

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

23-293

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

September 22, 2020

To declare the month of October 2020 as “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” in the District of Columbia.

WHEREAS, preserving and improving the dignity and safety of all District residents is the foundation of a vibrant and healthy community;

WHEREAS, domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior used to exert power and control over an intimate partner, and it jeopardizes residents’ security and well-being;

WHEREAS, all forms of domestic violence – including physical, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse – can have devastating consequences for survivors and their families;

WHEREAS, globally, approximately 243 million women and girls have experienced sexual or physical violence in the past year;

WHEREAS, District youth deserve to be safe at home and in school;

WHEREAS, 26.6% of middle school students have reported experiences of dating violence, including physical and emotional abuse by someone they are dating or seeing;

WHEREAS, 35.3% of high school students reported experiences of dating violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by someone they have been dating or seeing in the past year;

WHEREAS, lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students are twice as likely to report experiencing sexual, physical, and emotional dating violence by someone they have been dating or seeing in the past year, as compared to their straight peers;

WHEREAS, in a one-day snapshot from late 2019, 533 individuals utilized the District’s emergency shelters, transitional housing, or other housing provided by local domestic violence

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programs, and during that day, those same providers had to turn away another 66 survivors who requested housing or emergency shelter due to a lack of resources and beds – translating to an estimated 24,090 survivors of domestic violence being turned away annually;

WHEREAS, domestic violence does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, religion, or race;

WHEREAS, there is a continuing need for survivors to have access to culturally-specific services which support a survivor’s cultural heritage, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other lived experiences;

WHEREAS, COVID-19 continues to have a devastating impact on many communities, but especially domestic violence survivors globally, nationally, and locally;

WHEREAS, in a 2-month span, the National Domestic Violence Hotline saw a 9 percent increase in calls or contacts during the COVID-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, from March to June 2020, one local culturally-specific service provider saw a 77% increase in outreach to their organization from survivors in need;

WHEREAS, the Crisis Response Line is averaging 120 calls per day since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to 56 calls per day pre-COVID;

WHEREAS, local domestic violence service providers are reporting a significant increase in the lethality of harm being perpetrated against survivors;

WHEREAS, now more than ever, service providers need national and local supports to provide critical services to survivors who depend on legal, housing, counseling, and culturally-specific services;

WHEREAS, due to COVID-19, service providers need access to improved IT resources in order to effectively support survivors while they navigate the abuse in their lives;

WHEREAS, service providers should be adequately funded and should not have to rely solely on volunteers or low wages in order to help survivors;

WHEREAS, the goal of Domestic Violence Awareness Month is to improve awareness about domestic violence, outreach to residents and community members, and foster cooperation between public and private actors to end domestic violence in the District;

WHEREAS, the Council will continue to partner with District agencies, community organizations, and residents to keep survivors safe; and

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WHEREAS, as the District fights COVID-19 and racism, the Council stands with survivors and the domestic violence service provider community to improve the many systems on which survivors depend to live safe and free.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Domestic Violence Awareness Month Recognition Resolution of 2020”.

Sec. 2. The Council declares the month of October 2020 as “Domestic Violence Awareness Month” in the District of Columbia.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.