RESOLUTION

Recognizing and honoring the Defender Association of Philadelphia for their tireless pursuit of justice for our indigent population and designating the day of March 18, 2021 as "Public Defense Day" in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, On March 18, 1963, the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark opinion in the case of *Gideon v. Wainwright*. Clarence Gideon was convicted and incarcerated after he was refused an attorney. He was innocent, and was released years later after the Supreme Court granted him counsel; and

WHEREAS, *Gideon v. Wainwright* established the 6th Amendment right to counsel for adults, even those who could otherwise not afford to hire an attorney. In that decision, the Supreme Court said, "in our adversary system of criminal justice, any person haled into court, who is too poor to hire a lawyer, cannot be assured a fair trial unless counsel is provided for him." This landmark decision also laid the foundation for the same protections to later be afforded to juveniles, in the case of *In re Gault*; and

WHEREAS, Public defenders are often tasked with the difficult job of fighting against injustices and abuses of power, while guarding the constitutional, human, and civil rights of ordinary citizens; and

WHEREAS, The Defender Association of Philadelphia was founded in 1934 to protect the rights of indigent defendants and since 1963 has filled the constitutionally required role of public defender for the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Defender Association of Philadelphia represents approximately seventy percent of all persons arrested in the City. The Association, however, has no power to appoint itself as legal counsel. The Court of Common Pleas and the Municipal Court of Philadelphia determine standards of indigence and make all counsel appointments for the Association. Clients are represented by fulltime Assistant Defenders who are members of the Pennsylvania Bar and who are not permitted to maintain a private practice or to participate in partisan political activity; and

WHEREAS, The attorneys and staff of the Defender Association of Philadelphia represent clients in adult and juvenile state courts, at civil and criminal mental health hearings, and as child advocates for children with open dependent petitions. The office's dynamic team includes social workers, paralegals, mitigation specialists, investigators, and administrative professionals who play critical roles serving their clients and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, The Defender Association of Philadelphia is led by Chief Defender Keir Bradford-Grey. Chief Bradford-Grey is a Co-Chair of Philadelphia City Council's Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform, where she has led the charge on "pre-entry," which means focusing on the needs of an individual and incorporating community intervention before an individual even enters the system; and

WHEREAS, Chief Bradford-Grey, along with members of her leadership team, work with the various justice partners and stakeholders throughout the city to support policy changes to change the culture of mass incarceration and reduce incarceration of pretrial defendants, a pertinent endeavor in light of challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The Defender Association of Philadelphia has been working to end cash bail, reform probation/parole detainers, support successful diversion programs, and empower communities to play a more active role in the criminal justice process, in an effort to fundamentally change our system to reduce racial disparities and end our over-reliance on incarceration; and

WHEREAS, The work of the Defender Association of Philadelphia is an invaluable resource to our City, because a strong indigent defense system increases the fairness and accuracy of our criminal justice system and contributes to the safety and security of our community; now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes and honors the Defender Association of Philadelphia for their tireless pursuit of justice for our indigent population and hereby designates the day of March 18, 2021 as "Public Defense Day" in the City of Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Defender Association of Philadelphia as evidence of the sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.

Introduced By:

Curtis Jones, Jr.
Councilmember – 4th District

March 18, 2021

Co-sponsored By: