

Legislation Text

File #: 190090, **Version:** 0

Authorizing the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform to hold public hearings to examine adequate solutions in addressing the specific needs of incarcerated women.

WHEREAS, The 2018 Annual Report from the Philadelphia Commission for Women indicates that the number of incarcerated women nationwide has increased by more than 700% between 1980 and 2014. Additionally, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reports that there over one million women behind bars or under the control of the criminal justice system, making women the fastest growing segment of our nation's incarcerated population; and

WHEREAS, The majority of incarcerated women were convicted of nonviolent crimes, are the primary caregivers to minor children and are survivors of sexual violence. The ACLU reports that approximately 18% of women incarcerated are convicted of violent crimes, while the report from the Philadelphia Commission for Women states that 80% of all incarcerated women are mothers and 80% have also suffered physical or sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS, The ACLU specifies that there is an overrepresentation of Black women and women of color in the criminal justice system. While Philadelphia has succeeded in reducing its overall prison population, and the number of women incarcerated in the City has dropped 44%, as of February 5, 2019, there are still 394 women that are incarcerated within the Philadelphia Prison System; and

WHEREAS, In addition to these statistics, there have been numerous reports signifying concerns regarding the treatment of incarcerated women and girls, the resources available to women, girls and mothers during incarceration, upon release and re-entry, and how the impact of the criminal justice system can be distinctly different for female inmates than their male counterparts; and

WHEREAS, It is the role of the Philadelphia Department of Prisons to house those charged and convicted of crimes, and to offer education, resources and support to inmates during incarceration and upon release. It is the role of Philadelphia City Government to keep residents safe, and to reduce recidivism within the City of Philadelphia. As such, the issues contained in these reports should be examined by members of the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform to ensure that the policies and plans set forth by the City's jails include adequate solutions to address the specific needs of incarcerated women and girls, and assure that Council is dedicated to appropriating the funding required to do so; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform to hold public hearings to examine adequate solutions to address the specific needs of incarcerated women.