Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	260627	**Version:**	0	**Name:**	
Type:	Resolution			**Status:**	ADOPTED
File created:	6/4/2026			**In control:**	CITY COUNCIL
On agenda:				**Final action:**	6/4/2026
Title:	Honoring Leo Elliot, Susan Layne, and Nancy Geist for their skillful and committed work in making the Eviction Diversion Program Portal possible and their nationally recognized success in keeping thousands of Philadelphians in their homes.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Brooks, Council President Johnson, Councilmember Phillips, Councilmember Gauthier, Councilmember Landau, Councilmember Harrity, Councilmember O'Rourke, Councilmember Bass, Councilmember Ahmad				
Indexes:	EVICTIONS				
Code sections:					
Attachments:	1. Signature26062700				

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
6/4/2026	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar		
6/4/2026	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED	Pass	

Honoring Leo Elliot, Susan Layne, and Nancy Geist for their skillful and committed work in making the Eviction Diversion Program Portal possible and their nationally recognized success in keeping thousands of Philadelphians in their homes.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia’s Eviction Diversion Program is a nationally recognized model for keeping families housed. By bringing landlords and tenants together before an eviction is filed, connecting households to rental assistance and counseling, and resolving disputes through mediation rather than the courtroom, the program has prevented thousands of evictions in Philadelphia each year and has become a template studied by jurisdictions across the country; and

WHEREAS, The Eviction Diversion Program operates through the day-in, day-out coordination of multiple partner organizations, including CORA Services / Good Shepherd Mediation, Philadelphia Legal Assistance, Community Legal Services, and the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, working alongside the City of Philadelphia and Philadelphia’s housing counseling agencies. From its earliest days the program has been shaped by ongoing feedback from every group it touches, tenants, landlords, landlord advocates, mediators, attorneys, and housing counselors alike, and its strength has always come from sustained partnership and shared learning across them; and

WHEREAS, In February 2026, after years of cross-agency design, development, and testing, the program launched a new Eviction Diversion Program Portal: a single digital system that receives applications, routes them across pathways, supports mediation, rental assistance, and direct negotiation, and connects all partner organizations. The Portal is the operational foundation that allows the program to function at the scale that Philadelphia’s housing emergency demands; and

WHEREAS, Leo Elliot of Philadelphia Legal Assistance is the Program Coordinator for PLA’s EDP tenant

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hotline, coordinating a team of paralegals who answer the calls of Philadelphia tenants seeking guidance about the Eviction Diversion Program and the protections it offers. He also plays a central role in the careful choreography of scheduling housing counseling appointments; work that requires constant collaboration across organizations so that each tenant who reaches out can be connected, at the right moment, to the help they need; and

WHEREAS, Over the multi-year development of the Eviction Diversion Program Portal, and on top of his full-time hotline responsibilities, Mr. Elliot brought a tenant advocate's perspective to a deeply technical project, working to ensure that the Portal's logic, notifications, and workflows reflected what tenants experience and need. At the same time, he developed an uncommon command of the Portal's underlying formulas, data structures, and notification triggers, and used that deep knowledge to identify systemic problems whose effects reached far beyond those who call the hotline; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Elliot tested every part of the Portal, not only the features that mattered to his organization or to tenants and followed every issue he raised through to its resolution. He became, in effect, one of Portal's most committed stewards: a connective thread among the many people and organizations involved in building the system, and a quiet but essential force in holding the work together; and

WHEREAS, Where others saw a tool to be used, Mr. Elliot saw a system to be understood; its logic, its language, its vulnerabilities. He learned that language fluently, then spoke it on behalf of every participant and partner who would one day move through its circuits; and

WHEREAS, Susan Layne of CORA Services / Good Shepherd Mediation leads the Eviction Diversion Program's application review team, which processes thousands of landlord applications each month with both timeliness and thoroughness. Her team is the entrance point for the landlords who apply, and when an application arrives incomplete, the team works diligently and compassionately to help the applicant resolve the issues so that they and their tenants can enter the program; and

