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TO: Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division

DATE: November 13, 2023

RE: Resolution to proclaim November as Family Court Awareness Month

City Council President Mary Sheffield has requested the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) produce a resolution proclaiming the month of November as Family Court Awareness Month. Attached is the requested resolution. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

A RESOLUTION BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MARY SHEFFIELD

Proclaiming the month of November as Family Court Awareness Month

WHEREAS Ms. Tina Swithin became an advocate for change in the Family Court System after enduring a ten-year high conflict custody battle and seeing the flaws in the system firsthand, recognizing the need to shine a spotlight on systemic issues that are placing children in harm's way; and

WHEREAS In 2020, Ms. Tina Swithin in collaboration with Sandra Ross of The California Protective Parents Association, founded, "Family Court Awareness Month"; and

WHEREAS In its inaugural year, the Family Court Awareness Month Committee (FCAMC) memorialized the initiative with a cross-country tour that started in California and ended in North Carolina, receiving support from various domestic violence advocates, law enforcement officers, district attorneys, attorneys, and judges; and

WHEREAS The mission of the FCAMC is to increase awareness on the importance of education and training on domestic violence, childhood trauma and post separation abuse for all professionals working within the family court system; and

WHEREAS When an abusive relationship ends, and children are involved, the abuse often escalates and transitions into the family court system, children are often used as pawns and weaponized by the abusive, unhealthy parent; and

WHEREAS The mission of the FCAMC is to increase awareness on the importance of using scientifically valid, evidence-based, treatment program and services that are proven in terms of safety, effectiveness, and therapeutic value; and

WHEREAS The mission at the FCAMC is to educate judges and other family court professionals on the empirical data and peer-reviewed research that is currently available, for such research is a critical component to making decisions that are truly in the best interest of children. This research includes The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) study; (CDC-Kaiser Permanente), Sauner's Study (US Department of Justice), The Meier Study: Child Custody Outcomes in Cases Involving Abuse Allegations (Joan Meier), and the Santa Clara Law Study; (Confronting the Challenge of High-Conflict Personality in Family Court); and

WHEREAS The mission at FCAMC is fueled by the desire to create awareness and change in the family court system for the conservatively estimated, 58,000 children a year ordered into unsupervised contact with abusive parents, while honoring the over

800 children who have been murdered since 2008 by a parent in an estranged relationship; (Source: Center for Judicial Excellence) **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT,**

RESOLVED The Detroit City Council unequivocally supports the FCAMC in its mission of serving the community by increasing awareness on the importance of a family court system that promotes child safety and encourages decisions that are in the best interest of children **NOW, BE IT FURTHER,**

RESOLVED The Detroit City Council through Council President Mary Sheffield, proclaims the month of November as Family Court Awareness Month.



CITY OF DETROIT

MARY SHEFFIELD

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Legislative Policy Division (LPD)

Through: Council Member Latisha Johnson, Chair, Internal Operations Standing Committee

From: Council President Mary Sheffield submitting memorandum relative to

Date: 10/24/2023

RE: Request to Draft Resolution Declaring November as Family Court Awareness Month

SUMMARY:

Family courts play a critical role in our society, handling matters of utmost importance to families, such as child custody, domestic violence, and child support. By designating November as Family Court Awareness Month, we aim to emphasize the significance of these institutions in our communities and foster a deeper understanding of their vital role in protecting the rights and well-being of numerous individuals and families.

In partnership with the Family Court Awareness Month Committee, my office seeks to underscore the essential role of the family court system in prioritizing child safety and acting in the best interests of children. This mission is driven by the urgent need to raise awareness and bring about positive change within the family court system, particularly in light of the staggering estimate of 58,000 children annual placed in unsupervised contact with abusive parents. The gravity of this mission is further underscored by the tragic reality of hundreds of children who have lost their lives during visitation with dangerous parents.

Family Court Awareness Month provides an opportunity to recognize and express gratitude for the unwavering dedication of judges, lawyers, social workers, and support staff working within

these institutions. Their commitment to upholding the best interests of children and families deserves our recognition and appreciation. Therefore, my office would like to request a resolution be drafted declaring November as Family Court Awareness Month. Please contact Caryn Shannon from my office at caryn.shannon@detroitmi.gov if you have any questions.

Cc: Honorable Colleagues
City Clerk

DEPARTMENTAL CONTACT:

Name: Caryn Shannon

Position: Policy Analyst