City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 240477

Introduced May 16, 2024

Councilmember Ahmad

RESOLUTION

Honoring the Life of Christian Hall, Urging the Pennsylvania State Senate to Pass House Bill 1305, and recognizing both Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and Mental Health Awareness Month.

WHEREAS, The traditional "9-1-1" emergency response system is not always adequately equipped to respond to mental health crises, leading to outcomes that, tragically, can result in harm to individuals in need of mental health supports; and

WHEREAS, A person in the midst of a mental health crisis is more likely to encounter law enforcement personnel than to receive a crisis intervention or other mental health treatment; and

WHEREAS, Historically, crisis response services have placed members of marginalized communities at disproportionate risk of poor or harmful outcomes, including criminal justice involvement; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of "9-8-8" as a dedicated number for mental health crises was a significant step towards improving access to critical mental health services and reducing the stigma associated with seeking that type of help; and

WHEREAS, Mobile crisis units have been proven as an effective means of de-escalating crises by connecting individuals with appropriate mental health services, reducing unnecessary incarcerations and hospitalizations; and

WHEREAS, A person experiencing a mental health emergency should be kept safe and given help to diffuse the situation; and

WHEREAS, On December 30, 2020, when Christian Hall, a 19-year-old Chinese American man from Stroudsburg, needed such care, the Pennsylvania State Police tragically failed to provide it; and

WHEREAS, On that day, Christian anonymously called "9-1-1" to report a suicidal person – himself – but when troopers responded to the medical emergency, they shot and killed Christian; and

WHEREAS, Had "9-8-8" been available to Christian in 2020, his call would have been answered by specialized mental health crisis responders trained in de-escalation and the delivery of compassionate care, rather than then the State Police; and

WHEREAS, The death of Christian Hall spurred protests across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, while the ensuing lack of transparency in the wake of what many considered a grave miscarriage of justice attracted national media attention to his case; and

WHEREAS, Understanding that a service as crucial as "9-8-8" must have an adequate, sustainable and dedicated funding stream, State Representative Stephen Kinsey introduced House Bill 1305, which would require a nominal monthly fee on wireless devices, similar to how we fund "9-1-1"; and

WHEREAS, May is Asian Pacific Heritage Month, and the Justice for Christian Hall Campaign is being led by the Asian Pacific Islander Political Alliance ("API PA"), the largest and first-ever political organization in Pennsylvania directly advocating for the needs of Asian Pacific Islanders; and

WHEREAS, May is also Mental Health Awareness Month, which, since, 1949, has been dedicated to eradicating the stigma around accessing mental health services and raising awareness regarding diverse mental health needs; and

WHEREAS, Christian's parents Fe and Gareth Hall, the Justice for Christian Hall Campaign, community members, and API PA have been working to ensure that "9-8-8" is funded and operates seamlessly with "9-1-1," while also working to increase awareness of the mental health needs of Asian Americans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the life of Christian Hall, urge the Pennsylvania State Senate to pass House Bill 1305, and recognize both Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and Mental Health Awareness Month.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to representatives of the Justice for Christian Hall Campaign, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.