

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Fiscal Stability and Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee to hold hearings examining the economic impact of the Coronavirus-related restrictions on Philadelphia's restaurants and other significantly affected businesses and to explore how these actions will impact the safety of our citizenry and the City of Philadelphia's Five-Year Financial Plan.

WHEREAS, Since March of 2020, the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have placed restrictions on economic and social activity in response to the Coronavirus pandemic to prevent further spread of the virus and the consequent loss of life; and

WHEREAS, With case numbers at an all-time high, with a weekly total in Pennsylvania nearing 7,000 cases, the City must carefully consider the balance of protecting the health and safety of our citizens with the crippling consequences to our economy. It is essential that local leaders make transparent and consistent decisions during this unprecedented time. The balance between respecting the science and expert input while doing as much to preserve the local economy as possible is essential; and

WHEREAS, Throughout 2020 the City has closed various businesses both independently and with respect to mandatory statewide mandates. As of November 2020, the City once again put stronger restrictions into place prohibiting indoor dining, indoor exercise facilities and classes, and restricting gatherings indoors and outdoors with non-household member persons; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's restaurant community is one of its crown jewels. Its restaurants and restaurateurs are nationally acclaimed, have won every major national and regional award, and are a centerpiece of Philadelphia's prominent tourism and hospitality sectors. Philadelphia's restaurants also serve as an incubator and forum for Philadelphia's distinctive civic and cultural life. Moreover, they employ tens of thousands of Philadelphians from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, The resulting economic catastrophe has wreaked havoc on the industry, leading to dozens of temporary and permanent restaurant closures. Indeed, there have been so many closures that the *Philadelphia Inquirer* has maintained a running list since September. Even worse, no end is in sight. Although testing is becoming more widely available and there are vaccines pending approval, it is uncertain how long it will take for the public to resume dining out; and

WHEREAS, The amount of job loss to this industry has been staggering. According to the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, Philadelphia was home to roughly 78,000 jobs in the hospitality sector, which fell to 33,000 by April of this year. Total there 40% of positions have yet to be restored. A survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Licensed Beverage and Tavern Association found that 70% of Pennsylvania's small bars and restaurants won't survive COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, The local economy broadly has suffered due to the pandemic and subsequent restrictions at times

seem to contradict one another or have been applied in an inconsistent manner. While protecting people and preserving the ability of our healthcare system to care for patients is essential, restrictions and the decision-making process should be transparent and consistent each time they are updated because of the significant impact they have on the economy; and

WHEREAS, With Coronavirus restrictions the local economy has contracted sharply and disproportionately. Small businesses, minority and women owned businesses, the hospitality industry, and our arts and entertainment industries are more likely to operate on thinner margins at the best of times, but have collapsed or are barely sustaining operations during this time; and

WHEREAS, Federal aid has been slow to arrive and its uses are strictly prescribed. The City must reexamine seeking federal funding as a new administration takes office in order to maximize dollars sent to the City to aid recovery especially for those industries most significantly affected by the shutdowns; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the impact on the greater regional economy, the restrictions in place to prevent the spread of Coronavirus affect the financial health of the City; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the hearing of the Fiscal Stability and Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee is to gather policy ideas to best balance the safety and economic concerns of the pandemic moving into 2021, seek information regarding the decision-making process and its transparent and consistent application, and focus on best practices for helping the recovery effort; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the Fiscal Stability and Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee to hold hearings examining the economic impact of the Coronavirus-related restrictions on Philadelphia's restaurants and other significantly affected businesses and to explore how these actions will impact the safety of our citizenry and the City of Philadelphia's Five-Year Financial Plan.