

Legislation Text

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Authorizing City Council's Committee on Education to hold hearings to examine the potential benefits of establishing a program, entitled "School-Based Family Services", through which the Philadelphia School District's schools would function as neighborhood-based community hubs for the delivery of key social services to children and their families.

WHEREAS, Children come first and represent the future of our community; and

WHEREAS, There is a collective obligation among all who live and work in Philadelphia, and particularly among those who work in the public sector, to nurture and protect our children, and to provide them with the opportunities and supports they need to thrive, to dream, and to achieve their highest potential; and

WHEREAS, The economic, social, and environmental challenges facing many children and their families are complex and daunting, requiring that they interact frequently with numerous agencies to obtain supportive services. For example, according to a report prepared by PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, 17 percent of Philadelphia School District students have been involved with the Department of Human Services (DHS) or the juvenile justice system, with that percentage reaching 20 percent by high school, or one out of every five students; and

WHEREAS, Essential programs supporting these children are increasingly beyond the capacity of the financially distressed School District itself to provide, and the City must develop means and ways to step in; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the School District of Philadelphia, numerous agencies are involved in assisting children, including, for example, DHS, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Parks & Recreation, the Philadelphia Housing Authority, the Office of Housing and Community Development, the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, the Office of Supportive Housing, and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services; and

WHEREAS, To maximize the benefit of available services while minimizing costs, services should be provided in a coordinated, comprehensive manner, and ideally at one nearby location, so that children and their parents, grandparents, or guardians do not have to expend precious time and resources navigating from one agency to another, and instead have easy access to the services they need close to where they live; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia School District's schools offer the potential to serve as one-stop locations, where children and their families could receive those services intended to increase the likelihood that those children will thrive both in school and in their homes; and

WHEREAS, The City and School District could jointly define a new agency, headed by key representatives from each entity that currently provides services to children and their families. Such an agency would (1) plan, (2) implement, (3) evaluate and (4) refine a new School-Based Family Services Program. Thus, the agency's responsibilities would include identifying services that could most effectively be provided in a school and the

procedures for providing those services; assigning personnel from participating agencies to staff in-school, neighborhood-based programs; working out the logistics required to fully incorporate social support services into the school setting; informing families of the services available to them; developing effective working relationships among teachers, principals and those professionals being brought into the schools; and evaluating the results of these new efforts while recommending new, innovative approaches; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That City Council's Committee on Education is authorized to hold hearings to examine the potential benefits of establishing a program, entitled "School-Based Family Services", through which the Philadelphia School District's schools would function as neighborhood-based community hubs for the delivery of key social services to children and their families.