

Mayor Jim Kenney
City Hall, Office 215
Philadelphia PA 19107

Sent via email

Dear Mayor Kenney,

We write today on behalf of the City of Philadelphia to urge you to support the Defender Association of Philadelphia's request for an additional \$5.8 million more than proposed by the Mayor's budget. Our community counts on our Public Defenders to provide high-quality legal services to our family, friends, and neighbors when they are facing charges. We have seen that when the weight of the system is against you, a good defense can make all the difference, and that everyone deserves a high-quality defense when their freedom and reputation is at stake. And in the poorest big city in America, we need to know that the City understands the value of public defense and can ensure that the Defender will be there when we need them.

With so many other budget priorities, it is easy to overlook our public defenders. But we believe in the long run that is a mistake. As interested members of the community, we see a well-resourced Defender office as a long-term investment in public safety. The Defender needs to be adequately funded so it can recruit and retain a diverse and talented pool of attorneys, hire the best experts and investigate cases properly so that the justice system gets things right the first time. This is the only way people in the community will trust the system and its outcomes and not feel like it is an assembly line in the courthouse.

More importantly, the Defenders need the resources to connect people with the social supports they need to succeed so that our jails can be used as a last resort and so those who do return to the community can do so safely. They also need resources to represent their young clients, children involved in either abuse or neglect or delinquency proceedings, and make sure our young people have a chance to follow their ambitions and receive the support they need in their home communities.

We also count on the Defender to continue to give high-quality representation for people seeking early termination from probation, early release from dangerous conditions in our county jail, and appropriate diversionary opportunities so young people can avoid the lifetime impact of a criminal conviction.

It is the government's responsibility to ensure that the public defender's office has the resources it needs to do the job well which is why we are writing to let you know we support the

Defender's request for an additional \$5.8 million. We know they have been working to develop meaningful connections in neighborhoods throughout the city, to build trust with clients and their families, and to empower communities to be involved in improving client case outcomes. And we stand with them in their request that the City fund the Philadelphia Defenders.

In solidarity,

Abolitionist Law Center

Amistad Law Project

Best Outcomes Participatory Defense Hub

Chosen 300

Coalition for Parole Justice

Dignity and Power Now

Frontline Dads Inc.

Germantown Participatory Defense Hub

Human Rights Coalition

IDAAY, Inc

Kings Saving Kings & Queens Inc

Mothers In Charge

New Leash on Life USA

North Philly Participatory Defense Hub

PENNfranchise Project

People's Paper Co-op

Philadelphia Bail Fund

Philadelphia Community Bail Fund

Philadelphia Reentry Think Tank

POWER Live Free

Sankofa Healing Studio

South Philly Participatory Defense

The Decarceration Team of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

The Village of Arts & Humanities

Unincarcerated Minds

West Philly Participatory Defense Hub

Why Not Prosper, Inc.

X-Offenders for Community Empowerment

Youth Art & Self-empowerment Project (YASP)