Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Health and Human Services to hold hearings on environmental health disparities and the impact of pollutants in at-risk neighborhoods.

WHEREAS, Environmental factors such as air and water quality are fundamental determinants of health and well-being. Environmental factors can also lead to disease and health disparities when the places where people live, work, learn and play are burdened by social inequities; and

WHEREAS, Environmental health disparities exist when communities exposed to a combination of poor environmental quality and social inequities have more sickness and disease than wealthier, less polluted communities; and

WHEREAS, A 2018 study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that facilities emitting dangerous particulate air pollution disproportionately impact low-income community and communities of color; and

WHEREAS, The study also found that communities living below the poverty line have a 35 percent higher burden from particulate matter emission that the overall population. In addition, non-Whites had a 28 percent higher health burden, and African-Americans had a 54 percent higher burden than the overall population; and

WHEREAS, A 2017 joint study by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Clean Air Task Force, and National Medical Association found that the air Black Americans breathe is nearly 40 percent more polluted than that of their White counterparts; and

WHEREAS, According to data from the Philadelphia Department of Health, the rates of asthma hospitalizations for children under 18 are significantly higher in the City's low-income neighborhoods and much lower in the more affluent ones; and

WHEREAS, The history of economic injustice and environmental racism regarding air pollution continues in our City's most vulnerable communities who must endure the worst pollution and its health effects, including severe asthma attacks, heart attacks, and premature death; and

WHEREAS, Reducing toxic environmental elements will increase the health and quality of life for thousands of Philadelphians in addition to having a positive impact on the financial health of our medical facilities; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Committee on Health and Human Services to hold hearings on environmental health disparities and the impact of pollutants in at-risk neighborhoods.