



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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JAMES F. KENNEY
Mayor

July 19, 2021

Honorable Jamie Gauthier
3rd District Councilmember
City Hall Room 582
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Via Email

Dear Councilmember Gauthier:

I write today in response to your call for the declaration of a gun violence emergency for the City of Philadelphia. I wholeheartedly welcome contributions and ideas to help solve the epidemic of gun violence impacting Philadelphia. Your feedback was a key reason that our administration began bi-weekly public briefings about the epidemic, similar in format to our briefings on COVID-19. I agree with you that the public deserved greater transparency and communication about the administration's commitment to anti-violence and I'm pleased that these are now occurring. But, after serious consideration I believe the simple declaration of some emergency or disaster akin to that signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo for the state of New York is not a solution that will demonstrably change conditions in Philadelphia for several reasons.

First, calls for a disaster or emergency declaration are intended to unlock additional resources, but the City of Philadelphia is already doing by this allocating over \$150 million in the FY22 budget that was just approved. This money is independent of the hundreds of millions of dollars the City already spends on solving some of the deeper root causes of violence. The funding does include over \$20 million in money for community-based organizations working to intercede and stop violence before it occurs, and substantial new funding for job opportunities for those at the highest risk of committing or being a victim of violence. A call for an emergency declaration may be better directed toward unlocking more state resources like Andrew Cuomo allocated \$139 million in new funding for gun violence prevention across the state of New York. The City would welcome additional state resources and changes to regulations that stem access and the flow of illegal guns. I have discussed this with the Governor directly, and my Administration is working closely with Attorney General Shapiro on the issue of illegal guns.

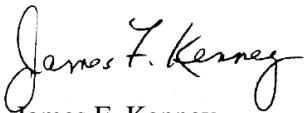
Secondly, it has been said that an emergency declaration would allow for a more coordinated response to gun violence. The reality is that our Administration has been working to address violence in a coordinated fashion for several years, dating back to the release of the first Roadmap to Safer Communities in 2019, with further refinement with the updated Roadmap release this past April. Every week I meet with a team of officials from the Philadelphia Police Department, Managing Director's Office, Office of Children and Families, Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and other departments to hear directly about our on the ground work and our progress and setbacks. On a weekly basis there is

coordination amongst operating departments and social service agencies, led by the Managing Director's Office, the Roadmap Tactical meetings are real-time problem-solving efforts in areas most vulnerable to gun violence. Additionally, our Administration is leading a collaborative approach to violence that includes working with other agencies not under my authority, including the District Attorney and the First Judicial District. Make no mistake that are always areas for improvement. In fact, we are planning to deepen the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's coordination and reporting role in the updated Roadmap because we believe a public health approach with an epidemiological lens will bolster the impact of the initiatives underway. That said, a disaster or emergency declaration would have no discernible impact on strengthening what is already a highly collaborative and innovative approach to addressing this public health crisis.

Next, it has been said that an emergency declaration would draw more attention to this issue and allow for a greater response from other governmental or non-governmental partners. The reality is that the gun violence epidemic is impacting cities across the country, and Philadelphia is participating in every opportunity to learn and share with our peers. I have spoken personally with President Biden on the urgent need for new and enhanced approaches, and Philadelphia is participating in the White House's Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Collaborative. We are participating in national networks, like Cities United, Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, and the National Coalition for Gun Violence Interventions. I have also joined Attorney General Shapiro, DA Krasner, and Commissioner Outlaw in calling for enhanced firearms trafficking resources be sent to Philadelphia to help us stem the flow of illegal guns into our City and the hands of those willing to commit violence. An emergency or disaster declaration would not change the direction of this work.

Local government leaders across America are doing everything we can within our powers to bring resources, coordination and attention to the epidemic of gun violence that continues to spread like a disease across our nation. Together we must all keep working on solutions to invest in and heal communities hurt by gun violence and resist the temptation to issue statements that will not have the desired impact. I look forward to your continued partnership on this front.

Sincerely,



James F. Kenney
Mayor

CC: James Engler, Chief of Staff
Tumar Alexander, Managing Director
Vanessa Garrett Harley, First Deputy Managing Director
Danielle Outlaw, Police Commissioner
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