



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committees on Gun Violence Prevention and Children and Youth to conduct joint hearings to examine the need for universal access to trauma counseling for Philadelphia's youth.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has experienced several years of steadily rising gun violence, punctuated by a recent bloody surge. In 2020, Philadelphia is on pace to top 400 homicides for the first time since 2006. Thousands have been shot this year, including three children and youth per week, on average; and

WHEREAS, Not only is each shooting devastating to the victims, its ripples spread far and wide. Countless family members, friends, neighbors, and classmates suffer vicarious trauma from shootings; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence is just one type of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are traumatic events that happen in childhood and increase individuals' risk of future violence, both as victims and as perpetrators. According to a survey performed by The Philadelphia ACE Project, almost seven in ten adults in Philadelphia had experienced at least one ACE and one in five had experienced four or more; and

WHEREAS, Race and class disparities in ACEs are common. Children from minority and low-income households face much higher risk of ACEs and their devastating long-term effects. Moreover, in high-violence neighborhoods, PTSD is as common as in a war zone. Meanwhile, people of color have been found to be less likely to seek and receive treatment for PTSD; and

WHEREAS, Many young people who have experienced trauma and violence can continue to use violence as a method to deal with conflict as a part of daily life often because many experience anger related to exposure to these traumatic events; and

WHEREAS, Given this domino effect, trauma response has the potential to not only heal emotional and psychological wounds but to also prevent further violence and other trauma; and

WHEREAS, The School District maintains a variety of student services, including its Office of Prevention and Intervention, and has made notable efforts at this Council's urging to expand the number of social workers and behavioral support staff in schools. Likewise, the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services maintains the Network of Neighbors program, which addresses vicarious trauma; and

WHEREAS, Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of gun violence and other ACEs suggests a need for an expanded, more integrated approach that ensures universal access to trauma counseling; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The this Council hereby authorizes the Committees on Gun Violence Prevention and Children and Youth to conduct joint hearings to examine the need for universal access to trauma counseling by Philadelphia's youth.