

Legislation Text

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Proclaiming and designating the week of April 2-8 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 - “Strength. Resilience. Justice.” - reflects the hope that despite traumatic experiences, victims are strengthened by the support they receive, organizations are resilient in the face of adversity, and communities are able to gain collective justice and healing; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, there were an estimated 5.4 million violent victimizations and 15.3 million property victimizations experienced by U.S. citizens age 12 or older. A large proportion of people can expect to become a victim of crime at some point in their lifetime, making crime not a remote or distant issue, but rather one that touches many of us, our families, and our communities; and

WHEREAS, After a period of significant decline, Philadelphia’s crime rates are now growing again. As of March 26, 2017, there had been 71 homicides in Philadelphia since the start of the year, a 15 percent increase from 2016 when there were 62 homicides by March 26, and a 27 percent increase from 2015 when there were 56 homicides by March 26; and

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

WHEREAS, Women are often victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, crimes that affect survivors in the most intimate aspects of their lives; and

WHEREAS, Too often, victims are targeted due to their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and identity and these factors may prevent some of the most vulnerable victims from seeking and receiving the help they need; and

WHEREAS, Hate crimes have become a more frequent threat given the country’s current political climate. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, during just the first 10 days after the 2016 Presidential Election Day, there were 867 bias-related incidents in which victims were intimidated, threatened, or assaulted due to their identity; and

WHEREAS, In particular, transgender women of color have been targeted and suffered at the hands of violent hate crimes. Since just the beginning of 2017, the number of transgender people killed in the United States

totals 8 - all of whom were transgender women of color; and

WHEREAS, American Muslims have also been targeted based on identity. Last year, the number of reported anti-Muslim hate crimes drastically increased by 67 percent from 2015, a figure which had not been seen since the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks; and

WHEREAS, Like the rest of the country, Philadelphia has seen a recent surge in bias-related incidents. On November 9, 2016, authorities reported Nazi-themed and racially derogatory graffiti in the South and Center City areas, and vandalism has plagued a synagogue in Tacony and a Jewish cemetery in Wissinoming; 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, 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, Philadelphia has taken significant steps through its Sanctuary City Policy to extend protections to undocumented immigrants, including those who are victims and witnesses to crime, so that no one need fear a call to the police will result in deportation; 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 earning 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 April 2-8, 2017 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.