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Authorizing the Joint Committees on Public Health and Human Services and the Children and Youth to hold hearings to raise awareness regarding the role of gaming platforms and social platforms and their use in the grooming, recruitment, and exploitation of minors, including conduct that may lead to human trafficking.

WHEREAS, The sexual exploitation and trafficking of children remain an ongoing concern affecting public safety, public health, and the welfare of families in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Minors increasingly spend time in online environments, including gaming platforms, where communication with other users may occur through text, video, voice, or private messaging; and

WHEREAS, These platforms are often designed to encourage interaction and engagement, including with individuals who are not personally known to the child; and

WHEREAS, Law enforcement, child advocates, educators, and service providers have reported that online contact can be used by adults to groom minors, gain trust, and normalize inappropriate behavior over time; and

WHEREAS, Concerns have been raised that certain platform features, safeguards, and moderation practices may not consistently prevent or detect grooming behavior involving children; and

WHEREAS, The increased use of artificial intelligence tools on and around these platforms including AI-generated profiles, messages, images, videos, and voice may make it easier to impersonate minors, scale grooming attempts, and evade moderation, and may also complicate investigations and reporting; and

WHEREAS, In 2025, civil lawsuits were reported in multiple states alleging that children were groomed and exploited after initial contact occurred on gaming platforms, with communications in some instances continuing across other online services; and

WHEREAS, In the same year, several state Attorneys General filed or announced enforcement actions against gaming or communications platforms alleging failures related to child safety protections and representations made to users and parents; and

WHEREAS, In December 2025, the United States Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation centralized numerous federal cases involving allegations of child sexual exploitation connected to a major gaming platform, including cases originating from Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, These proceedings involve allegations that have not yet been fully resolved; however, they reflect widespread concerns regarding online child safety and the potential for exploitation; and

WHEREAS, City Council has an interest in understanding how these risks affect children locally and how City agencies, schools, families, and community organizations can better prevent harm and respond when incidents occur; and

WHEREAS, Holding public hearings would allow Council to receive testimony, place information on the public record, and consider whether further action is appropriate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Joint Committees on Public Health and Human Services and the Children and Youth to hold hearings to raise awareness regarding the role of gaming platforms and social platforms and their use in the grooming, recruitment, and exploitation of minors, including conduct that may lead to human trafficking.

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