WHEREAS, While carrying that full operational load, Ms. Layne devoted countless hours and relentless focus to the design and refinement of the Portal. During the soft launch, she and her team juggled both the legacy portal and the new one in parallel, reviewing applications in two systems at once while continuing to shape the new system from within. Through it all she insisted on a review process that is fast enough to keep pace with demand, accurate enough to connect each household with the right resources, and clear enough that landlords and tenants understand at every step what is happening with their application; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Layne approached every problem with extraordinary persistence, testing fixes, tracking which issues had been resolved and which had not, and refusing to accept partial answers when more was possible. In February 2026, her team approved the first application to be processed under the new fully launched Portal, demonstrating that what had been imagined for years now worked in practice at scale; and

WHEREAS, If the Eviction Diversion Program has a front door, Ms. Layne is the person who has spent years making sure it opens; for the landlords who arrive uncertain or frustrated or who have difficulty with paperwork or technology. Behind each application she sees a household, and her insistence that the door opens quickly, accurately, and with care has set the standard the program now strives to meet; and

WHEREAS, Nancy Geist Giacomini of CORA Services / Good Shepherd Mediation serves as the Senior Program Manager for the Eviction Diversion Program and leads the program's Landlord Liaison work. She also oversees the program's mediation work, drawing on her many years of experience as a mediator, including for the Eviction Diversion Program, before she joined the staff. Day in and day out she helps landlords and their

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representatives, from small mom-and-pop property owners to the staff of large corporations and the lawyers of major law firms, understand how the program works, participate effectively, and find their footing through situations that can be confusing, contentious, and high-stakes; and

WHEREAS, Like her colleagues, Ms. Giacomini took on the work of building the Portal on top of her full responsibilities. Her focus across the project was the experience of landlords and their representatives, anticipating where they would be confused, advocating for clear communications, and ensuring that the program's mediation pathway and its connections to housing counselors and other supports would function reliably for everyone involved; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Giacomini consistently brought attention to risks and edge cases that others might have missed, surfacing problems that affected real participants in real time, and proposing thoughtful, creative solutions during the complex transition between the program's old and new systems. She was also ever mindful of the need to provide a seamless experience for the dozens of pro bono mediators without whom the program would not function. Her vigilance helped ensure that no participant fell through the cracks during the launch and that the work of the mediators was able to continue unimpeded; and

WHEREAS, Across her years with the program, Ms. Giacomini has been the steady voice landlords find on the other end of the line, translating a complex system into terms each one can act on, whether they own a single rowhouse or manage a portfolio across the city. She came to this work as a mediator, and she has brought a mediator's instinct for clarity and fairness to every part of it; and

WHEREAS, None of the three honorees are employees of the City of Philadelphia. They are community partners, at Philadelphia Legal Assistance and at CORA Services / Good Shepherd Mediation, who chose, again, to extend themselves beyond what any job description required of them. Just as the Eviction Diversion Program has always been built on the feedback of the people who use it, tenants, landlords, advocates, mediators, attorneys, and counselors, these three honorees turned their own deep listening into the design and refinement of the Portal. Their commitment to the participants of the program, and to the program's success, is what made the launch of the Portal possible; and

WHEREAS, The contributions recognized here are part of a much larger collective effort. Many colleagues at CORA Services / Good Shepherd Mediation, Philadelphia Legal Assistance, Community Legal Services, the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, the City of Philadelphia, and additional partner organizations devoted themselves to the Eviction Diversion Program and the development of its new Portal, and they share equally in the gratitude this resolution expresses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honors Leo Elliot, Susan Layne, and Nancy Geist for their skillful and committed work in making the Eviction Diversion Program Portal possible and their nationally recognized success in keeping thousands of Philadelphians in their homes.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That three Engrossed copies of this Resolution be presented to Leo Elliot, Susan Layne, and Nancy Geist Giacomini as an expression of gratitude and admiration of the Council of the City of Philadelphia.

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