



Legislation Text

File #: 241073, Version: 0

Declaring the Third Week of Every November as "Restorative Justice Week" in the City of Philadelphia in Honor of the International Campaign "International Restorative Justice Week".

WHEREAS, Restorative Justice Week originated in 1975 in England as "Prisoner's Sunday," evolving into "Prisoner's Week" and later being expanded in 1996 by Canada into "Restorative Justice Week." Today, the International Restorative Justice Week is celebrated globally, with the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) actively promoting initiatives since 2000 that honor this legacy and foster community connections; and

WHEREAS, Each year, the third week of November is designated as Restorative Justice Week, an international campaign where organizations raise awareness about restorative justice. The 2024 theme, "The Promise of Restorative Justice in a Polarizing World," emphasizes the role of restorative justice in fostering dialogue and understanding, with events scheduled from November 17 to 23; and

WHEREAS, According to the Philadelphia Prison Population Piktochart report, as of September 2024, the City of Philadelphia's prison population stands at roughly 4,800 individuals, with 20% of those incarcerated being children from the 7th Council District, and 30% of the incarcerated child population also in foster care; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Department of Prisons Monitor's Reports indicate that a lack of appropriate alternative housing for individuals experiencing mental illness has led to some being placed in administrative segregation, a form of solitary confinement that isolates inmates from the general population. Despite recognizing the significant harms that extended isolation can inflict, documentation from PDP shows that as of August 8, 2022, there were 331 class members in segregation status, with 47% on the behavioral health caseload and 12% documented as having serious mental illness (SMI); and

WHEREAS, Upon release, these individuals will require assistance in securing and maintaining basic needs such as housing, employment, healthcare, and financial support. Moreover, these individuals-especially children released from the prison system-will need support to cope with the trauma experienced during their incarceration. As these individuals reintegrate into society, restorative justice offers a vital framework that not only promotes accountability and understanding but also fosters healing for both offenders and victims; and

WHEREAS, Restorative justice is an approach that focuses on repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior through inclusive processes involving victims, offenders, and the community, emphasizing accountability, understanding, and community engagement; prioritizing healing and community restoration as fundamental responses to harm rather than punishment; and

WHEREAS, By facilitating dialogue and community involvement, restorative practices help create supportive networks that empower formerly incarcerated individuals to reclaim their identities, find employment, and address underlying issues, ultimately leading to significantly reduced recidivism rates and fostering safer, more resilient communities; and

WHEREAS, Designating the Third Week of every November as "Restorative Justice Week" will enhance

community awareness and encourage meaningful conversations about its principles and benefits, providing a valuable opportunity for engagement and reflection on restorative justice's positive impact in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Implementing educational programs and training for community members, law enforcement, and justice system stakeholders on restorative justice principles and practices will foster a deeper understanding of its benefits, encourage broader community involvement, and enhance the effectiveness of restorative initiatives in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Council of the City of Philadelphia recognizes the importance of fostering healing and understanding among victims, offenders, and the community at large, as restorative justice empowers victims, encourages accountability, rebuilds community relationships, and promotes a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of crime, ultimately leading to better outcomes for all involved; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby declares the third week of every November as "Restorative Justice Week" in Philadelphia.