Legislation Text

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Calling for the creation of a Special Committee on Early Childhood Development to evaluate, support, and strengthen Philadelphia's early childhood care and education systems, with the goal of improving outcomes for children from birth through age five and addressing the broader issues of poverty, equity, and economic opportunity.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has a large and diverse population of young children, with more than 90,000 children under the age of five residing in the City according to the 2023 American Community Survey; and

WHEREAS, Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Pre-K programs are vital to addressing childhood poverty and promoting future academic success by providing children with a strong foundation of academic, social, and emotional skills; and

WHEREAS, Children from low-income families often begin school with fewer resources and experiences than their more affluent peers, contributing to an achievement gap that can have long-term consequences such as lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, and reduced economic opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Fully funding and supporting ECE and Pre-K programs helps close this gap by offering quality educational experiences that level the playing field and ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed. Participation in ECE and Pre-K programs support the development of critical social-emotional and cognitive skills; such as self-regulation, communication, problem-solving, letter recognition, counting, and pre-reading abilities, laying the groundwork for future academic and personal success; and

WHEREAS, These programs also offer access to essential support services, such as healthcare screenings, nutrition guidance, and resources for parents and caregivers to promote healthy child development; and

WHEREAS, Challenges in early learning and care highlight urgent issues of systemic underinvestment, the persistent undervaluation of the early childhood workforce, and the growing economic burden on families and providers when access to high-quality care is limited or unaffordable; and

WHEREAS, Early Childhood Education and Pre-K workers are the backbone of our early learning system, providing essential care and instruction during the most critical years of child development, yet they often receive low wages, limited benefits, and insufficient professional support; and

WHEREAS, Supporting and investing in the early childhood workforce through fair compensation, access to professional development, and improved working conditions are essential to ensuring quality care, reducing staff turnover, and sustaining a strong, equitable early learning system for all children; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of early childhood educators are women-many of whom are women of color-and addressing the inequities faced by this workforce is not only a matter of education policy but also one of racial and gender justice; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative to evaluate the availability, quality, and accessibility of early childhood education and Pre-K services in Philadelphia, including best practices for supporting providers and engaging families in the learning process; and

WHEREAS, City Council holds a vital responsibility to examine, advance, and champion policies and initiatives that enhance the well-being of children and families across Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the creation of a "Special Committee on Early Childhood Development," consisting of members appointed by the Council President, to evaluate, support, and strengthen Philadelphia's early childhood care and education systems, with the goal of improving outcomes for children from birth through age five and addressing the broader issues of poverty, equity, and economic opportunity.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That in furtherance of these goals, the Special Committee's duties shall include, but not be confined to: convening regular meetings for planning and coordination purposes; examining the efficacy of current programs and policies, identifying local and national best practices, engaging community leaders; increasing capacity for data collection and analysis; developing metrics to measure progress toward strategic goals; reviewing allocation of City resources to ensure optimization of results; holding public hearings to highlight the Special Committee's progress and solicit public input.

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