

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the creation of a Youth Residential Placement Task Force, to make recommendations and provide guidance to safely reduce both the number of Philadelphia youth in residential placements and the use of placements outside of city limits.

WHEREAS, On May 17, 2018, the Committee on Children and Youth held a hearing on the quality of services and impact that out-of-county residential placements have on the care, treatment, and development of Philadelphia youth; and

WHEREAS, Over 1,300 Philadelphia youth currently reside in congregate care settings, and approximately 900 of those youth are placed in residential institutional facilities; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's Department of Human Services ("DHS") and Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services ("DBHIDS") contract with residential facilities to provide placement for Philadelphia youth, many of which are located outside of city limits; and

WHEREAS, Education and youth advocates and juvenile justice leaders, along with young people who have been placed in residential facilities, all testified at the May hearing to the need of ending out-of-county placements to the extent possible and bringing Philadelphia youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare system closer to their homes, loved ones, and communities; and

WHEREAS, Young people and families who have been directly impacted by or involved in the child welfare or juvenile justice system have already shown courage in speaking about their experiences and the need for reform, and recognizing that future reform efforts must continue to center the voices youth and families; and

WHEREAS, DHS, DBHIDS, and CBH have shown strong leadership in reducing the number of youth in residential placement and diverting children to community-based options when possible, as well as creating a specialized evaluation team that visited each providers over the past year, closing intake and severing contracts with several facilities that failed to meet their standards; and

WHEREAS, The DHS Commissioner has demonstrated good faith efforts in meeting with youth advocates and juvenile justice leaders to begin reducing the number of youth in residential placement; and

WHEREAS, The local development of a comprehensive array of high quality, trauma-informed prevention, placement, education and behavioral health services for youth is supported by researchers as being critical to reducing Philadelphia's reliance on out-of-county residential institutional placements; and

WHEREAS, Whenever possible, it is in the best interest of Philadelphia's youth to be cared for in their own homes and communities, in family settings, and close to home in order to allow them to maintain connections to their supportive resources, foster permanent relationships, and access District-run educational programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia authorizes the creation of a Youth Residential Placement Task Force, to make recommendations and provide guidance to safely reduce both the number of Philadelphia youth in residential placements and the use of placements outside of city limits.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall be comprised of no more than 25 representatives from the Philadelphia City Council, the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, the Defenders Association of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, Philadelphia Community Behavioral Health, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services, the School District of Philadelphia, and the Office of the Deputy Managing Director for Health and Human Services. The Task Force shall also include key community stakeholders such as child and family advocates, representatives of foundations with expertise and capacity to fund child welfare and juvenile justice reform efforts, contracted provider agency representatives, physical and behavioral health professionals, charter school representatives, young people formerly placed at a youth residential institutional placement, and caregivers of those formerly and currently in placement. Representatives from Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Family Court of Philadelphia shall be invited and encouraged to participate in the Task Force.

FURTHER RESOLVED, There shall be two co-chairs of the task force. One co-chair shall be appointed by the Chair of City Council's Committee on Children and Youth and the other co-chair shall be appointed by the Office of the Managing Director. The co-chairs will select the additional task force members.

FURTHER RESOLVED, In the event that any named organization shall decline to name a representative, is unable to do so, or ceases to exist, the Chairs shall designate a successor organization of generally similar character, which shall thereupon be entitled to select a member for appointment to the Task Force.

FURTHER RESOLVED, The Task Force's duties shall include: identifying, collecting and reviewing data regarding the needs of Philadelphia youth and the current service array of providers in order to identify gaps in services for the purpose of addressing the family support, therapeutic, medical and educational needs of the youth involved with the child welfare, juvenile justice and behavioral health system; and exploring and examining estimated costs associated with task force recommendations and potential opportunities for reinvestment of funds, as well as additional funding streams to support local efforts to address youth needs.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall make recommendations regarding: the safe reduction of youth in residential placements and the number of youth in residential placements outside the City limits, while maintaining positive outcomes for the youth and their families; programs, services, and facilities that may support Philadelphia youth safely within their communities, as well as modifications to existing programs, services, and facilities, that are needed to safely reduce the numbers of Philadelphia youth in congregate care settings and youth in residential facilities outside of City limits; and guidelines for holding provider agencies accountable for ensuring safe, trauma informed, culturally competent and abuse-free service delivery, as well as providing access to quality educational services.

Further RESOLVED, That the task force shall establish recommendations for shared objectives and accountability measures that promote the goal of reducing the total number of children in placement and reducing reliance on out-of-county placements.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall convene within 60 days of its creation and shall meet at least quarterly. The task force will hold two public meetings in order to receive feedback and update on the progress of the Task Force.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That all City Departments, Agencies, Boards, and Commissions shall cooperate with the Task Force, and provide any data it may require. Other public entities, along with the private sector, are encouraged to support and cooperate with the Task Force.

Helen Gym
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June 21, 2018