

Legislation Text

File #: 200447, **Version:** 0

Calling on Mayor James F. Kenney to declare gun violence a citywide emergency and develop an urgent, unrelenting response to the gun violence epidemic plaguing Black and Brown neighborhoods in Philadelphia, and re-affirming the commitment of the City Council of Philadelphia to continue collaborating with, and supporting the work of, the Mayor, our City agencies, the criminal justice community, and non-governmental partners, to mitigate this deadly epidemic.

WHEREAS, Gun violence has plagued Philadelphia for decades. Between 2003 and 2016, 82% of people murdered in Philadelphia were killed with a gun. Between 2007 and 2019, there were over 1,000 shootings annually, with over 1,250 shootings in all but four of these years. During this period, there were 17,293 total shooting victims in Philadelphia, with up to 1,597 people shot in any given year. Between 2007 and 2016, a hospital in the Third District reported treating 1,800 children victims of gun violence; and

WHEREAS, The gun violence epidemic has inflicted an unconscionable amount of trauma on Black and Brown communities in Philadelphia, as the perpetrators and victims of gun violence are predominantly young Black men. In 2015, gun violence was the leading cause of death among Black males ages 15-24 in the city. In 2017, 75% of perpetrators and victims of gun violence were Black men under the age of 45. One in two Black adults in Philadelphia report witnessing violence as a child, while only one in four White adults in the City report witnessing violence during childhood; and

WHEREAS, Many factors, like decades of intentional federal disinvestment in Black urban communities and state and federal gun law preemption, have contributed to the current gun violence epidemic. We must continue to advocate for gun law autonomy on the local level, and for more federal funding for our communities; and

WHEREAS, Over the past decade, the City of Philadelphia has implemented many strategies to combat gun violence, including Operation Pressure Point, Operation Pressure Point 2.0, and Operation Pinpoint, and has launched various anti-violence intervention strategies and programs such as the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership, Community Crisis Intervention Program, and Focused Deterrence. The City has also partnered with nongovernmental organizations to implement anti-violence programs like Operation Cease Fire and Cure Violence; and

WHEREAS, In response to the gun violence epidemic, the Council of the City of Philadelphia, guided by the leadership of Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson, Councilmember Curtis Jones Jr. and Council President Darrell Clarke, created the Special Committee on Gun Violence in June, 2017, and in September, 2017, declared gun violence a public health crisis in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Special Committee on Gun Violence has held numerous hearings, meetings and roundtables to shed light on, and identify solutions to, the gun violence epidemic; and

WHEREAS, Despite state and federal preemption, the Council of the City of Philadelphia has worked diligently to try and discover ways to regulate firearms on the City level, with the goal of reducing gun violence; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Kenney has prepared the City to take an innovative approach to attacking the gun violence epidemic. In 2017, the Mayor created the Office of Violence Prevention to coordinate the City's anti-violence efforts across multiple departments. In January, 2019, Mayor Kenney unveiled the Roadmap to Safer Communities, a groundbreaking and comprehensive five-year plan to address the gun violence epidemic through a public health approach; and

WHEREAS, In support of the Roadmap, the Council of the City of Philadelphia appropriated approximately \$15 million across multiple City departments towards the implementation of the Roadmap, almost doubling the City's budgetary commitment in fiscal year 2019 to anti-violence efforts.

WHEREAS, In the first year of the Roadmap, the City successfully reduced the number of shooting victims in areas served by Operation Pinpoint, a policing strategy undertaken as part of the Roadmap, but the City also suffered the most shootings in a decade that same year; and

WHEREAS, In November, 2019, the Mayor announced Group Violence Intervention (GVI), another element of the Roadmap which offers an evidenced-based gun violence intervention program. GVI promises to identify those at risk of gun violence, and connect them with City services to provide an alternative to shooting. While this program is promising, it took too long to implement: it did not actually launch until a few weeks ago. Additionally, the City has not released a quarterly update on the implementation of the Roadmap so far in 2020; and

WHEREAS, Major cities around the country have experienced a dramatic increase in both homicides and shooting victims in 2020. Philadelphia in particular has seen a 33% increase in homicides, and a 42% increase in the number of shooting victims. While this spike in violence may be attributable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, this does not obviate the Mayor from operating with the highest level of urgency and transparency to combat the gun violence epidemic in Philadelphia. The City needs more consistent and public leadership on this issue; and

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Philadelphia calls on the Mayor to:

(a) issue an executive order declaring a citywide gun violence emergency, which would include directing the Office of Violence Reduction, the Police Department and other applicable City agencies to (i) implement the Roadmap to Safer Communities with fidelity, (ii) elevate their response to this crisis to the level of the City's response to COVID-19 and (iii) provide weekly public briefings on the City's efforts to combat the gun violence epidemic, performance goals, inputs and outputs; and

(b) partner with the Council of the City of Philadelphia to sustainably invest in gun violence reduction efforts over the long-term; and

(c) develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to engage with residents around the creation of safe and healthy communities, and expand funding for these efforts; and

(d) consistently stand with and support community members in public as they confront the gun violence crisis in their neighborhoods; and

(e) rally corporations, healthcare and educational institutions to raise funds, increase research and innovation, and supply meaningful jobs to combat the gun violence epidemic; and

(f) more quickly and frequently evaluate the efficacy of the strategies being carried out as part of the Roadmap; and

(g) improve coordination among City departments towards the goal of reducing gun violence and provide enhanced resources to neighborhoods impacted by gun violence; and

(h) continue to invest in and implement evidence-based violence reduction efforts, including independent proven violence reduction efforts; and

(i) work with juvenile probation and parole, the Courts, DHS, and the School District to create a comprehensive intervention program with juveniles involved in, or adjacent to, gun violence; and

WHEREAS, The Council of the City of Philadelphia stands in solidarity with the Mayor, our City agencies, the criminal justice community, and non-governmental partners in the fight against gun violence, and will continue to support their efforts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby calls on Mayor James F. Kenney to declare gun violence a citywide emergency and develop an urgent, unrelenting response to the City of Philadelphia's gun violence epidemic plaguing Black and Brown neighborhoods in Philadelphia, and re-affirms the commitment of the Council of the City of Philadelphia to continue collaborating with, and supporting the work of, the Mayor, our City agencies, the criminal justice community, and non-governmental partners, to mitigate this deadly epidemic.