



Honorable James F. Kenney, Mayor
City of Philadelphia
City Hall Room 215
Philadelphia, PA 19107

July 22, 2021

Mayor Kenney:

Philadelphia is being held hostage by gun violence. As of July 21st, nearly 1,300 Philadelphians have been shot and 309 people have been murdered this year. If nothing changes, the city is on pace to eclipse more than 550 homicides in 2021 – a devastating record high. In your July 19th letter, you stated that you would not declare a citywide emergency, a step many Philadelphians believe you should take, because it would not demonstrably change conditions in the city and that it would not have the desired impact. While we disagree with your decision – , your administration set a precedent by declaring an opioid emergency in 2018 – we write today because we cannot allow your letter to be the end of the conversation. The gun violence epidemic gripping our city is claiming too many lives for us to remain quiet.

As you know, much of the violence in our city is concentrated in 14 ZIP codes (19144, 19141, 19120, 19124, 19140, 19138, 19134, 19133, 19132, 19121, 19131, 19104, 19139, and 19143) and disproportionately impacts Black and brown residents. Bringing the gun violence epidemic to an end is absolutely an issue of racial justice. If the aim of your Administration is to promote equity for our city’s most vulnerable residents, then your Administration should use the approach to combating the opioid crisis as a model for how to tackle gun violence. To ensure that residents and communities receive the care and attention they desperately need, resources to stem the tide of violence must focus on these ZIP codes, and any coordinated effort by the Managing Director’s Office must have clear goals and benchmarks that are communicated with the public. Additionally, we believe a comprehensive response must include the following objectives:

1. Philadelphia Parks and Recreation shall lead efforts to substantially and immediately increase programming at Recreation Centers in the aforementioned ZIP codes.

Please provide in writing a detailed plan for expanding programming, including which programs are being offered and will be offered, and at which recreation centers.

2. The Department of Public Health and the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) shall lead efforts to ensure that all residents in the aforementioned ZIP codes have access to quality treatment and mental health services.

Please provide a list of services that are currently available to residents in these ZIP codes and through which agency the services are being provided. Additionally, please provide a plan for expanding treatment options to individuals within these ZIP codes.

3. The Commerce Department shall coordinate with DBHIDS and City partners under the Roadmap to Safer Communities to strategically invest \$5.6 million in additional workforce development funding to reach individuals involved, or at risk of being involved, in gun violence within the aforementioned ZIP codes.

Please provide a plan for accomplishing this action item, including a list of employers you will partner with in this effort, as the number of jobs the effort will create, and how you will ensure that the jobs will be filled and/or made available to the individuals most likely to be involved in, or at risk of, gun violence.

4. The Managing Director's Office of Community Services shall lead efforts to mobilize a community response by engaging individuals and additional non-profit and for-profit partners.

Please provide a copy of your community engagement strategy and a list of non-profit and for-profit partners you will partner with in the community response efforts.

5. The Managing Director's Office shall formalize a Gun Violence Emergency Response Team, consisting of senior officials who shall meet daily to develop, implement and measure multi-departmental, place-based strategies to respond to gun violence hot spots. All City departments shall cooperate with the Gun Violence Emergency Response Team.

Please provide a list of who will be assigned to the Gun Violence Emergency Response Team and which departments they represent.

6. The Gun Violence Emergency Response Team shall communicate actions supporting its objectives to the public, the press, and elected officials on a weekly basis, as the Opioid Emergency Response did. The Gun Violence Emergency Response Team shall develop a website in which weekly targets and progress will be posted, similar to the Opioid Emergency Response Group.
7. The Managing Director's Office of Violence Prevention shall work collaboratively and expeditiously with City Council to develop a framework to allocate \$20 million in additional anti-violence funding from the FY 2022 budget toward trusted grassroots organizations to deliver culturally relevant anti-violence programs, in particular those that employ credible messengers and create access to services for individuals most likely to shoot or be shot. Program results should be tracked and measured.

8. The Managing Director's Office of Violence Prevention shall lead efforts to expand the Community Crisis Intervention Program in the aforementioned ZIP codes, and offer a timeline for increasing staff capacity and number of outreach workers on the ground in these areas.

We request that your response include a detailed plan and timeline for implementation for all of the above action items by Friday, July 30th.

In addition, we urge your administration to regularly update all stakeholders on your administration's progress to accomplish the goals above and those laid out in your Roadmap to Safer Communities. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, your administration updated every local elected official on a daily basis; this crisis deserves the same level of communication. More frequent communication would allow stakeholders to understand the efforts underway, and assure Philadelphia residents that the City is making its best efforts to heal our communities hurt by gun violence. Lastly, you said that your administration is already providing the transparency, operational urgency, and necessary coordination our residents deserve. However, your letter lacked detail. In the Roadmap to Safer Communities update from April 21, 2021, your administration stated intended plans to deliver critical prevention and intervention programs and services, with the goal of reducing shootings and gun-related homicides by 30% by 2023 and engaging with 100% of shooting victims and highly at-risk individuals by 2023. In order to fully understand the progress being made under the Roadmap, we are requesting the following information:

- A list of Free Library branches, organized by police district, whose hours have been expanded according to the Roadmap to Safer Communities. Please include the change in hours as compared to FY 2019;
- A list of Recreation Centers, organized by police district, whose hours have been expanded according to the Roadmap to Safer Communities. Please include the change in hours as compared to FY 2019;
- The list of summer academic and enrichment programs for students developed by the Office of Children and Families, including program locations and hours of operation;
- The timeline for the development of the RFP for violence intervention grants, including when the Managing Director's Office expects the grants to be distributed;
- The anticipated launch date of the READI pilot and any strategies developed to fill the 222 available slots;
- An update regarding the pilot Co-Responder teams, including a schedule for the expansion to a "24-7" citywide operation;
- The timeline for the development and implementation all community engagement strategies listed on page 10 of the Roadmap to Safer Communities; and
- The timeline for coordinating among hospitals and hospital-based intervention program providers, in order to promote best practices and the expansion of these programs.

Given the severity of this crisis and the deleterious impact it is having on our city and our Black and brown residents in particular, we are requesting a response to this letter, including whether you intend to move forward with the action steps above, by Friday, July 30, 2021. Again, we ask that your response include a detailed plan with a timeline for implementation. In your letter, you stated that there is always room for improvement and that you welcome contributions and ideas to help solve this epidemic. While we have found you to be defensive, calling appropriate criticism 'political grandstanding,' and dismissive of the ideas and work of countless stakeholders, we hope that you take the above recommendations into consideration. More than anything, our goal is to stop the bloodshed in our neighborhoods. It is with that intention that we mapped out these specific action steps and requests for information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Rhynhart', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rebecca Rhynhart
City Controller

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Gauthier', written in a cursive style.

Jamie Gauthier
Councilmember, 3rd District

CC: James Engler, Chief of Staff
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
Vanessa Garrett Harley, First Deputy Managing Director
Erica Atwood, Senior Director for Criminal Justice and Public Safety