

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 170408, **Version:** 0

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Calling on and urging The School District of Philadelphia (“District”) to permanently prohibit the suspension of elementary-aged students from the first through fifth grades.

WHEREAS, Despite prohibiting the suspension of kindergarten students, the District continues to suspend students from first through fifth grades at alarming rates. According to Pennsylvania’s most recent Safe Schools Report, the District meted out 615 suspensions to kindergarteners; 1,081 to first graders; 1,779 to second graders; 2,192 to third graders; 2,295 to fourth graders; and 2,260 to fifth graders during the 2015-16 school year; and

WHEREAS, The District needs to invest in additional training and resources to support schools as they move away from discriminatory and punitive exclusionary discipline practices, and toward practices that promote positive school climates; and

WHEREAS, Suspensions harm our youngest learners. The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania reports that whenever a school suspends a student it increases that child’s likelihood of future educational barriers and challenges, including discipline, truancy, and dropout, which feeds the school-to-prison pipeline; and

WHEREAS, Suspensions not only harm the students who are suspended but also the students who remain in the classroom. Research shows that math and reading scores of students who are not being suspended suffer when their fellow classmates are removed from the learning environment; and

WHEREAS, According to the Civil Rights Data Collection (“CRDC”) published by the U.S. Department of Education, over 93% of the suspensions the District issued in the 2013-14 school year to first through fifth graders, almost all of whom are ten years of age or younger, were for “conduct” offenses and not weapons offenses. Punishment for subjective conduct offenses have shown to invite racial biases; and

WHEREAS, The District disproportionately suspends African American students. The CRDC reports that African American students, both male and female in the District are 2.65 times more likely to be suspended at all and 3.08 times more likely to be suspended multiple times than their white peers; and

WHEREAS, Similarly, the CRDC reports that the District disproportionately suspends students with disabilities. According to the 2013-14 CRDC data, students with disabilities are 1.33 times more likely to be suspended in the District than students without disabilities; and African American students with disabilities are 1.72 times more likely to be suspended than their white peers with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The use of discriminatory, outdated, and ineffective discipline techniques disproportionately affects households that live close to or below the federal poverty line. Parents risk forfeiting their family’s income when they leave work to attend to a child who has been suspended from school. This creates economic instability and injustice for working parents attempting to provide for their families; and

WHEREAS, Seattle prohibits suspensions for all elementary students; Minneapolis prohibits suspensions for students through fifth grade; Houston prohibits suspensions for students through third grade; New York City and Chicago school districts prohibit suspensions for students through second grade; and the states of California, Connecticut, and New Jersey have legislatively limited suspensions for students through second and third grade; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that the District invest in training and resources that will enable school communities to build the skills and provide the services necessary to ensure a high-quality education to all students in a positive, welcoming, and affirming school climate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby urge The School District of Philadelphia to permanently prohibit the suspension of elementary-aged students from the first through fifth grades.