

## Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on the Environment to conduct hearings to investigate challenges and solutions to street litter and waste disposal systems in the wake of COVID-19 in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The global pandemic due to the spread of the COVID19 coronavirus caused an unprecedented crisis across the Nation and the City Philadelphia, adversely impacting essential municipal government services including solid waste services; and

WHEREAS, By September of 2020, Philadelphia reached over 34,000 COVID19 cases, leading to continuing public health orders requiring businesses to close and citizens to remain at home causing an increase in the amount of municipal solid waste generated in residential households; and

WHEREAS, The solid waste industry reported a twenty to thirty percent increase in municipal solid waste in many cities and counties across the country causing major delays, disruptions, and alterations to municipal solid waste and recycling collection systems during the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The COVID19 pandemic caused a major environmental threat to the health and safety of the public with the overwhelming amount of tonnage of residential waste, illegal short dumping, and large amounts of street litter leading to an increase in rodents and harmful insects that pose an additional threat to the health and safety of Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, The outbreak of COVID19 lead to an unprecedented increase in the volume of waste further compounded by the significant decrease in attendance by essential sanitation workers who were directly and indirectly impacted by COVID19 and other health related issues; and

WHEREAS, The threat to health and public safety caused the Administration to immediately add over 100 temporary workers to the Streets Department to supplement the high number of unplanned absences incurred by this unprecedented pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The Streets Department has worked tirelessly to mitigate collection delays and manage the increased tonnage of waste and continue to conduct waste removal at the best pace possible within the situation, despite increased overworking of available employees, temporary loss of dozens of personnel due to the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The global pandemic will continue to have major operational and fiscal impacts on essential government functions, the City must undertake large scale systematic change with the manner in which waste collection occurs in order to better prepare for future emergency situations and to work more efficiently in general; and

WHEREAS, The crisis of climate change continues to threaten the health and wellbeing of the planet and the citizens of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Landfills release 12% of the world's total methane emissions, a greenhouse gas over 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide, and

WHEREAS, While the City of Philadelphia has set a zero-waste goal by the end of 2035 and worked diligently to implement the Zero Waste and Litter Action Plan, a thorough review of the City's municipal solid waste practices must be undertaken and solutions that fit within the framework of our City infrastructure must be implemented to mitigate the impacts of climate change and avoid any future severe disruptions of service; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia must explore new solutions and best practices to improve and modernize the systems of waste management to offer the highest level of services to our City residents; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Will hereby authorize the Committee on the Environment to conduct hearings to investigate challenges and solutions to street litter and waste disposal systems in the wake of COVID-19 in the City of Philadelphia.