

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Special Committee on Kensington to convene and investigate the processes and effectiveness of the current and past diversion programs in relation to individuals suffering from substance use disorder in the Kensington area.

WHEREAS, The opioid crisis has significantly impacted communities nationwide, with Philadelphia experiencing a staggering increase in opioid-related fatalities, with over 1,200 overdose deaths in 2021 alone. This represents a 53% increase from the previous year, according to the Philadelphia Department of Public Health in 2022; and

WHEREAS, Kensington has been disproportionately affected by the opioid crisis, with estimates indicating that over 40% of the City's opioid-related deaths occur within this neighborhood, according to the Philadelphia Medical Examiner's Office in 2021; and

WHEREAS, Diversion programs have shown promise in providing alternatives to incarceration, with studies indicating that individuals who participate in these programs are 30% less likely to re-offend compared to those who do not receive treatment, according to research from the Urban Institute in 2018; and

WHEREAS, The National Institute on Drug Abuse states that individuals engaged in treatment programs have a 40-60% improvement in treatment retention and recovery outcomes compared to those who do not have access to such programs, as reported in 2021; and

WHEREAS, Understanding the effectiveness of existing diversion programs in Kensington is critical for enhancing their impact and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to combat the crisis; and

WHEREAS, Diversion programs such as Forensic Intensive Recovery (FIR), Accelerated Misdemeanor Program Tier 1 and Tier 2 (AMP 1 & 2), Accelerated Rehabilitation Disposition (ARD), The Choice is Yours (TCY), Treatment Court, Mental Health Court, Drug and Alcohol Treatment-Based Restrictive Intermediate Punishment (RIP) Program, Juvenile Treatment Court (JTC), Crisis Intervention Response Teams (CIRT), Police Assisted Diversion (PAD), and other diversion programs provide alternatives to traditional prosecution and incarceration by addressing underlying issues such as substance use disorders and mental health problems, with the aim of offering treatment and support to reduce recidivism and assist individuals in reintegrating into society; and

WHEREAS, The Forensic Intensive Recovery (FIR) Program, established in 1993 in response to a 1991 Federal Consent Decree, mandates a minimum of 250 treatment slots for males and females as an alternative to incarceration, providing substance abuse treatment and support services; as of March 30, 2024, the program had 269 individuals in treatment and 262 receiving case management services; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Treatment Court, operational since April 1997, serves as a jail diversion program that integrates treatment and judicial supervision for individuals identified as eligible at arraignment, with 128 individuals actively engaged in treatment and 187 receiving case management as of March 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, The Drug and Alcohol Treatment-Based Restrictive Intermediate Punishment (RIP) Program, initiated in September 1997, aims to reduce prison populations through substance use treatment, with 22 individuals actively receiving treatment and 31 benefiting from case management as of March 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, The Juvenile Treatment Court (JTC), established in September 2004, provides intensive diversion for juveniles needing substance abuse treatment, with 9 active adolescents in treatment and 11 enrolled as of March 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, The Accelerated Misdemeanor Program (AMP) offers non-violent misdemeanor defendants an alternative resolution to their cases, allowing for community service and social services without a guilty plea, with 49 individuals actively participating and 152 receiving case management as of March 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, The Crisis Intervention Response Teams (CIRT), are teams of sworn officers and mental health clinicians that operates citywide and responds directly to 911 calls and crisis events. The aim of CIRT is to provide individuals with behavioral health needs, a tailored response including de-escalation and connection to services; and

WHEREAS, The Police Assisted Diversion (PAD) is a program designed to divert individuals away from the criminal justice system. Participants are individuals who in previous years would have been arrested for incidents such as retail theft, prostitution, and narcotics possession. PAD connects these individuals to a wide range of services such as housing, substance use treatment, food, and transportation services; and

WHEREAS, There is a critical need for the City Council of Philadelphia to assess the effectiveness and trends of existing diversion programs to enhance their scope, thereby increasing access to treatment for individuals struggling with substance use disorder and decreasing the number of individuals facing incarceration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Special Committee on Kensington is authorized to convene and investigate the processes and effectiveness of the current and past diversion programs in relation to individuals suffering from substance use disorder in the Kensington area.