across the United States have achieved significant reductions in violent crime and improvements in the quality of life for neighborhoods plagued by violent crime by pursuing violence reduction strategies focused on violent groups, their individual members and the hotspots where they operate; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Police Department, the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office and other law enforcement and city partners are currently pursuing a violence reduction strategy based on these same principles known as focused deterrence; and

WHEREAS, Focused Deterrence is not a program or an initiative, it is a strategy. This strategy seeks to reduce violence quickly and dramatically by influencing the behavior of the small number of street groups; and

WHEREAS, Focused Deterrence was developed by David Kennedy, PhD of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. This approach is a multi-agency collaboration with the community. Standing together, community members, social service providers and law enforcement agencies deliver a message in person at a meeting named a "call in." The message to these violent groups is that the violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated anymore; and

WHEREAS, In cities where focused deterrence has been successful, there has been a 40%-60% decline in gun violence. More than 20 years of field experience and a substantial body of research demonstrates that this strategy: reduces serious violence, shuts down overt drug markets, reduces arrests and imprisonment and strengthens disadvantaged communities; and

WHEREAS, Focused Deterrence is currently being implemented in South Philadelphia as a "pilot program;" and

WHEREAS, Additional resources are needed for this strategy to be implemented city wide and sustained in order to achieve significant reductions in gun violence and improve the quality of life for neighborhoods

plagued by violent crime; and

WHEREAS, The City has made a minimal investment towards the social services component of focused deterrence, in order to continue the implementation of the focus deterrence strategy and to actually see a sustained reduction in violent crime, there must be a more significant commitment, not only from law enforcement and social service providers, but from the City; and

WHEREAS, The City needs to invest in the sustainability of focused deterrence and create a permanent structure to organize and administer the strategy. This would include the creation of an Office of Violence Reduction (OVR), an appointment of an executive director and appropriate staff to run and manage the Office of Violence Reduction; and

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Public Safety is hereby authorized to hold public hearings regarding the implementation of a focused deterrence program city wide in Philadelphia to reduce violence in the city, the creation of an Office of Violence Reduction (OVR) and the appointment of an executive director and staff.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That in furtherance of such investigation, the Committee is hereby authorized to issue subpoenas as may be necessary or appropriate to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter.