




# Hope *For* Help



Northwest Victim Services April 2026 Newsletter





Losing my 16-year son to gun violence on March 2, 2026 changed every part of my life. My mental state has forever been changed and my current financial state is in immediate danger. Paying out of pocket for my son's funeral expenses caused me to fall behind in my rent, utility bills, and other monthly expenses. Trauma does not resolve quickly and the lasting effects will be permanent.

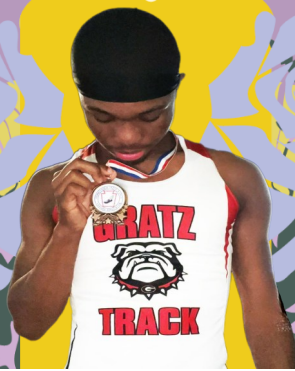
My cry is for law makers to understand those affected by crime have long term needs. We are in need of unlimited mental health services and financial services. Parents that lose a child due to violence may be unable to work due to stress disorders, depression, or anxiety. Sometimes it is hard for us to walk out our front door just to sit on the porch.

- Mercedes King, A Grieving Mother in NEED

# KING FAMILY



Markel King, 16-year old homicide victim





Office of  
**Public Safety**



Office of the  
**Victim Advocate**  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HOMICIDE VICTIM FUNERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



## Support with Funeral Costs

The Homicide Victim Funeral Assistance (HVFA) Program provides vital financial support for families grieving the loss of a loved one due to homicide, ensuring they can focus on healing during a time of tragic loss.



# Up to \$2,000

## Financial Support Available

- The homicide must have occurred within the City of Philadelphia after March 1, 2026
- All payments are issued directly to the funeral service provider
- Determinations are made within 48 hours of request
- Families may also seek up to \$6,500 in reimbursement through the Pennsylvania Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP)

**For assistance, please contact:**

**The City of Philadelphia Office of the Victim Advocate**

**Phone: (215) 686-2115**

**Email: [OVAfuneralfund@phila.gov](mailto:OVAfuneralfund@phila.gov)**

NORTHWEST VICTIM SERVICES

# Leaning on Legislation

LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

NATIONAL VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

APRIL 18, 2026 | 9AM - 12PM

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHESTNUT HILL

8855 GERMANTOWN AVE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19118



## FEATURED SPEAKERS



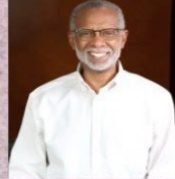
**Sheriff  
Rochelle Bilal**



**State Rep. Chris Rabb**



**Captain Dana  
Bradley**



**State Sen. Art  
Haywood**



**State Rep. Andre D.  
Carroll**



**Senator  
Sharif Street**



**Adara Coombs  
Executive Director, Office  
of Victim Advocate for  
Philadelphia**



**G. Lamar Stewart  
Chief, Dao's External Engagement  
& Government Affairs Division,  
Philadelphia DAO**



**Pennie Mackenberry  
Director of Public Policy and  
Legislation,  
Office of the Victim  
Advocate, Harrisburg**



**State Rep.  
Darisha Parker**



**Councilwoman Cindy  
Bass**

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Cristsandra Penn, President
- Kevin Raphael, Esq. Treasurer
- Tonay Ellis, Secretary
- Maleka Freua
- Dr. Erica Harris
- Esther Kim
- Mark Moore, Esq.
- Lisa Michalle Thomas Muhammad
- Joseph Palin
- Pedro Rodriguez
- Dr. Janet Etzi
- Dr. Sean Cuillo
- Staff Hspector Ernest Ransom
- James McArthur

### ADVISORY BOARD

- Reverend Nick Taliaferro
- Reverend Leroy Miles
- Derrick Sawyer

### STAFF

- **Melany P. Nelson**  
Executive Director
- **Rysheda Elliott**  
Victim Advocate
- **Rachel Reyes-Vazquez**  
Court Advocate
- **Wynter Downing**  
Youth Engagement  
Coordinator

### RESOURCE TABLES FEATURING

- Office of Victim Advocate for Philadelphia
- PA State Office of Victim Advocate
- NorthWest Victim Services



REGISTER TO ATTEND

Scan OR Code to Register



6023 GERMANTOWN AVENUE

PHILADELPHIA, PA 19144

215-438.4410 OFFICE

267-808-0350, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MELANY P. NELSON

[NORTHWESTVICTIMSERVICES.ORG](http://NORTHWESTVICTIMSERVICES.ORG)

