Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Special Committee on Gun Violence Prevention to conduct hearings to examine the shortage of trauma counseling services and its impact on victims and co-victims of gun violence.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia faces an ongoing trend of rapidly rising gun violence. In 2021, Philadelphia has already suffered 374 homicides, mostly committed with firearms, which is a 17% increase from the same time in 2020 and a 54% increase over the same time in 2019; and

WHEREAS, As gun trauma interventions have improved, hospitals and medical centers in Philadelphia are seeing two times to three times more gunshot survivors than fatalities at trauma centers, leaving many survivors facing long-term health challenges; and

WHEREAS, Not only is each shooting devastating to the victims, but also to the countless family members, friends, neighbors, and classmates suffer vicarious trauma from shootings; and

WHEREAS, People who experience trauma and violence are at greater risk of committing violence in the future. Given this domino effect, effective trauma response has the potential to not only heal emotional and psychological wounds but to also prevent further violence and other trauma; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the need for trauma counselors far outpaces the supply of counselors due to the spike in gun violence. According to the Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia, an organization that provides counseling services to people impacted by violence, as of June 2021 there were 174 people on the waitlist to receive services, compared to about 30 people at the same time in 2020; and

WHEREAS, In April of 2020, a joint hearing was held between the Committees on Gun Violence Prevention and Children and Youth, where several departments and community organizations discussed their struggle to keep up with the need for youth trauma counseling due to their lack of available resources and funding; and

WHEREAS, Counselors are seeing layers of trauma and revictimization in their clients as gun violence increases. The pervasiveness of gun violence and the lasting grief that comes from it indicate a need for an expanded, more integrated approach that ensures access to counseling for all those who want and need it; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, This Council hereby authorizes the Special Committee on Gun Violence Prevention to conduct hearings to examine the shortage of trauma counseling services and its impact on victims and co-victims of gun violence.