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Democratic Whip



Senate of Pennsylvania

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June 17, 2019

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Capitol Building
Via Hand Delivery

Dear Governor Wolf,

After yet another several days filled with record homicides in Philadelphia, as an elected official I am embarrassed by our lack of action. As a husband, father, and neighbor, I am frustrated, scared, and angry. This level of loss of life should be met with the same dignity and urgency with which we address any other mass shooting in America.

Yesterday, my community was rocked by a senseless act of gun violence during a Father's Day and graduation picnic at Finnegan Playground, a public park in my district, resulting in six victims and one death. All of those shot in this incident were under twenty-five-years-old; this was just one of nineteen shootings in the city over the weekend that left five dead and twenty-eight wounded. While the event made national news, the lack of shock and public outcry by public officials was stunning. As we enter the summer months there is a fair expectation that the rate of homicide in Philadelphia will continue to rise. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and children are afraid to simply walk through their neighborhood in peace, as they see no plan to change the current circumstances or provide relief.

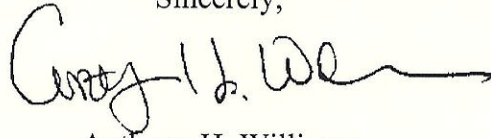
I think we're well past the point when those of us who are elected to lead are always reacting. We must restore some level of public confidence by addressing this epidemic proactively. I know you not only to be an exceptional leader, but a person concerned about humanity. So my ask of you, and the demand of those who we represent, are a few immediate steps:

- We in elected office should acknowledge that this level of human loss is not acceptable. We should declare some form of a state of emergency/crisis immediately.
- I would hope that despite the pressures to pass a timely budget, that I along with other interested and responsible parties be convened immediately to begin a coordinated and compassionate response to this crisis. Several issues can and should be addressed:

Increase temporary law enforcement presence in affected communities (while removing the elements of law enforcement known to have intolerant views) to abate some level of violence and reduce the high level of anxiety in these neighborhoods. Collaboration and coordination on grant approvals for community anti-violence programs at both the local and state levels. Redirecting funding currently given to larger institutions to “study” violence to create a fully-funded crisis intervention akin to that of the 1970s, along with other proven, data-driven models.

I believe your leadership is essential in this deeply sickening set of circumstances. Our collective appearance of limited actions comes across as a deafening silence to communities that have already been marginalized. Thank you for your concern and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony H. Williams", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony H. Williams
State Senator – 8th District