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Authorizing a joint hearing between the Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs to examine the presence of firearms in public recreation spaces, the enforcement of existing laws, and strategies to reduce gun violence in parks and playgrounds across the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's homicide rate in 2025 declined to its lowest level in roughly 60 years; however, despite this progress, there were still at least 935 recorded shooting victims, with the vast majority of shootings concentrated in a small number of neighborhoods. Research underscores this disparity: a Pew Research Center analysis of 2022-2024 data found that nearly 40% of shootings occurred in just 12 of Philadelphia's 159 neighborhoods, demonstrating that gun violence remains highly localized rather than Citywide; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence continues to disproportionately impact young Black males, with a University of Pennsylvania report estimating that approximately one in eight Black males in Philadelphia will be shot or killed before the age of 25, underscoring the urgent need to protect young people and ensure that public spaces, especially City parks and recreation facilities remain safe and free from gun violence, and the City of Philadelphia has implemented measures to address these concerns; and

WHEREAS, Children and adolescents remain disproportionately affected by firearm violence. Public health research from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab indicates that nearly all pediatric firearm injuries and deaths occur in low-opportunity neighborhoods, with approximately 96 percent affecting Black and Hispanic youth, and that children in these neighborhoods are more than twice as likely to be injured or killed by a firearm; and

WHEREAS, Juvenile involvement in nonfatal shootings is increasing. Data reported by the District Attorney's Office shows that 49 juveniles were charged in connection with nonfatal shootings in 2024, underscoring the ongoing need for targeted prevention, mentorship, and community-based support; and

WHEREAS, 300 incidents of gun violence we're recorded between 2019-2022 in City parks and recreation facilities. In response, the Mayor's Office issued an Executive Order in 2022 prohibiting firearms and other deadly weapons at all City recreation facilities, including recreation center buildings, courts, fields, playgrounds, and pools; and

WHEREAS, The City has also adopted legislative measures to further reduce gun violence. In 2025, Philadelphia City Council passed an ordinance requiring licensed firearms dealers to post point-of-sale signage warning against buying a firearm for someone else an illegal practice known as straw purchasing, this along with other signs illustrating the consequences of illegally acquired firearms aimed to reduce gun violence, as reflected in City Council legislative records; and

WHEREAS, While these steps have contributed to progress, including a decrease in homicides to 222 in 2025 from the previous year, continued effort is necessary to ensure the safety of children and adolescents in public spaces; and

WHEREAS, Research in public health and criminal justice indicates that gun-free zone policies, signage, and posted restrictions alone are insufficient in preventing firearms from entering public recreation spaces, but when these initiatives are combined with other violence prevention strategies like consistent enforcement, community engagement, and prevention strategies, gun violence can be reduced; and

WHEREAS, Other jurisdictions have utilized this approach banning firearms while working with local organizations and law enforcement to work together to reduce gun violence. For example, New Jersey has prohibited firearms in parks, New York City combines warnings with restrictions on concealed carry, and Boston has developed community-driven youth programs, focused deterrence strategies, and trauma-informed supports in high-risk neighborhoods, based on municipal experience and program evaluations; and

WHEREAS, To addressing Philadelphia's ongoing gun violence crisis that is particularly pronounced among children and adolescents will require a sustained and comprehensive approach that integrates law enforcement, prevention efforts and community investment, this effort reflects both the success we have achieved in reducing gun violence and a continued focus on solutions that further reduce the harm gun violence continues to cause ; and

WHEREAS, A joint hearing of the Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs would provide City Council with the opportunity to review enforcement of the 2022 Executive Order, assess the effectiveness of signage and point-of-sale warnings, consider potential improvements to laws and policies, examine youth-focused prevention strategies, and identify opportunities for coordination among City agencies and community stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, Testimony from stakeholders, including City officials, law enforcement, public health experts, community organizations, and youth advocates, will provide insight into both enforcement challenges and solutions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby calls for a joint public hearing of the Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs to examine the presence of firearms in public recreation spaces, the enforcement of existing laws and ordinances, and strategies to reduce gun violence in City parks and playgrounds.

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