

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Labor & Civil Service to hold hearings regarding the safety and well-being of workers in the Sanitation Division of the Streets Department.

WHEREAS, According to the *Five Year Financial and Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2024*, “The mission of the Streets Department is to provide clean, green, and safe streets in a cost-effective and efficient manner. The Department constructs and maintains the City’s transportation network and develops solid waste management systems for the public health and safety in Philadelphia’s communities”; and

WHEREAS, According to an analysis conducted by City Council’s Technical Staff and adjusting for inflation, funding for the Streets Department, and specifically its Sanitation Division, has been effectively flat for at least the past fifteen years; and

WHEREAS, During this time of flat funding, the Sanitation Division’s roles and responsibilities have ostensibly grown. For example, compared to fifteen years ago, in addition to carrying out its core functions, the Streets Department is now trying to achieve the goals of Zero Waste Philadelphia; implement and expand street sweeping; navigate a new reality in terms of globally-increasing recycling costs; and increase enforcement of trash and dumping violations; and

WHEREAS, It is likely that all the employees of the Streets Department have felt the effects of being asked to do more without a significant increase in funding. However, the employees who have felt these effects the most are those on the “front line” - the Sanitation Division employees; and

WHEREAS, In an October 24, 2019 article by WHYY, the reporter highlighted some the hazardous conditions faced by many Sanitation employees. For example, in the midst of their daily duties, Sanitation workers regularly contend with syringes and human feces, both of which have become even more problematic since the City is dealing with a Hepatitis A outbreak; and

WHEREAS, According to the WHYY article, the City does provide Sanitation workers with certain “protective gear,” but the gear the City provides is viewed as low-quality, and often, ineffective; and

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Department of Labor, “hazard pay means additional pay for performing hazardous duty or work involving physical hardship. Work duty that causes extreme physical discomfort and distress which is not adequately alleviated by protective devices is deemed to impose a physical hardship” ;and

WHEREAS, The City’s police officers and fire fighters already receive some form of “hazard pay” (referred to a “stress pay”). Now is the time to explore best practices nationwide in terms of “hazard pay” - also called “environmental stress pay” or “exposure pay” - for Sanitation workers. Also, we must evaluate the impact of implementing some sort of “environmental stress pay” or “exposure pay” for Philadelphia’s Sanitation employees; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Kenney should be commended for remaining committed to a Citywide street cleaning program, and Streets Commissioner Carlton Williams should be acknowledged for advancing the Department

and meeting its critical goals with the resources his Department has been given; and

WHEREAS, Now is the time to analyze the Sanitation Division, and to determine if it has the resources it needs to achieve its goals while also keeping all of its employees safe; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the Committee on Labor & Civil Service to hold hearings regarding the safety and well-being of workers in the Sanitation Division of the Streets Department.