City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Authorizing hearings in the Committee on the Environment to evaluate the environmental justice impacts of the City's waste management practices and potential alternatives to the City's contract with Covanta Delaware Valley LP.

WHEREAS, On December 20, 2016, Mayor Kenney signed Executive Order No. 13-16, creating the Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet and stating Philadelphia's intention to become a Zero Waste City; and

WHEREAS, On March 15, 2023, Mayor Kenney signed Executive Order No. 2-23. The Order gives the Environmental Justice Advisory Commission the ability to review existing and proposed government programs, policies, activities, and processes to identify environmental justice concerns and propose alternative solutions, clearly demonstrating the City's desire to engage in environmentally just practices throughout its operations; and

WHEREAS, The trash incinerator industry disproportionately impacts people of color, especially Black people, and low-income people within our region. Of people living within one mile of Pennsylvania's incinerators, 65% are people of color and their median household income averages $46,000; and

WHEREAS, Covanta Delaware Valley, located in Chester, PA, is the nation's largest incinerator, and is the primary polluter in the City of Chester. Chester is recognized as an Environmental Justice area by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection; and

WHEREAS, The City's current contract with Covanta Delaware Valley also includes a "Guaranteed Annual Quantity" clause, meaning the City will be penalized if we provide under a certain tonnage of waste per year. This is directly in conflict with the City's Zero Waste goal; and

WHEREAS, Other municipalities are moving ahead of Philadelphia when it comes to addressing Zero Waste. Washington, DC created an Office of Waste Diversion in 2014 and passed a Zero Waste Omnibus Bill in 2020 to help the District meet its Zero Waste by 2032 goal. In 2021, our neighbors in Delaware County put out an RFP for their state-mandated municipal waste management plan that was completely focused on Zero Waste; and

WHEREAS, As the City is approaching the renewal of its waste management contract, it is crucial that City Council engage all voices, especially those most impacted by the incinerator's operations, to understand the environmental justice impacts of our decisions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Committee on the Environment to hold hearings to evaluate the environmental justice impacts of the City's waste management practices and potential alternatives to the City's contract with Covanta Delaware Valley LP.