Legislation Text

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Recognizing December 21st 2024 as Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in the City of Philadelphia, acknowledging the lives of all unhoused people we have lost over the past year, and bringing attention to housing insecurity across the City.

WHEREAS, December 21st 2024 is the Winter Solstice and the longest night of the year, which typically brings severely cold temperatures across the entire City; and

WHEREAS, Homelessness is an epidemic plighting the City of Philadelphia, and 2024 represents the fourth consecutive year where the number of unhoused people has increased in the City. An estimated 5,200 individuals are experiencing homelessness, nearly a 10% increase from the year 2023; and

WHEREAS, Several core causes drive homelessness in Philadelphia, all of which are related to systemic and institutional failures within the City, the commonwealth, and the country at large. Philadelphia's poverty rate is 21.7%, significantly higher than other major US cities. Additionally, 11.7% of Philadelphia residents are living in deep poverty, living on incomes 50% of the federal poverty limit; and

WHEREAS, A lack of affordable housing is the most significant motivating factor in Philadelphia's homelessness crisis. An estimated 48% of Philadelphians pay more than thirty percent of their income on housing alone, and only 38 affordable housing units exist for every 100 low-income households. As a result, many households across the City live in constant financial instability; and

WHEREAS, More than 20% of people experiencing homelessness have either been evicted or displaced; and

WHEREAS, On December 1st, Philadelphia declared its first "Code Blue" of the season, announcing that outside temperatures will be hazardous for all people and even more so for those living outside. A code blue is activated when temperatures fall below freezing or when the wind chill makes it feel like 20 degrees or below; and

WHEREAS, Homelessness is known to hasten the effects of physical aging on the body, it reduces one's life expectancy by 20 years. People experiencing homelessness are more likely than others to experience injury and interpersonal violence, and some studies estimate homelessness deaths are upwards of 13,000 people per year with many dying from treatable conditions, largely because of a lack of access to food, housing, and healthcare; and

WHEREAS, Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is a day to remember those who have lost their lives while being unhoused. It also provides an opportunity for us to reflect and act as a community to identify and confront the factors that cause homelessness; and

WHEREAS, Homeless Persons' Memorial Day is also meant to address and highlight connections individuals have with the unhoused population, the causes behind Philadelphia's high homelessness population, and the lives that have been lost while being unhoused; and

WHEREAS, The day shall also recognize efforts made by the government of the City of Philadelphia, local organizations, and individuals supporting unhoused populations, working to reduce the number of unhoused people in the City, and limiting the factors that lead individuals to becoming homeless; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize December 21st 2024 as Homeless Persons' Memorial Day in the City of Philadelphia, acknowledge the lives of all unhoused people we have lost over the past year, and bring attention to housing insecurity across the City.

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