

Legislation Text

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Authorizing Council's Special Committee on Child Separations in Philadelphia to conduct public hearings to further understand the role of community umbrella agencies (CUA), such as Turning Points for Children, in the local child welfare system, and further investigate the systemic failures that resulted in three girls being returned to their sexually abusive father.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) contracts with community umbrella agencies (CUA) to provide child welfare services throughout the City; and

WHEREAS, The largest of these local agencies - Turning Points for Children - is under intense criticism for returning three girls to a sexually abusive father, who then repeated the abuse upon their return; and

WHEREAS, Nadeem Bezar, the attorney for the girls and a member of Council's Special Committee on Child Separations in Philadelphia, described the incident as an "unspeakable" failure; and

WHEREAS, At least five caseworkers and two supervisors were assigned to the case, according to Bezar, and misinterpreted the father's criminal record and failed to conduct a court-ordered psychosexual evaluation; and

WHEREAS, Bezar described the father as unemployed, homeless, with a history of abuse toward women and girls; and

WHEREAS, Turning Points for Children has received "mixed reviews" in annual evaluations of CUA agencies conducted by DHS; and

WHEREAS, Despite these mixed performance reviews, Turning Points for Children received \$54 million in funding from the City in 2020, a sizable increase from the \$38 million it received in 2016; and

WHEREAS, CUA agencies interact with thousands of children and families annually, and their grave responsibility to protect our City's youth should be critically reviewed on a periodic basis; and

WHEREAS, In order to ensure there is proper oversight and accountability in place for CUA agencies, and ensure proper safeguards are in place to prevent similar tragedies in the future; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes Council's Special Committee on Child Separations in Philadelphia to conduct public hearings to further understand the role of community umbrella agencies (CUA), such as Turning Points for Children, in the local child welfare system, and further investigate the systemic failures that resulted in three girls being returned to their sexually abusive father.