TO: All Participating Middle Schools and Programs
FROM: The Honorable Lori A. Dumas, Chair, Do the Write Thing Philadelphia
DATE: March 2021
SUBJECT: 2021 “Do the Write Thing” Challenge

Over the past year we have witnessed students from across the country demand that we, as a nation, ensure their safety and that of their friends, families, schools and communities. Young people are speaking up, calling on those responsible for their well-being to listen to their concerns, and take action to end the violence they face. At the National Campaign to Stop Violence, we are heeding those calls and have been for the past 25 years. Through our hallmark program, the “Do the Write Thing” (DtWT) Challenge Program, we seek to empower youth, through their writings, with the ability to reduce youth violence.

By agreeing to include your 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in the 2021 “Do the Write Thing” Challenge you will be doing your part to help more students find their voice. Starting this spring, you will be joined by hundreds of schools and programs from across the United States in a coordinated, unique effort to give students the opportunity to express the impact of youth violence on their lives, and to make personal commitments to reduce violence.

This year marks twenty-five years, the “Do the Write Thing” Challenge has been effective in reducing youth violence in schools and communities nationally. Since inception, over one million students have accepted the “Challenge” to do something to reduce youth violence. Hundreds of books have been published and circulated containing the words of these students, both locally and nationally. Recent research conducted by the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), on the “Do the Write Thing” Challenge found the program had a positive impact on the relationship between students, parents and teachers. The research revealed participating students exhibited a “greater empathy and understanding for the victims of violence,” and show “more positive behaviors and attitudes towards peers and teachers.” The program has helped motivate widespread community involvement aimed at making
schools and neighborhoods safer for young people. As a result, the “Challenge” is especially proud of the support of thousands of adult volunteers across the country. All costs for this program are generously paid for by our sponsors.

The packet enclosed, entitled Instructions for Classroom Teachers explains this year’s “Do the Write Thing” Challenge in more detail. This packet includes a letter to participating classroom teachers and information about program rules, entry deadlines, selection criteria, classroom discussions, common core application and student recognition. In addition, you will find a brief summary of UTEP’s research outlining the benefits of using the DtWT Challenge and information on how the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (OJJDP) campaign on “Changing Minds” dovetails with the DtWT Challenge. Feel free to visit the national Do the Write Thing website, www.dtwt.org, to view more information about the Challenge, as well as a video highlighting National Recognition Week.

Please designate one person to be the contact person for your school or program. This individual will be responsible for coordinating with your teachers to manage the online submissions of completed student writings. The deadline for the submission of student writings is 5:00 PM on Friday, April 30, 2021.

If you have any questions, please contact Nickisha Cox, Esquire at nickisha.cox@courts.phila.gov or email dtwtphilly@gmail.com. We wish your students success and hope to see one of your teachers and one of your students during our National Recognition Week in Washington, D.C. in July if conditions permit.