

Legislation Text

File #: 200169, **Version:** 0

Recognizing Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia for 30 years of service to victims of violent crime in South Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Since 1989, Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia (V/WSSP) has supported the community by responding to the needs of victims and witnesses throughout South Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, In its 30 years of operation, V/WSSP has provided free services to over 73,000 individuals affected by violence, and in the last decade has recovered over \$4,371,000 in Victim Compensation Assistance Program awards. Those funds have provided for victims' expenses including medical costs, therapy bills, loss of earnings, loss of support, relocation, and other crime related expenses; and

WHEREAS, V/WSSP helps victims and witnesses of the 1st, 3rd and 17th police districts of South Philadelphia navigate the criminal justice system. The organization also provides counseling and social service referrals, community education and trauma response, and works to strengthen the relationship between local agencies and communities; and

WHEREAS, V/WSSP's clients reflect the vast diversity of South Philadelphia's communities. Accordingly, V/WSSP staff speak English, Spanish, Vietnamese, French and Cantonese. Moreover, in just the last year, the organization has been able to serve clients in Arabic, Burmese, Cambodian, Chin, Fuzhou, Indonesian, Mandarin, Nepali, Swahili, and Urdu; and

WHEREAS, V/WSSP has created a number of successful programs, such as the Asian Outreach Project and the Latino Outreach Project, which in turn grew into the Immigrant Access Collaborative (IVAC), a partnership with Justice at Work and HIAS-Pennsylvania. Through the IVAC program, they have provided increased victim services, case management, therapy and legal services to immigrant victims citywide; and

WHEREAS, V/WSSP has provided numerous trainings and workshops on issues related to public safety, crime prevention, resources for survivors, the criminal justice system, access to justice, and other subjects. As a result, thousands of community members have been empowered to advocate for themselves and their families in situations involving violence; and

WHEREAS, V/WSSP has been a leading advocate for legislative and policy changes that benefit survivors of crime and violence and that promote community safety and resilience. Some of these policy issues include advocating for a citywide trauma response plan, advocating for comprehensive language access at various City agencies, participating in a successful campaign to end ICE holds, and winning a federal civil rights lawsuit seeking remedies to anti-immigrant violence at South Philadelphia High School; and

WHEREAS, The dedicated staff and leadership at the Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia have worked tirelessly to provide outreach, direct services, and crisis response to hundreds of Philadelphians impacted by violence and continues to expand their outreach services to meet the needs of the community. For thirty years, V/WSSP has been an invaluable partner to the City's efforts to identify the root causes of violence

and to seek solutions to reduce the devastating impacts on our neighborhoods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Recognizes Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia for 30 years of service to victims of violent crime in South Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia as evidence of the appreciation of the Council.