

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Legislative Oversight to conduct hearings to examine findings of racism, nepotism and mistrust within the First Judicial District, as set forth in a recently revealed report by The Center for Urban and Racial Equality.

WHEREAS, In July 2019, The Center for Urban and Racial Equality (CURE) completed a report on diversity, equity and inclusion commissioned by the First Judicial District (FJD). This report was an organizational assessment that reviewed practices, policies and culture within the FJD; and

WHEREAS, The report was not made available to FJD judges and staff, much less the public, until July 2020, after a letter from Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson, co-signed by 13 Council colleagues, called for its public release; and

WHEREAS, CURE's report found a "culture of nepotism, mistrust, and racial tension," with only about a third of employees feeling trust in FJD leadership to implement fair and equitable policies in the organization; and

WHEREAS, Almost 25% of judges and 17% of staff reported experiencing discrimination in some form at work, with female judges and employees of color reportedly experiencing harassment, bias and exclusion at the highest rate of any cohort. Black staff in particular reported lack of promotion, not receiving recommendations for promotions, and having to fight harder for smaller raises; and

WHEREAS, Examples of racial discrimination have been public knowledge for some time. The most prominent incident involved a racist and sexist note sent to the chambers of a Black Municipal Court judge through inter-office mail. The report concluded that the specific incident "was not taken seriously" by court leadership; and

WHEREAS, CURE also found that some white judges and staff believe that "reverse racism" was as pervasive and important as discrimination against people of color; and

WHEREAS, The FJD is an institution that makes decisions that deeply impact thousands of lives every day. It must, therefore, proactively and effectively address issues of racial equity; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The City Council of Philadelphia will hereby authorize the Committee on Legislative Oversight to conduct hearings to investigate the reported culture of racism, nepotism and mistrust within the First Judicial District.