

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to hold hearings examining best practices and new ideas for safely reopening the City of Philadelphia's workspaces including office buildings, City buildings, and other high-risk congregate settings not currently operating at pre-pandemic capacity.

WHEREAS, As the first anniversary of the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown approaches in March of 2021, Philadelphia is in the fortunate position to begin preparing for reopening of workspaces as more citizens are vaccinated; and

WHEREAS, In early 2021, Philadelphians and workers in the greater region began receiving their Covid-19 vaccinations. Philadelphia is far from mass vaccination and herd immunity, but with the approval of a third vaccine in February 2021, government and business leaders can begin to think about the eventual reopening of congregate work settings; and

WHEREAS, The School District of Philadelphia is expected to announce a return to the classroom on a slowly increasing basis throughout the spring of 2021. The City should anticipate a commensurate return of its own workers and private sector workers; and

WHEREAS, On March 13, 2020, the City of Philadelphia issued a closure order for its non-essential workspaces. This closure has been ongoing with few to no safety changes being made to communal City offices and buildings. Adaptations to workspaces will be required as Philadelphians slowly reach herd immunity through vaccination; and

WHEREAS, Like the City, many private companies have been conducting their non-essential operations remotely. As workers return to their office spaces, best practices will also need to be communicated and implemented for safety both now and in the future should another pandemic occur; and

WHEREAS, Communal workspaces such as open offices, cubicles, or other set ups without physical distancing will need adapting in order to return to full capacity. Moreover, upgrades to current ventilation systems, cleaning procedures, hand washing stations, food storage and communal spaces such as conference rooms, kitchens, cafeterias will be required; and

WHEREAS, Hearings should focus on exploring best practices for safe reopening and issuing guidelines in a transparent and consistent manner as we scale back up to full capacity citywide. The City of Philadelphia's Commerce, Health and, internally, Public Property departments should create a clear strategy for this process; and

WHEREAS, The financial implications of upgrading to a Covid-safe workplace must be considered in making recommendations and issuing formal guidelines. The overall financial impact on the City of a slow return to work must also be examined including the possibilities of remote work continuing permanently; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development to hold hearings examining best practices and new ideas for safely reopening the City of Philadelphia's workspaces including office buildings, City buildings, and other high-risk congregate settings not currently operating at pre-pandemic capacity.