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## **CITY CONTROLLER RHYNHART, COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER RELEASE STATEMENT ON PHILADELPHIA'S GUN VIOLENCE CRISIS**

**Philadelphia, PA** – City Controller Rebecca Rhynhart and Councilmember Jamie Gauthier (3<sup>rd</sup> District) today released a joint statement on Philadelphia's on-going gun violence crisis and the Kenney administration's response to it. The statement details the offices' interactions with the Kenney administration since their [July 2021 press conference](#), in which they demanded the administration take a more urgent and targeted response to gun violence. Additionally, the Controller's and Councilmember's Offices published a [timeline of the correspondence](#), including all letters.

The joint statement is as follows:

“As 2021 draws to a close, we are reflecting on a year in which gun violence has ripped our city apart. 529 Philadelphians – men, women, and children – murdered. Most of them killed with a gun. The families and friends of these victims are reeling, mired in grief. Whole communities are traumatized and afraid.

Philadelphia's shooting and homicide rates have grown and grown over the last five years, and this violence has been concentrated in historically disadvantaged areas. And that's on top of decades of racist, government-sponsored programs that over the course of decades spurred segregation and inequality, preventing residents from accessing well-paying jobs, high-quality schools, and meaningful opportunities to build wealth – and disproportionately affecting communities of color. This is unquestionably an issue of racial justice.

As the gun violence has reached record-breaking levels, we've tried to use the power of our offices to push the Kenney administration to develop a comprehensive response to gun violence, proposing evidence-based strategies to address this crisis with the urgency it requires. This summer, we took our efforts to the next level, publicly calling on Mayor Kenney to take specific

action in the 14 ZIP codes most impacted by gun violence<sup>1</sup>, including expanding programming and trauma services in those communities. We sent a letter outlining eight objectives that the administration must implement in a targeted way to initiate a true emergency response. We hoped our efforts and their widespread support would spur action by Mayor Kenney, and lead to an open and productive partnership that would ultimately improve the city's response to the gun violence plaguing our neighborhoods.

That letter, and our public demand for more action from the mayor, ignited a back-and-forth correspondence between our offices and the Kenney administration over a two-month period. The administration's replies were lengthy, but half-hearted. We asked for detailed plans and timelines; in response, the administration defended its work, asserting that every objective we outlined was already underway. But when we asked for details, few were provided. The administration pointed to its Tactical Team as an example of its "all-hands-on-deck" approach, telling us a report would be released in October. That report still has not been released. We were offered a meeting with administration staff, but Mayor Kenney declined to participate.

In the months since our last contact with the administration, we've waited for the reports and expanded services we were told were forthcoming to materialize. We're still waiting.

We want to be clear: we are wholly disappointed in the mayor's inaction. The administration's failure to answer our demands for a more comprehensive and urgent response to gun violence, including providing trauma services to those affected by gun violence and prioritizing the ZIP codes with the highest volume of shootings, is unacceptable. What's most disappointing is that since we stood together on 51<sup>st</sup> Street this past July, shoulder-to-shoulder with elected colleagues, anti-violence advocates, and community leaders to demand a comprehensive and strategic emergency response, another 905 Philadelphians have been shot, 187 fatally.<sup>2</sup> And yet, we are still not any closer to a comprehensive emergency response. It's hard to fathom the inaction and detachment after this year of devastation.

From the outset, our goal has always been to help stop the bloodshed in our communities and help them heal in the aftermath of years of pain and loss. We've tried to be a partner, offering policy solutions and strategies to enhance the City's response. We've leveraged our bully pulpits and the press to draw attention to the issue. We've demanded action and information in the hopes of providing Philadelphians with much needed transparency, and to keep them apprised of what's happening and what services are available to them. We've gone straight to departments and worked with them to strengthen the response where we can. We've been frustrated and angry with the mayor's siloed approach – and his words aren't matched by action.

But we're not giving up. We will continue to fight for the people of this city, to push for an end to the bloodshed and a return of calm to our streets. We will work with the community, other elected officials and civic leaders, criminal justice partners, and anyone else that is committed to ending Philadelphia's gun violence crisis. Because that's what the people of this city deserve: safety, healing, and peace."

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<sup>1</sup> The 14 ZIP codes represent the 13 with the highest rate of shooting incidents and one ZIP code with a lower rate of shootings but a high concentration of fatal shootings.

<sup>2</sup> As of 12/12/21. Source: Philadelphia Police Department