

Wilmington, Delaware
April 7, 2022

#0161

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Cabrer**

WHEREAS, the VICTIM (Violent Incident Clearance and Technological Investigative Methods) Act of 2021, H.R. 5768 was introduced in response to a more than 30% rise in the national murder rate between 2019 and 2020, and clearance rates for homicides have been trending downward for decades; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wilmington has a homicide rate of 44.2 per 100,000 people which is the 13th highest in the nation. Wilmington Police Chief Robert Tracy reported that the Wilmington Police Department was only able to clear and close 40% of murder cases in 2020, which was below the national average. This is also down from a 67% clearance rate in 2019, and 62% in 2018. To date, more than half of the cold cases in the State of Delaware are concerning Wilmington residents; and

WHEREAS, the VICTIM Act of 2021, H.R. 5768 would authorize \$1 billion in appropriations over ten years to fund grants aimed at improving clearance rate for homicides and shootings by the following: 1) hiring, training, and retention of homicide detectives, 2) purchasing and upgrading evidence processing technology, and 3) ensuring that victims have access to resources including timely mental health treatment, grief counseling, funeral and burial expenses, relocation expenses, emergency shelter and transportation, and lost wages assistance: and

WHEREAS, Wilmington Police Department's (WPD) Cold Case Unit is part of the Department's Criminal Investigations Division and includes WPD cold case investigators. The Unit specifically handles cases that have remained unsolved for more than one year, and after all investigative leads have been exhausted by the primary investigator, the members of the Cold Case Unit work tirelessly to pursue new leads in these cases, and to deliver justice on behalf of those who have been affected by violent crime; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence in the City of Wilmington is a persistent problem. Wilmington Police Department made 307 gun arrests in 2020, which was 80% more than in

2019, and 27% more in the past five years. Of the 293 people arrested in 2020 with guns, 148 had prior gun charges; and

WHEREAS, the VICTIM Act of 2021, H.R. 5768 bill was proposed on the House on October 28, 2021 by Representative Val Butler Demings of Florida, and currently has 32 co-sponsors. The Wilmington City Council urges the Honorable U.S. Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester to support H.R. 5768. This bill has been applauded and endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police, The Major Cities Chiefs Association, the National Association, the National Association of Police Organizations, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, and the National Police Foundation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that the Wilmington City Council supports VICTIM Act of 2021, H.R. 5768 aimed at increasing clearance rates and compensating victims of homicides and shootings or their families.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution expresses strong support from the Wilmington City Council for the passage of H.R.5768 which aims to do the following: 1) to hire, train, and retain homicide detectives, 2) purchase and upgrade evidence processing technology, and 3) ensure victims have access to resources, including timely mental health treatment, grief counseling, relocation expenses, emergency shelter with transportation, lost wage or funeral and burial expenses, thereby increasing clearance rates for homicides and shootings, and giving compensation to victims or their families in the case of death.