



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL

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2ND DISTRICT COUNCILMEMBER

April 21, 2022

Mayor James F. Kenney
City of Philadelphia
Sent via e-mail

Re: The Defender Association of Philadelphia FY23 budget increase

Dear Mayor Kenney,

We believe that the FY23 budget should include a \$5.8 million increase for the Defender Association of Philadelphia. The Sixth Amendment guarantees a defendant's right to effective assistance of counsel in order to increase the fairness and likelihood of justice ultimately being reached in a criminal justice system. Our public defenders experienced unprecedented challenges throughout the past few years during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have acted as first responders and continued to advocate for their defendants while putting their own lives at risk, never resting in the defense of their clients.

The Defender Association is asking for a \$5.8 million budget increase that would allow the ability to pay their non-legal staff a living wage and would allow them to attract and retain well qualified attorneys. \$3.8 million would be allocated for salary increases for the non-attorney and administrative staff. Currently 45% of the non-legal staff earn less than \$40,000, which leaves many having to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. The proposal would allow for a salary increase to a livable wage of \$40,000, which is in line with the pay of other comparable cities.

The remaining \$2 million would be allocated for increased pay for attorneys to allow the Defender's Association to become more competitive with their hiring. Private legal employers aggressively recruit with salary increases and signing bonuses, which increases the difficulty of recruitment. There is also a struggle to competitively recruit applicants from the same pool as the District Attorney's office is due to the fact that the Defenders Association is only able to offer 89 cents to their dollar. The proposed increases in pay are beneficial retention strategies that would allow for hardworking staff and attorneys to be fairly compensated and would allow the Defender's Association to continue to hire qualified individuals.



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Pennsylvania is the only state that doesn't provide state funding for public defenders, making the funding we provide vital for many Philadelphians who find themselves enmeshed with the criminal justice system. A lack of resources can lead to an unfair fight and leaves low-income defendants who are represented by overburdened public defenders more likely to be wrongfully convicted or receive longer sentences.

As a city, if we truly believe that Black Lives Matter then we should have a budget that reflects those values and fights for those most in need. We believe that the Defender Association of Philadelphia should receive a \$5.8 million increase in their FY23 budget so that they can continue working to protect our citizen's constitutional rights.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kenyatta Johnson in blue ink.

Kenyatta Johnson
Second District

Handwritten signature of Isaiah Thomas in blue ink.

Isaiah Thomas
At Large

Handwritten signature of Jamie Gauthier in blue ink.

Jamie Gauthier
Third District

Handwritten signature of Curtis Jones, Jr. in blue ink.

Curtis Jones, Jr.
Fourth District

Handwritten signature of Maria Quiñones-Sánchez in blue ink.

Maria Quiñones-Sánchez
Seventh District

Handwritten signature of Mark Squilla in blue ink.

Mark Squilla
First District



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Handwritten signature of Helen Gym in blue ink.

Helen Gym
At Large

Handwritten signature of Allan Domb in blue ink.

Allan Domb
At Large

Handwritten signature of Cindy Bass in blue ink.

Cindy Bass
Eighth District

Handwritten signature of Kendra Brooks in blue ink.

Kendra Brooks
At Large

Handwritten signature of Cherelle L. Parker in blue ink.

Cherelle Parker
Ninth District

Handwritten signature of Katherine Gilmore Richardson in blue ink.

Katherine Gilmore Richardson
At Large

Handwritten signature of Derek S. Green in blue ink.

Derek Green
At Large