



Councilmember Helen Gym

Philadelphia City Council, At-Large



Focus on Children & Youth

Chair, Committee on Children & Youth

Longtime education activist

Founder of Parents United for Public Education

Parent of three children who graduated from Philadelphia public schools

Intersectional approach to issues

In addition to education:

- Housing and eviction prevention
- Public safety and anti-violence
- Civil rights and anti-discrimination
- Worker rights

Our lens: Racial justice, economic justice, public health

Medical/behavioral health orgs and social workers are key allies in our work

School funding and equity

Increase school funding through fair taxation

Expand resources systemwide, but prioritizing where there is greatest need

Typical initiatives:

- STEP program creation and expansion
- School breakfast access
- Clean, safe water
- Teacher/staff vacancies, including special ed
- School facilities modernization

Youth Residential Placement Taskforce

Convened 2018-2019, following the death of David Hess at Wordsworth

Active implementation work is ongoing

Builds on work to reduce institutional placements for young people

Relies on expansion of effective prevention and treatment services, as well as community-based alternatives to institutionalization

3-year goals

Behavioral Health Services

- Increase the number of youth receiving home and school-based behavioral health supports by 31%, serving 2,687 additional youth.²
- Increase the number of families receiving family therapy by 16%.
- Increase the number of families served with High Fidelity Wraparound Services by 33%. “High Fi” is for youth in or at-risk for PRTF placement, especially those involved with Philadelphia Department of Human Services.
- Increase the number of youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder receiving Applied Behavioral Analysis by 18%.

Reports available at

<https://www.phila.gov/departments/health-and-human-services/youth-residential-placement-task-force>

School-based highlights

Recommendation #8, 9, 19

- New Code of Conduct
- IBHS implementation and STEP permanency
- \$150m from ARP over 4 years for “social supports such as case management, school counselors, home visiting, and family based resources”
- Focus on truancy
- Expand transition supports
- Improve quality of IEP/504, information-sharing

Youth-powered Anti-Violence Agenda

Released Spring 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

Guarantee youth employment in the zip codes most impacted by gun violence.

Expand youth programming, including extended rec center hours for teenagers in impacted zip codes and increased funding for existing youth-serving programs.

Ensure safe and secure housing. Communities with the highest rates of gun violence also have a disproportionate share of evictions and substandard housing.

Provide universal trauma counseling. Establish a 24-hour trauma support line, rapid response teams, and expanded therapeutic services for youth and families impacted by violence.

Prevent harm and reimagine justice. Expand evidence-based violence interruption programs, non-police crisis response teams, and restorative justice programs.

Provide additional supports and resources for the schools most impacted by gun violence. Just 25 schools enrolled over 50% of youth involved in gun violence.

Re-engage youth who are disconnected from school or employment. Roughly half of the youth involved in gun violence have disconnected from a school system or graduated.

School-based highlights

- Importance of workforce pipeline and retention for trauma therapeutic services
- Focus on reaching disconnected youth
- Expand STEP and counseling resources
- Specialized training and support for staff in addressing trauma
- Invest in conflict resolution, restorative practices, mentoring, and violence interruption
- Support feeder schools for those most impacted by violence
- Reform truancy system
- Increase access to trauma counseling

For the future

- Strong Futures for Foster Youth Act
- Youth Ombuds Office
- Youth employment initiative
- JJSC transition supports
- Expand investments in anti-violence, prevention, restorative justice, and crisis response
- Advocate for fully funded, 21st century schools

Contact us

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