A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

24-229

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

September 20, 2022

To commemorate and recognize October 2nd, 2022, as International Wrongful Conviction Day in the District of Columbia.

WHEREAS, International Wrongful Conviction Day was established on October 2, 2013, by the Innocence Network to raise awareness of the causes and remedies of wrongful conviction;

WHEREAS, the Innocence Network is an affiliation of organizations dedicated to providing pro-bono legal and investigative services to individuals who have been wrongfully convicted, rectifying the causes of wrongful convictions, and supporting exonerees after their release;

WHEREAS, according to the Innocence Network since 1989, over 3,200 wrongful convictions have been exposed across the United States;

WHEREAS, according to the National Registry of Exonerations, individuals exonerated in 2021 spent 1,849 years incarcerated for crimes they did not commit;

WHEREAS, those exonerated in 2021 served an average of 11.5 years for crimes they did not commit;

WHEREAS, since 1989 24 people sentenced in the District have been exonerated;

WHEREAS, the personal, social, and emotional costs of wrongful convictions are immeasurable;

WHEREAS, psychological research shows that those who are wrongfully convicted suffer mental health consequences such as post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, depression, institutionalization, and personality changes;

WHEREAS, the District provides compensation for those who are wrongfully convicted;

WHEREAS, those who are wrongfully convicted are entitled to $200,000 for each year of incarceration and $40,000 for each year served on parole, probation, supervised release, or as a registered sex offender;

WHEREAS, those who are wrongfully convicted are also entitled to $10,000 for assistance with immediate services, reimbursement of child support payments, lifetime physical and mental health care through D.C. HealthCare Alliance, and reimbursement for tuition/fees to the University of the District of Columbia or the District of Columbia Community College or for a vocational or employment skills development program;

WHEREAS, there is no amount of money that can repair the harmful effects of a wrongful conviction;

WHEREAS, the right to liberty is a fundamental human right;

WHEREAS, it is vital for the District to support organizations that work to identify and eliminate wrongful incarcerations;

WHEREAS, Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf (HEARD) is an all volunteer nonprofit organization that promotes equal access to the legal system for individuals who are deaf and for people with disabilities;

WHEREAS, HEARD's primary focus is to help raise awareness about wrongful arrests and convictions of deaf people;

WHEREAS, HEARD created and maintains the nation's only deaf prisoner database, and is working to increase representation of the deaf in the legal profession by connecting deaf youth with legal education organizations, law schools, and law firms;

WHEREAS, the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project is a member of the Innocence Network and works to prevent and correct the conviction of innocent individuals in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia;

WHEREAS, the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project has one of the highest success rates in the country for exonerating those who have been wrongfully accused; and

WHEREAS, the DC Superior Court has an Ad Hoc Committee on Wrongful Convictions that works to establish standards and partnerships to ensure that no innocent person is convicted or imprisoned.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "International Wrongful Conviction Day Ceremonial Recognition Resolution of 2022".

Sec. 2. The Council recognizes International Wrongful Conviction Day in the District of Columbia and honors the important work of organizations that work to end wrongful convictions and help those who have been wrongfully convicted.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.