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NEWS RELEASE

**Councilman Duncan Harrison and Councilwoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson Call for Creation of Local Mental Health Board**

**Tuesday, May 10, 2016**

**Trenton, New Jersey:** Councilman Duncan W. Harrison and Councilwoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson are calling for the creation of the City of Trenton Mental Health Board.

“No Trentonian should have to bear the weight of mental illness alone. I want residents to know that there are safe spaces to talk through what you are experiencing and treatment options to make you better. We need to come together, pool resources, and ideas in order to get our residents the help they need,” stated Councilman Duncan W. Harrison.

The City of Trenton Mental Health Board shall consist of seven to twelve City residents, appointed by City Council. Board members shall serve for four years without compensation. In order for the board to be most effective we would seek to appoint a broad swath of community stakeholders. From clergy, to educators, to business leaders, to healthcare professionals, and community activists.

“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and bi-polar disorder are a few of the different types of mental illnesses that some Trentonians suffer. If properly treated, those who suffer from these challenges can live healthy, productive lives and be better assets to our families and the community,” stated Councilwoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

The board’s primary responsibilities shall be to: develop a plan of action to encourage better communication among organizations addressing mental health issues, develop a plan of mental health services for Trenton, and submit a City Mental Health Plan that would provide the framework for mental health funding and program development in the City of Trenton. The board would submit an annual budget request to City Council, which if approved, would be disbursed by the Department of Health & Human Services.

“We also need to work closely with our schools so that this generation of young people and the next understand that there is no shame in saying “I need help””, stated Councilman Duncan W. Harrison. We need to create a safety net that identifies, captures, and treats individuals at the onset of symptoms.

Another key component will be the availability of rapid response grief counseling for those impacted by shootings. The ordinance will be introduced at the next City Council meeting, scheduled for Thursday, May 19, 2016.

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