

Legislation Text

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Proclaiming and designating the month of January 2014, as “Poverty in America Awareness Month” in Philadelphia and encouraging citizens to learn about the City’s efforts to strategically combat pervasive poverty by focusing efforts and resources on the five comprehensive goals of the City’s Shared Prosperity Plan.

WHEREAS, Today, 49 million Americans live in poverty including approximately 16 million children (which is nearly 22% of all American children) live below the poverty line. At the same time, 28% of Philadelphians live in poverty compared to 13.1% statewide; and

WHEREAS, This is the sixth consecutive year that the poverty rate in America has risen. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in December 2012, the official U.S. poverty rate in 2012 was 15.9%, up from 14.3% in 2009. Between 2007-2012, the number of poor Americans grew by more than ten million; and

WHEREAS, The number of families in America living on less than \$2 per person per day is now 1.46 million which is twice as high as it was 15 years ago, according to a study by the University of Michigan and Harvard University. This means that 2.8 million children are living on less than \$2 a day in America; and

WHEREAS, Children under five make up to the highest population living in poverty in America, nearly one in every four children under five, or 25%, live below the poverty line. In Philadelphia 39% of all children are poor; and

WHEREAS, Federal and State government officials are considering practical solutions to reducing poverty, such as raising the minimum wage (currently \$7.25) and linking the minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index so that wages will automatically rise with inflation. In his recent State of the Union Address, President Obama argued that there is a nationwide need to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 in order to keep pace with the rising costs of living; and

WHEREAS, Some states are seeking innovative ways to reduce poverty such as issuing Social Impact Bonds to reduce poverty among targeted groups. For example, Social Impact Bonds in New York fund vocational training for ex-offenders and in Massachusetts they are used to assist young people who are aging out of the juvenile justice system in an attempt to prevent future incarcerations and lower the rate of recidivism; and

WHEREAS, Unemployment in Pennsylvania is 7%; however in Philadelphia the rate of unemployment is 11%. Philadelphia, unlike other counties, is home to a large ex-offender population who face numerous difficult barriers to employment; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia’s poverty rate is the highest among the nation’s 10 largest cities. Over 430,000 Philadelphians live below the federal poverty line and nearly 200,000 are living at “deep poverty” levels, which is defined as income that is less than half the federal poverty limit; and

WHEREAS, The average one bedroom apartment in Philadelphia rents for \$1,000 a month. A worker earning minimum wage must work more than 137 hours a month just to pay rent in Philadelphia, not including other

necessities such groceries, health insurance, utilities and childcare; and

WHEREAS, The average income in Philadelphia is \$27,392 and the median household income at \$34,207 ranks 24th out of the 25 largest cities; and

WHEREAS, In July 2013, the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity released its Shared Prosperity Plan to combat the prevalent problem of poverty in Philadelphia through a comprehensive five-point strategy as follows: (1) by focusing job creation and workforce development efforts on citizens with the greatest barriers to employment (2) by expanding access to public benefits and essential services (3) by increasing education opportunities for year-round learning for children (4) by increasing housing security and affordability and (5) by strengthening economic security and asset building; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Month of January 2014, shall be declared "Poverty in America Awareness Month" in Philadelphia and citizens are encouraged to learn about the City's efforts to strategically combat pervasive poverty by focusing efforts and resources on the comprehensive goals of the City's Shared Prosperity Plan.