



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Children and Youth and the Committee on Education to conduct hearings concerning the impact of five years of reduced state funding on safety, essential services and academic outcomes in Philadelphia schools, and on vulnerable student populations.

WHEREAS, In 2007 the state of Pennsylvania determined that public schools across the state needed an additional four billion dollars in order to meet basic goals of adequacy and equity, and to allow students the opportunity to meet state academic standards; and

WHEREAS, In 2011 the state passed a budget that included unprecedented steep cuts to school funding for Philadelphia, creating a \$300 million shortfall in the budget for the School District of Philadelphia that resulted in expensive borrowing as well as devastating reductions in staffing and services; and

WHEREAS, These state cuts persisted in subsequent years, and led to the Philadelphia School District adopting a series of so-called "Doomsday" budgets that resulted massive school closings, staff layoffs, and attrition as well as the elimination of important school programming; and

WHEREAS, Conditions in individual Philadelphia schools significantly deteriorated as a result of inadequate funding, and parents and community members filed over 800 complaints in the fall of 2013 that documented alleged failures to meet state curriculum standards; and

WHEREAS, The number of teacher and staff vacancies have reached alarming and persistently high levels, thereby leading to increased class sizes, impairment of students' learning, and limited access to essential services; and

WHEREAS, A shortage of core personnel, in particular among nurses and counselors, has raised significant safety concerns given the medical and mental health issues faced by the City's high-poverty student population; and

WHEREAS, Vulnerable students including those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and English Language Learners, and other distinct needs are particularly impacted by reduced funding because of their dependence on school-based services; and

WHEREAS, Parents of public students from Philadelphia and across the state have brought a major constitutional challenge to the state's approach to funding its public school system; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania legislature is presently considering budget proposals for Fiscal Year 2016 that could result in additional resources for Philadelphia schools, but also potentially additional costs; and

WHEREAS, After successive years of funding shortfalls and budget cuts, and in light of the potential for new or restored funds, accurate and up-to-date information is needed about the cumulative impact of such cuts on individual Philadelphia schools and the Philadelphia School District as a whole; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes hearings to be conducted concerning the impact of five years of reduced state funding on safety, essential services, and academic outcomes in Philadelphia's public schools, and on vulnerable student populations.