

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Public Health and Human Services to hold joint public hearings concerning the recent death of a juvenile at Wordsworth Academy, and future plans for safety at juvenile treatment facilities caring for Philadelphia youth.

WHEREAS, Wordsworth Academy is a private treatment facility located at 3905 Ford Road, which has operated a residential treatment program since 2006. The facility is referred 2,000 Philadelphia area youths per year. Many youths are placed at Wordsworth Academy by a judge for treatment after contact with the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, On Thursday, October 13, 2016, a 17-year-old male resident of Wordsworth Academy's Residential Treatment program became unresponsive after hitting his head while being restrained in a headlock by staff at the facility. The juvenile was later pronounced dead by emergency medical responders who arrived at the facility; and

WHEREAS, It is reported that this juvenile suffered from a mental health condition and that the staff members restraining him were using the facility's protocols. These protocols and procedures have not been made available to the public; and

WHEREAS, On Monday, October 24, 2016, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Bureau of Human Service Licensing ordered the revocation of the residential treatment facility's license and ordered its immediate closure. However, Wordsworth will continue to operate its other programs, which include special education schools, individual and family therapy, and foster care; and

WHEREAS, There are 90 juveniles who currently reside at Wordsworth Academy. These juveniles must now be transitioned to new residential facilities. It has not been determined what facilities they will go to, and what safety protocols are in place at those facilities; and

WHEREAS, In the interest of the safety of the City's youths who were placed at Wordsworth Academy, it should be examined whether alternative placement facilities are equipped to handle the needs of the youth that are sent there; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the City Council Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Public Health and Human Services to hold joint public hearings concerning the recent death of a juvenile at Wordsworth Academy, and future plans for safety at juvenile treatment facilities caring for Philadelphia youth.