



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Recognizing the Philadelphia Obituary Project for its work to provide dignity to homicide victims and solace to their families by remembering and honoring those victims' lives.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Obituary Project (also known as "The Obit Project") was founded in 2016 by Cletus Lyman. Mr. Lyman recognized that many homicides are not covered by the media. Moreover, even when there is media coverage, it fails to dignify and humanize the victim. Indeed, many reports fail to even mention victims' names; and

WHEREAS, The Obit Project was founded to remedy that problem, treating homicide victims as individuals, rather than spectacles or statistics. The goal is to tell victims' stories and honor their lives in a way the local media often does not; and

WHEREAS, This approach is an important antidote to the sensationalism common in media coverage of homicides. Such coverage often breeds speculation and assumption by the general public about the victim. At its worst, it can suggest that the victims were to blame for their tragic deaths; and

WHEREAS, Each week The Obit Project is able to highlight the life of another victim and to show that, regardless of their background, homicide victims are always people. As such, they have lives, families, dreams and struggles, just as all people do; and

WHEREAS, Since the Obit Project's launch, more than 170 memorial profiles of victims have been published on its website and social media channels. In 2019, more than 90,000 unique visitors visited the site, and readership continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, The visibility of these memorials helps give dignity to victims and comfort to the victims' loved ones. At the same time, the obituaries help promote public awareness of our City's growing plague of violence, while bringing attention to unsolved cases; and

WHEREAS, The urgent need to honor these victims has become all the more pressing with the alarming spike in homicides during the pandemic. After finishing 2020 with 499 homicides, the City is on pace for the highest homicide total in its history; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes the Philadelphia Obituary Project for its work to provide dignity to homicide victims and solace to their families by remembering and honoring those victims' lives.