

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to conduct hearings regarding the establishment of an independent fiscal office for the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, This Council has a responsibility to inform itself, and the public, as best as it is practicably possible in their creation of policy, budget, and related public policies; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia regularly considers public policy proposals affecting both private economic decisions, including hiring, investment, and location in the City, and public policy considerations, not least of which is the oversight of an approximately \$4.5 billion annual budget, yet lacks an independent budget office to provide neutral analyses to aid in evaluating decision-making; and

WHEREAS, The executive branch's joint responsibility to create budgetary proposals and to run city agencies creates tensions, apart from any interbranch, political, partisan, or personal differences, with the legislative branch, which is left without objective estimates regarding potential administrative costs and probable private reactions to its decisions; and

WHEREAS, To remedy this incapacity, independent fiscal or budget offices have been established by many legislatures at all levels of government, including cities, states, and, best known, at the federal level, where the Congressional Budget Office, or CBO, makes important and often decisive estimates of policy implications of various legislative texts; and

WHEREAS, The City of New York established its own Independent Budget Office in 1989 to "provide nonpartisan information about city budget and tax revenues" such as "program costs, historical trends, tax burdens, debt, or capital finances"; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania established its Independent Fiscal Office in 2010 to provide "revenue projections for use in the state budget process along with impartial and timely analysis of fiscal, economic, and budgetary issues" to assist the General Assembly in evaluating policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, These examples are among the precedents Philadelphia might use to empowering an entity to generate models, make estimates, and otherwise clarify the implications of public policy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Council Committee on Commerce and Economic Development hold hearings regarding the establishment of an independent fiscal office for the City of Philadelphia.