

Wilmington, Delaware
April 15, 2021

#xxxx

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Oliver**

WHEREAS, elected officials are public servants and take an oath of office to always place the public interests above any special or personal interest. Elected officials also swear to uphold and defend the Constitutions of the United States and Delaware. In the Delaware General Assembly, Members take the oath that affirms “freely acknowledging that the powers of this office flow from the people I am privileged to represent”; and

WHEREAS, threats to public servants have increased exponentially over the past few years. The U.S. Marshalls Office, which is responsible for protecting federal judges, reports that threats to judges about 1,350 threats/inappropriate communications against judicial members are logged each year. Last year (2020), 4,261 threats were received, down from 4,449 in 2019 which was the year in which an attack against Judge Salas’ was carried out at her home and severely injured her husband and killed her son. In 2015, there were 926 such threats; and

WHEREAS, threats to state election officials were not hidden and targeted local leaders, namely but not limited to election officials, across the country in November 2020 through January 2021. There are many press reports and blogger accounts of local election officials being bullied, intimidated and threatened via phone calls, emails and social media. The threats often included the home address (and sometimes GPS coordinates and views of the official’s home) of the elected official. These threats became more commonplace in the time leading up to the riots and violent attack against the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020. Threats to public officials did not end on January 6. Instead, threats are now seen as credible and actionable, as evidenced by the Jan 6 U.S. Capitol attack, in which several members of law enforcement lost or took their (own) lives; and

WHEREAS, elected officials should publicly disclose all information related to their public office and personal businesses, when appropriate. In order to better protect elected officials, home addresses for all elected officials in the state should be concealed with the opportunity to opt out at any time. Elected officials would use a P.O. Box or their office address on all public records outside of personal items, i.e.: mortgage applications, car applications,

etc. Addresses outlining places of residence would need to be notarized, submitted to and kept on record with the Department of Elections and with the Clerk of the respective courts. These addresses will not be subject to the Freedom Of Information Act. Information required to confirm residence with respect to the jurisdiction of the office sought or held would be in the form of a notarized statement from the respective records official who would review and confirm the information. Candidates running for public office would be permitted to use a P.O. Box or their home address. Participation in the effort to shield home addresses from the public and to protect elected officials from threats to their homes and families is optional and not mandatory.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that Wilmington City Council strongly encourages the Delaware General Assembly to develop a process by which to better protect elected officials in Delaware and to keep private their home addresses.

Passed by City Council,

Attest: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution is encouraging the Delaware General Assembly to keep the addresses of elected officials and judicial officers private.