Legislation Text

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Authorizing the committee on Public Safety to hold hearings to examine the potential establishment of the Office of Freedmen Affairs within the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The history of the City of Philadelphia is deeply connected to the story of African Americans, including the descendants of persons once enslaved who helped build the civic and cultural foundations of the City; and

WHEREAS, The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution formally abolished slavery, yet the descendants of persons emancipated under its provisions continue to endure inequities rooted in the legacy of bondage and its aftermath; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia played a critical role in the abolition movement, serving as home to leaders such as Richard Allen and William Still who advanced the cause of freedom and justice for those seeking emancipation; and

WHEREAS, Despite this legacy, the City continues to confront inequities in housing and employment that disproportionately affect the descendants of persons once enslaved; and

WHEREAS, An Office of Freedmen Affairs could serve as a dedicated agency within municipal government, supporting the health and economic prosperity of descendants of emancipated persons in civic life and addressing present inequities; and

WHEREAS, Such an office could also promote a renewed public image for lineal descendants of persons afflicted with conditions of emancipation in Philadelphia, while coordinating with federal and state governments as well as local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The creation of an Office of Freedmen Affairs would require careful study of legal authority, funding sources, and programmatic priorities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Public Safety is authorized to hold hearings to examine the potential establishment of an Office of Freedmen Affairs within the City of Philadelphia, with the goal of supporting health and economic prosperity, renewing the public image of descendants of emancipated persons, and coordinating the work of government at multiple levels.