City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the City Council Committee on Intergenerational Affairs and Aging to hold public hearings examining solutions to the ongoing housing crisis impacting senior Philadelphians.

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2019, 14% of the Philadelphia population, or more than 221,000 Philadelphians, are 65 years of age and older; and

WHEREAS, According to the Philadelphia Corporation for the Aging, 206,000 elderly Philadelphians over 60 are homeowners and 30% of homes where an elder is the head of household serves as the place of residence for more than one generation; and

WHEREAS, The largest transfer of generational wealth in American history is on the horizon. Yet many senior households in Philadelphia lack access to affordable estate planning resources, creating chronic clouded title issues throughout the City including blight and home vacancies. Tangled title issues are a particular concern for many seniors who have worked for generations to expand the opportunity to pass along generational wealth to their heirs; and

WHEREAS, In 2018 and 2019, the Housing Trust Fund invested $6.9 million toward preservation efforts that support elderly Philadelphians aging in place, resulting in 3,917 homes receiving Basic Systems repairs and 425 homes receiving Adaptive Modifications funds that increase accessibility to keep people in their homes; and

WHEREAS, AARP's Philadelphia: An Age-Friendly, Livable City for All 2020 Livable Communities Action Plan and Assessment Report surveyed seniors and hosted community conversations, and many cited gentrification as a reason for increasing home and rental apartment costs, leading to a lack of available senior housing; and

WHEREAS, As of 2019, more than half of all Philadelphians are renters (51 percent), as compared to homeowners (49 percent); and

WHEREAS, According to the Mayor's Commission on Aging, as of November 28, 2016, Philadelphia had approximately 86,000 households being rented where the head of household is 55 years of age or older; and

WHEREAS, Between 2015 to 2019, Philadelphians on average paid more than $1,000 a month in rent according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Similarly, many rental facilities targeted towards seniors, including assisted-living facilities, private nursing homes, or continuing care retirement communities have rents upwards of $1,000 per month; and

WHEREAS, Rental rates have increased 21% on average citywide between 2000 and 2018; and

WHEREAS, The City is currently experiencing a net loss of available affordable housing units, as it is not developing new and rehabilitated affordable housing units at a pace to match the annual loss of already-existing

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affordable units; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia loses more than 1,500 affordable units per year as they are converted to market rate or high-end apartments according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and the Housing Action Plan. In comparison, the Housing Trust Fund invested $17.7 million into roughly 470 new rental units and 300 existing rental units preserved through substantial rehabilitation in 2018 and 2019; and

WHEREAS, The City's investments in affordable housing units have a limited impact on the ongoing senior housing crisis, as these investments are lost when affordable units are not developed to replace units converted to market-rate or luxury apartments. Many seniors live on fixed incomes provided by socialized benefits, and many of these benefits impose a cap on what a recipient is able to spend on rental housing. Despite this, no protections exist against unfair rent increases, leaving Seniors with the choice to either leave the City or become homeless; and

WHEREAS, According to the City's Office of Homeless Services, the percent of seniors that will be residing in the shelter system is anticipated to grow significantly as the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X gradually age. This trend is growing nationwide as the number of homeless seniors is projected to triple over the next decade, and these projections are only set to increase after the economic crisis following the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon Philadelphia City Council to examine housing conditions for elderly Philadelphians and evaluate solutions that will ensure stable and affordable housing, and these conditions and solutions should be examined by the members of the City Council Committee on Intergenerational Affairs and Aging to ensure that adequate solutions are provided; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the City Council Committee on Intergenerational Affairs and Aging to hold public hearings examining solutions to the ongoing housing crisis impacting senior Philadelphians.

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