Legislation Text

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Recognizing Thursday, November 19, 2020 as Children's Grief Awareness Day and honoring the work of Uplift Center for Grieving Children to meet the emotional needs of grieving children in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Children's Grief Awareness Day was created in 2008 by the Highmark Caring Place and has since been recognized and observed by organizations around the world every year on the third Thursday in November; and

WHEREAS, This time of year is an especially appropriate time to support grieving children as the holiday season becomes a difficult time of year after a death of a loved one; and

WHEREAS, Children's Grief Awareness Day seeks to bring attention to the fact that emotional support can make all the difference in the life of a grieving child. It provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the painful impact that the death of a loved one has on the life of a child, which is easy to overlook during a difficult time. The day reminds us to support opportunities to make sure that children receive the emotional support they desperately require when grieving and moving forward; and

WHEREAS, More than ever, the children of Philadelphia are experiencing alarming rates of trauma, violence, and grief from the devastating results of COVID-19, substance use disorder, and gun violence in the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Uplift Center for Grieving Children ("Uplift") was founded in 1995 by the Bereavement Program at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and incorporated as an independent nonprofit in 2000. Uplift offers peer support groups for children, teens, and young adults from kindergarten through 12th grade who have experienced the death of someone significant in their lives; and

WHEREAS, Peer support groups and a caring adult presence help to reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness that children often experience after death. Like adults, children experiencing loss need a listening and understanding ear which Uplift works hard to provide; and

WHEREAS, In the 2018-2019 program year, Uplift supported 419 children, youth, and teens and 315 caregivers in Family Service grief groups. Uplift ran grief groups for students in 163 schools and community groups supporting 1,275 children. Uplift also provided 29 post-crisis, in-school groups after a student dies which directly supported 241 children and adults. Uplift also provided grief and trauma training to 1,171 professionals; and

WHEREAS, In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Uplift established the Philly HopeLine as a free and confidential helpline in collaboration with the School District of Philadelphia to support children during a time of great loss. The Philly HopeLine provides mental health counseling, emotional wellness, grief support, and strategies for coping with COVID-19 related losses and is available to all School District of Philadelphia students and families; and

WHEREAS, During the 2019-2020 program year, Uplift has already supported more than 3,100 children and youth, caregivers and professionals through its School and Community, Family Services, and Post-Crisis Response programs; and

WHEREAS, Grief management and the complex issues surrounding have been recently highlighted by the "Speaking Grief" documentary produced by public media station WPSU Penn State. The film features diverse representations of grief through candid interviews with families whose losses include stillbirth, suicide and more. The documentary shares stories from families in Philadelphia, Bellefonte, and Collegeville, Pennsylvania; Houston; Los Angeles; Oakland, California and Collins, New York; and

WHEREAS, According to WPSU Penn State, the documentary explores the transformative experience of losing a family member in a grief-avoidant society and aims to validate grief as a normal, healthy part of the human experience rather than a problem that needs to be "fixed." It also addresses the role that support from friends and family plays in a person's grief experience, offering guidance on how to show up for people in their darkest moments; and

WHEREAS, Uplift will be recognizing the strength and resilience of grieving children everywhere by hosing a virtual event showcasing the "Speaking Grief" documentary on this year's Children's Grief Awareness Day; and

WHEREAS, Grief impacts all human beings, but not all of Philadelphians have equal access to support. Our citizens in marginalized communities suffer from the inaccessibility of mental and emotional healthcare, even while being disproportionately affected by trauma and illness. These disparities leave a tremendous amount of work ahead for Uplift, our medical providers, and our public leaders to support the wellness of all communities throughout the City; and

WHEREAS, The work that Uplift does is particularly meaningful in 2020 as the Philadelphia's children experience horrible losses of friends and family to the pandemic and the heightened level of gun violence. As adults and elected officials, we acknowledge and empathize with the affects of these events on our young people; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes Thursday, November 19, 2020 as Children's Grief Awareness Day and honors the work of Uplift Center for Grieving Children to meet the emotional needs of grieving children in the City of Philadelphia.

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