



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Joint Committees on Public Safety and Children and Youth to hold hearings on the status of educational, extra-curricular, health and wellness, and career programming designed to divert girls from the juvenile justice system.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney, District Attorney Larry Krasner, Chief Defender Keir Bradford-Grey, Police Commissioner Richard Ross and a number of other City officials have committed to reduce the population of individuals incarcerated by the City of Philadelphia. In 2015, the City was awarded a MacArthur grant to institute changes aimed at reducing local incarceration and disparities in jail usage among all demographic groups, including women and girls; and

WHEREAS, Involvement in the criminal justice system provides unique challenges for girls and young women. According to the Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy, girls make up the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice system, with more than 300,000 arrests and criminal charges nationally every year. According to the report, most girls who end up in the criminal justice system have family problems, trauma, or a history of abuse. Furthermore, the report indicates that most girls who end up in the juvenile justice system do not commit serious crimes, but are rather placed in the system for behaviors like truancy, breaking curfew, or running away from home; and

WHEREAS, A report from the Justice Policy Institute highlights the significant and negative impacts of youth incarceration on a young person's mental health, education, community, and opportunity to secure future employment. These issues are exacerbated for young women and people of color. According to a study, juvenile African American females were almost three times as likely as their peers to be referred to juvenile court for a delinquency offense, and were also more likely to be detained and formally petitioned to court than White females; and

WHEREAS, LGBTQ female youth also experience systematic disparities. A national study found that non-heterosexual girls were twice as likely to be arrested and convicted as other girls who engaged in similar behavior; and

WHEREAS, Reducing the population of incarcerated girls will enhance the life of each young woman diverted from prison while also saving taxpayer money. The Juvenile Court Judges Commission found that the general decline in juvenile placements in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania since 2007 has resulted in \$111,000,000 in savings for Pennsylvanian taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, Further reductions in the population of girls involved in the juvenile justice system will require a systematic and comprehensive approach across City government and the non-profit sector, including policies and programs specifically designed to engage, support and uplift young women at-risk of involvement in the criminal justice system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Joint Committees on Public Safety and Children and Youth to hold hearings on the status of educational, extra-

curricular, health and wellness, and career programming designed to divert girls from the juvenile justice system.