



Legislation Text

File #: 160539, **Version:** 0

Authorizing Council's Committee on Public Health and Human Services to hold hearings concerning the recent state downgrade of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services license to provisional as a result of serious violations of child welfare laws.

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania after its annual licensing inspection of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services (DHS) revoked its Certificate of Compliance and issued a provisional Certificate of Compliance for the time period from May 6, 2016 through November 6, 2016; and

WHEREAS, This is the first time since 2009 that DHS has received a provisional license. If the agency fails four consecutive reviews, the State will withhold funding or take over its operation; and

WHEREAS, The basis of this license revocation and downgrade were the numerous violations of child welfare laws, including the falsification of visit reports, sloppy documentation and keeping children overnight in agency offices. In fact, in 2015, according to State officials, there were 84 times when children had to stay overnight at DHS' headquarters at 15th and Arch Streets because caseworkers could not find temporary places for them to stay; and

WHEREAS, In the past several years the DHS decentralized its case-management services through the establishment of Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs) which were designed to bring services closer to families through neighborhood-based organizations; and

WHEREAS, The CUA model, according to the State, has been fraught with problems, because the City has not given them proper resources to adequately handle their cases. In particular, the CUA staff did not have immediate access to case records, including historical, medical, or criminal information on the families they are assigned; and

WHEREAS, DHS' caseload has grown by nearly 1,000 children in the past year and it has taken longer for children to be reunited with family members or be adopted, yet the State report made findings that DHS made insubstantial efforts to engage with fathers or extended families in seeking placements for children; and

WHEREAS, Delays or absence of home-safety visit reports, no documentation of renewals for FBI and state police clearances for workers and failure to train staff and resource parents, were also issues raised by the State's report; and

WHEREAS, The safety and general welfare of the City's children make it imperative that community leaders, stakeholders as well as all citizens, take seriously the responsibility to protect our most vulnerable residents from all types of harm, both physical and emotional, now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes Council's Committee on Public Health and Human Services to hold hearings concerning the recent state downgrade of Philadelphia's Department of Human Services license to provisional as a result of serious violations of child

welfare laws.