

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold public hearings on the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness, evictions, and residential foreclosures and the City's efforts to combat homelessness, evictions, and residential foreclosures.

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia there are more than 300,000 rental units, which is greater than the number of owner-occupied homes across the City; and

WHEREAS, The majority of renters are estimated to be cost-burdened, as they spend more than thirty percent of their income on rent; and

WHEREAS, Eighty-six percent of renters with incomes under \$35,000 are estimated to be experiencing this burden; and

WHEREAS, Individuals evicted from their homes experience dire consequences like homelessness, joblessness, and physical and mental health challenges; and

WHEREAS, Before the pandemic, Philadelphia had the 4th highest eviction rate among large cities, with 1 out of 14 renters facing eviction each year; and

WHEREAS, The number of Philadelphians struggling to pay rent has undoubtedly increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as at least 1.9 million Pennsylvanians and over 120,000 Philadelphians have filed for unemployment since March 2020, exacerbating already-existing financial burdens; and

WHEREAS, In May 2020, the City of Philadelphia used approximately \$10 million in federal funds to create PHL Rent Assist, a rental assistance program that aimed to provide rental assistance to 3,000-4,000 families. Approximately 13,000 Philadelphians, three to four times the number of families that could be funded, applied for this program; and

WHEREAS, Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that over 5,700 individuals in Philadelphia were homeless, including approximately 1,000 individuals who lacked shelter; and

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has provided free meals to those in need, access to testing for COVID-19, and shelter to quarantine for those who test positive, and separate living space for at-risk populations in the shelter system; and

WHEREAS, Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Philadelphia had the highest rate of residential foreclosures among metropolitan areas with 1,000,000 people; and

WHEREAS, Since 2008, the City has operated the Residential Mortgage & Tax Foreclosure Prevention Program, which has saved over 12,000 homes from foreclosure; and

WHEREAS, Preventing homelessness, evictions and residential foreclosures is paramount to the welfare of Philadelphians. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to explore the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness, evictions, and residential foreclosures, and the City's efforts to combat homelessness, evictions, and residential foreclosures; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the Philadelphia City Council Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold public hearings on the impact of COVID-19 on homelessness, evictions, and residential foreclosures, and the City's efforts to combat homelessness, evictions, and residential foreclosures.