

Legislation Text

File #: 170841, **Version:** 0

Authorizing the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless to hold hearings to discuss the impact of squatting in Philadelphia, the victims of squatting and additional measures and best practices to prevent squatting.

WHEREAS, Squatting is typically defined as the “unlawful occupancy of an uninhabited building”; and

WHEREAS, This resolution is not discussing what is traditionally referred to as “squatting”, where a person occupies an abandoned building that has been uninhabited for an extended length of time, but rather persons who break into homes that are currently occupied or are currently in transition to be occupied; and

WHEREAS, The type of squatting this resolution is discussing can be readily defined as criminal trespassing, found in the Pennsylvania State Law under Title 18 § 3503 Criminal Trespass; and

WHEREAS, Illegal possession of residential properties, commonly known as squatting, is a public safety concern for the citizens of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, This practice and the negative consequences that arise from it have been covered extensively in recent years by local media, including ABC, NBC and Philadelphia Magazine; and

WHEREAS, Squatters often break into empty houses, or even homes that are currently occupied, changing the locks on the house, and may even barricade the home refusing to leave; and

WHEREAS, Squatters may produce and use fraudulent titles and leasing documents, pay for monthly utilities, and handle maintenance and landscaping matters of a titled property; and

WHEREAS, This illegal behavior puts the owner and the community in an arduous position, as they are unable to remove the squatters from their property without calling the police; and

WHEREAS, Officers of the Philadelphia Police Department are unable to verify the legality of a fraudulent and forged title or leasing document on the scene; and

WHEREAS, Individuals wishing to remove squatters from their property are then often required to pursue a lengthy judicial process that may render the rightful owners homeless for the duration of the court proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Another victim in this situation is the community and neighborhood where the home is located, as the community now must face the ever-present threat of an individual or group of individuals illegally breaking into and trespassing on their homes and rightfully titled property; and

WHEREAS, Additional victims in this situation are the individuals who believe that they are signing a legitimate lease only to discover later that the lease is fraudulent and they must leave the property without a

place to go; and

WHEREAS, The challenge of combating illegal possession of residential homes is necessarily complicated, involving the intersection of public safety, housing and the court system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless to hold hearings to discuss the impact of squatting in Philadelphia as well as the victims of squatting and additional measures and best practices to prevent squatting.