

Legislation Text

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Proclaiming and designating the week of April 10 - 16, 2016 as “Philadelphia Crime Victims’ Rights Week” to encourage citizens to assist crime victims and to increase community awareness and support for the organizations that help crime victims rebuild their lives.

WHEREAS, National Crime Victims’ Rights Week was established in 1981 to promote awareness and support for victims of crime and is sponsored by the Federal Office for Victims of Crime which provides funding to state victim assistance and compensation programs; and

WHEREAS, This year’s theme is “Serving Victims. Building Trust. Restoring Hope.,” recognizing that trust is of particular concern in communities that feel isolated from or invisible to mainstream service providers and the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, A large proportion of people can expect to become the victim of a crime at some point in their lifetime, making crime not a remote or distant issue, but rather one that touches many of our families and communities; and

WHEREAS, In 2015, after a period of significant decline, Philadelphia saw its murder rate climb with 280 murders, a 13 percent increase from 2014; and

WHEREAS, Young people are disproportionately victimized compared to other age groups. Of the national population of 14- to 17-year-olds, over 69 percent had been assaulted, 56 percent had experienced a property victimization (including robbery), 41 percent had been maltreated and 27 percent had been sexually victimized at some point in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Crimes such as domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse affect survivors in the most intimate aspects of their lives; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, 25% of crime victims experienced lifetime PTSD and 23% of family members of homicide victims have also developed PTSD at some point in their lives; and

WHEREAS, Too often, factors such as language and culture, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, disability and social isolation may prevent victims from seeking and receiving help; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has taken steps through its Sanctuary City Policy to extend protections to undocumented immigrants, including those who are victims and witnesses to crimes, so that no one need fear that a call to the police for assistance will result in deportation. Additionally, the Department of Justice has launched a new initiative this year to reduce language barriers for underserved victims throughout the nation through training and technical assistance for victim service providers and allied professionals; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia’s network of victim advocacy organizations provide crucial services to crime victims

throughout the City, often employing culturally-sensitive and trauma-informed practices to ensure that victims have appropriate care and support at their time of greatest need; and

WHEREAS, Victims of crime living in the City of Philadelphia may receive compensation through the Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP) which is operated by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. VCAP aids victims of crime by helping cover their medical, counseling and travel expenses, as well as the loss of their earnings and support; and

WHEREAS, Rallies, candlelight vigils and a host of commemorative activities are held each year to promote victims' rights and to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the week of April 10 - 16, 2016 will be recognized as "Philadelphia Crime Victims' Rights Week" to encourage citizens to assist crime victims and to increase community awareness and support for the organizations that help crime victims rebuild their lives.