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Council Member Shabazz Stresses the Urgency of Putting Solutions in Place to Curb Violent Crime Following Today's Issuance of an Urban Crime and Prevention Report by the Centers for Disease Control

The Council Member Says the Report Should Prompt All Parties, Including the State, City and Community to Make the Report's Recommendations a Priority

Wilmington City Council Member Hanifa Shabazz (D-4th District) today thanked the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for releasing its long-awaited report regarding what she terms a pandemic of violent crime largely affecting the City's African American population. Shabazz originally asked the CDC in December of 2013 to come to Wilmington to investigate the City's rising violent crime problem.

Almost immediately after learning of the contents of the report today from the CDC and officials from the State Health and Social Services Department, Shabazz stressed to the State the need for utmost urgency so that the report's findings can be formulated and put into practice without further delay.

"It took nearly two years for the CDC to complete its report and we simply cannot afford to wait another two years or even a year to implement some of the findings," said Shabazz. "The CDC told us without hesitation today that Delaware can be a model for the nation in terms of curbing gun violence if it implements the CDC report recommendations. I need to stress as strongly as I can that all of us should be moving with utmost speed to implement the report so we can save lives in Wilmington and elsewhere around the nation."

As expected, the CDC report confirmed Wilmington's extremely excessive homicide rate as compared to statistics from cities throughout the United States. The report also confirmed the CDC's original hypothesis presented last March that a strong, data-driven risk assessment tool can detect persons who are likely to commit a violent crime involving a weapon. The report went on to say that an equally strong array of wrap-around state services must be in place to help divert at-risk individuals away from further criminal activity.

The CDC report is based on the examination of data from multiple sources regarding 569 Wilmington citizens (95% of whom are male and between the ages of 12 to 35) who committed violent crimes and/or assaults using a weapon from January of 2009 through May of 2014. The data was compiled from medical records, child welfare files, criminal statistics, employment records and statistics from the state education system.

The risk assessment tool developed by the CDC showed conclusively that if such a tool and array of state services had been available in a coordinated system in Delaware, many of those in the sample population may have been diverted away from committing a violent crime.

“I will be extremely disappointed if we are still debating how to get this type of system in place even six months from now,” said Shabazz. “Many pieces of this puzzle are already in place and I trust that the Governor, his cabinet-level appointees and those of us who are in leadership roles in the City are ready to get to work immediately on implementing the CDC recommendations.”

A copy of the CDC’s report is available at the website of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services by using this link:

<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dms/files/cdcgunviolencereport10315.pdf>

City Council President Theo Gregory today thanked the CDC for its report and congratulated Council Member Shabazz for her persistence on this issue. Gregory said he also agreed with Hanifa’s immediate assessment of the report that it needs to be implemented without further delay.

“Addressing urban youth issues generally, which many times involve acts of crime fueled by a lack of education, job skills and family dysfunction, I feel we have to stop just going through the motions and get some policies and services in place, along with measured outcomes,” said Gregory. “Looking at the statistics in the CDC report, especially those affecting individuals who had negative experiences with education, with their families or with the police, is just heartbreaking when you think that we could have helped them if we had the tools in place as presented today by the CDC.”

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