



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Education to hold hearings to investigate the level and effectiveness of community engagement and outreach initiatives carried out by higher education institutions in Philadelphia that directly impact adjacent neighborhoods.

WHEREAS, Higher education institutions in Philadelphia, including universities and colleges, play a crucial role in the City's educational landscape and economic development. Effective community engagement and outreach efforts can enhance relationships between these institutions and local residents, fostering increased enrollment and academic success; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's most renowned universities including Temple, Penn, Drexel, La Salle, and St. Joseph's have enormous impacts on the City, with combined budgets of over \$6 billion. However, their impact on local communities is not reflected in enrollment; and

WHEREAS, Research indicates that access to higher education is often inequitable, with many local residents facing significant barriers to enrollment; and

WHEREAS, According to the Lumina Foundation, nearly 60% of jobs in Pennsylvania require a postsecondary credential, yet only 48% of adults in Philadelphia hold such a credential. The American Council on Education reports that institutions with robust community engagement initiatives see up to a 15% increase in local enrollment rates, highlighting the potential impact of effective outreach; and

WHEREAS, First-generation college students, who often come from underrepresented communities, face challenges such as financial insecurity and a lack of information about available resources. These barriers can hinder their ability to enroll and succeed in higher education, underscoring the need for targeted community engagement strategies; and

WHEREAS, In 2023 it was reported that just 1,605 students, or about 14% of the combined first-year classes of those five universities, are from Philadelphia. From reports in 2023 from a university spokesperson, at Penn, 149 first-year students are from Philadelphia, or 6% of the class. At Temple, 720 students are from Philly, about 15% of its class. Drexel has 420 students from the City, or 14% of its first-year class. At St. Joseph's, there are 100 students from Philadelphia schools, or 9% of the class. And La Salle enrolls the greatest percentage of students from Philadelphia, with 216 students making up 42% of its first-year class; and

WHEREAS, Universities in Philadelphia have a significant impact on the communities they reside in. Changes in demographics, development, and an overall influx of non-residents change the atmosphere and culture of these areas. Local residents should have equitable access to the opportunities that take place within their own neighborhoods, as these institutions continue to impact the surrounding areas; and

WHEREAS, To address these issues, the Committee on Education is authorized to hold hearings to investigate the levels of community engagement and outreach conducted by higher education institutions in Philadelphia. The hearings will assess the effectiveness of these outreach efforts, explore existing programs aimed at

connecting local communities with educational resources, and identify barriers that prevent local residents from accessing higher education; and

WHEREAS, By fostering meaningful engagement between higher education institutions and the Philadelphia community, we can promote educational access and equity, ensuring that these institutions serve as accessible gateways for local residents seeking higher education opportunities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorize the Committee on Education to hold hearings to investigate the level and effectiveness of community engagement and outreach initiatives carried out by higher education institutions in Philadelphia.