

# City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Room 402, City Hall  
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 241036)

## RESOLUTION

Congratulating Director Keli McLoyd, Noelle Foizen, and the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity on the success of the Overdose Prevention and Awareness Canvassing Program, which has knocked on over one hundred thousand doors in Philadelphia, and for earning recognition from The White House for its innovative and evidence-based public health approach to combating the overdose crisis.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has seen a drastic shift in demographics of overdose fatalities, disproportionately impacting Philadelphia's communities of color. Between 2018 and 2022, the number of overdose fatalities increased 87% and 43% among non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic individuals; and

WHEREAS, In response to this alarming rise, the Overdose Response Unit and the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, developed a door-to-door outreach program to reduce racial disparities in access to treatment services and resources by providing accessible, culturally relevant information about the overdose crisis, as well as life-saving interventions including naloxone. Staff have collectively knocked on over 100,000 doors in the span of less than a year, focused on neighborhoods with disproportionately rising rates of fatal overdose, working every day to save lives; and

WHEREAS, The Overdose Prevention and Awareness Canvassing Program model focuses on meeting people where they are—in their homes. Although there is a common misconception that most overdoses occur in the streets or amongst those experiencing homelessness, the majority (69%) of overdoses in Philadelphia occur inside people's homes; and

WHEREAS, By bringing resources, education, and services to people's homes without requiring people to identify themselves as drug users, the Overdose Prevention Canvassing Program is a powerful tool to combat the overdose epidemic. Many people in need do not seek services because they are afraid of "outing" themselves as drug users, especially in Black communities that have been targeted by the "War on Drugs" and the family separation and incarceration systems; and

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WHEREAS, The Overdose Response Unit and Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity aim to make life saving tools like naloxone as common and accessible as the aspirin in our medicine cabinets and education about overdose prevention common sense; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity is flexible and responsive to community needs, quickly canvassing neighborhoods that recently have experienced a surge in overdose deaths and working rapidly to connect anyone to treatment and services as soon as they are ready to receive it; and

WHEREAS, The Overdose Awareness and Prevention Canvassing Program, formerly Philly Counts, was originally created to go door-to-door to help register Philadelphians for the 2020 Census, but transitioned to combating the overdose epidemic due to the visionary work of Keli McLoyd, now the Director of the Overdose Response Unit, and Noelle Foizen, Former Director; and

WHEREAS, The life-saving success of the Overdose Awareness and Prevention Canvassing Program would not be possible without leaders in the Overdose Response Unit, including Director Keli McLoyd, Former Director Nicole Foizen, and Senior Project Manager Claire McKeown, and leaders in the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, including Deputy Executive Director of Place-Based Initiatives Robin Walker and Community Engagement Supervisors Andre Chaney and Anthony Wyatt; and

WHEREAS, Canvassers with the program are recruited and trained as “trusted community messengers.” The current team includes Denise Ross, Carl Green, Taisha Banks, Shanae Sutton, Benjamin Ward, Shawn Kornegay, Rasheeda Northington, Mitchell Bormack, Sharon Farmer, and Everoll Brackett; and

WHEREAS, The overwhelming majority of residents reached by canvassers (between 76% and 88%) accepted resources, including naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and information about overdose. Data suggests that recent decreases in both local and nationwide fatal overdoses may be due to the proliferation of naloxone in the hands of those that need it; and

WHEREAS, The White House recently recognized Keli McLoyd and the Overdose Awareness and Prevention Canvassing Program as the kind of program that should be replicated and scaled up nationally during its Overdose Awareness Week, hosted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. As the opioid epidemic has evolved to include fentanyl, xylazine and now medetomidine, it has become increasingly important to educate people and communities about the emerging and developing risks associated with newly available narcotics and connect them to services and tools like naloxone; and

WHEREAS, Other municipalities are looking at adopting the Overdose Awareness and Preventing Canvassing Program model, including recently Chicago. This past summer, Chicago launched its own pilot version of the program through its Summer Overdose Safety program,

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knocking on more than a thousand doors in five underserved neighborhoods over the course of 10 weeks; and

WHEREAS, Across the country, rising rates of homelessness, displacement and overdose indicate increased need for life-saving programs like the Overdose Awareness and Prevention Canvassing Program, capable of reaching people in their homes and helping people understand, cope with, and address issues that, left untreated, can lead to homelessness, chronic illness, and death. The relentless work of the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity in reaching out to and connecting with people across Philadelphia has saved lives and is reducing the damage and harms caused by the overdose crisis; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Congratulates Director Keli McLoyd, Noelle Foizen, and the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity on the success of the Overdose Awareness and Prevention Canvassing Program, which has knocked on over one hundred thousand doors in Philadelphia, and for earning recognition from The White House for its innovative and evidence-based public health approach to combating the overdose crisis.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Keli McLoyd and Noelle Foizen as evidence of the admiration and respect of this body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the thirty-first day of October, 2024.

Kenyatta Johnson  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum  
INTERIM CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Brooks

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Brooks, Phillips, Gilmore Richardson  
Gauthier, Thomas, Jones, O'Rourke and Squilla